

A survey of the Clann Ghormáin (McGormans) of Ibrickan, county Clare: land, lineage and resettlement in late medieval Ireland

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Abstract

Presented here is a transcription and translation of a late sixteenth-century poem by ollamh Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha on the historical migration of the Clann Ghormáin from Leinster to Thomond, where they settled in Ibrickan under new overlords, the Uí Bhriain. From these beginnings, Clann Ghormáin advanced themselves to a prominent position in the lordship of Thomond, which lasted until the loss of their estates in the mid-seventeenth century. An analysis of the seanchas-genealogy elements of the poem by Maoilín Óg alongside evidence contained in contemporary administrative records reveals the landholdings, proprietorial status and familial relationships of this important Gaelic Irish lineage.

Ar Maigh Adhar do gairthí Ó Briain; Mac na Mara do ghaireadh é;
Ó Duibhidhir Choill na Manach agus Mag Cormáin a mharuscáil
sluaigh [...]

[At Magh Adhar O Briain was inaugurated; it was Mac na Mara who
inaugurated him. O Duibhidhir of Coill na Manach and Mag Cormain
[McGorman] were his marshals of the hosts [...]]²

Introduction

The Clann Ghormáin were a prominent lineage in late medieval Thomond with close connections to the ruling Uí Bhriain. Yet their antecedents are found in Leinster where they were rulers of Uí Bhairrche before their expulsion, purportedly at the hands of the Anglo-Normans in the twelfth century. The tradition of their migration from Leinster to Thomond is preserved in a late sixteenth-century poem by the learned *seanchaidhe*, Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha, entitled *Deoraidh sonra sliocht*

¹ The authors thank John Minahane and Brian Ó Dálaigh for their advice during the preparation of this article.

² Patrick S. Dinneen (ed.), *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn le Séathrún Céitinn, D.D. The history of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, D.D.*, vol. 3 (London, 1908), 12–15.

Chathaoir ('Cathaoir's descendants are strangers here').³ A translation of this poem—published here for the first time—contains a wealth of genealogical and allegorical detail that enables us to assess the resettlement of the Clann Ghormáin in Thomond. Further insights can be drawn from the poem with regards to the martial prowess of the Clann Ghormáin, as well as their landholdings in Ibrickan in west Clare.

The poem was composed by Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha in *circa* 1590⁴ as a genealogy or eulogy for Domhnall (mac Maoilsheachlainn) Mac Gormáin.⁵ This Domhnall purportedly built Cahermurphy castle (see below) and was attainted in 1600, dying of a broken heart soon after (according to tradition referred to by Westropp).⁶ The poem is sixty-nine stanzas long and conforms to the strict rules of *dán díreach* poetry, it being couched in the professional *deibhidhe* metre. The great majority of the poem's stanzas enumerate the genealogy of the Clann Ghormáin, which, in traditional fashion, is traced back to Adam.

The poem can be summarised as follows. In vv. 4–5, the versifier describes the expulsion of the Clann Ghormáin from Leinster and in vv. 6–11 he chronicles their settlement in Owney in Limerick and Ibrickan in Thomond. Eulogistic praise to Domhnall Mac Gormáin is given in vv. 12–16, followed by a detailed genealogy in vv. 17–56. The remaining verses, in vv. 57–69, return to the addressee of the poem, Domhnall, and celebrate his sundry positive attributes—including his skills as a military leader, his magnanimous provision of hospitality and benevolent acts of charity. In these ways the poem draws on a variety of motifs common to other Gaelic-Irish genealogical and classical poetic material of the period.

The versifier, Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha, was a scion of the Clann Bhruaideadha who served as professional *seanchaidhthe* (chronicler-historians) in Thomond, but who were also skilled in *filidheacht* (poetry).⁷ From the mid-fourteenth century, *ollamhain* of the Clann Bhruaideadha appear in the historical record as poet-chroniclers in the service of aristocratic families in Thomond, and more specifically as historians and

³ Based on the copy of the poem in TCD MS H.6.7 (1411), dated 1737, as transcribed in Damian McManus and Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh (eds), *A bardic miscellany: five hundred bardic poems from manuscripts in Irish and British libraries* (Dublin, 2010), 212–14. At least five other copies are known to be extant (Stoneyhurst A/II/20ii, dated 1701; King's Inns 4, d. 1740–1; MS TCD H.2.3 (1294iii), late eighteenth century; RIA 23.F.14 (88), c.1770; British Library MS Egerton 112, 1780–82). Of these, only the very poor King's Inns copy, which gives no help with textual difficulties, was available to the translator. For the present purposes it was thought sufficient to use the TCD H.6.7 text as transcribed in *A bardic miscellany*, with a number of amendments proposed separately by the *Miscellany* editors, the *Bardic poetry database* editor and the translator.

⁴ Myles Ronan, 'The MacGormans of Ui Breacane', *Molua* (1938), 7–17, 7.

⁵ McManus and Ó Raghallaigh, *A bardic miscellany*, 212–14 [162/670].

⁶ Thomas J. Westropp, 'Cahermurphy castle and its earthworks, with certain forts near Milltown-Malbay, County Clare', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland [JRSAI]* 1:2 (1911), 117–37, 121.

⁷ Luke McInerney, *Clerical and learned lineages of medieval Co. Clare: a survey of the fifteenth-century papal registers* (Dublin, 2014), 301. On the Clann Bhruaideadha of Ibrickan see Luke McInerney, 'Lettermoylan of Clann Bhruaideadha: a résumé of their landholding, topography & history', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal [NMAJ]* 52 (2012), 81–113.

poets to the dynastic branches of the Uí Bhriain.⁸ The father of Maoilín Óg was Maoilín Mac Bruaideadha who served as *ollamh* to Ó Briain in *seanchas* until his death in 1582.⁹ Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha was an *ollamh seanchais* (professor of historical lore), whose work notably brought him to Dublin in the 1590s to assist with the translation of the Bible into Irish.¹⁰ He enjoyed the patronage of the Clann Ghormáin, in whose honour he composed *Deoraidh sonra sliocht Chathaoir*.

Discussion

While the poem figuratively places the Clann Ghormáin ancestral landholdings at Maistiu (Mullaghmast, county Kildare), a site with lofty royal associations such as with the Uí Dunlainge and other royal lineages, modern scholarship suggests a more prosaic origin; they were seated in the ancient barony of Slieve Margy (Sliabh Mhairgi) in southeast county Laois.¹¹ The Clann Ghormáin were a constituent part of a ruling kin-group known as the Uí Bhairrche, or the descendants of Daire Barrach, who is identified in v. 28 of the poem as the son of Cathaoir Mór, a legendary monarch of Ireland.¹²

The Clann Ghormáin established themselves as kings of Uí Bhairrche in pre-Norman times, and their local kingship was celebrated in the poem *Triallom timcheall na Fódla* ('Let us journey around Ireland'), which was compiled in the mid-fourteenth century as a topographical poem that enumerates the pre-Norman Gaelic elite, but was heavily influenced by the antiquarian views of the Gaelic revival of that century.¹³ Nevertheless, the Clann Ghormáin became sufficiently prominent to be referenced in the annals: in 1124, the obituary of Muireadhach Mac Gormáin, lord of Uí Bhairrche, describes him as 'the ornament and glory, and the chief old hero of Leinster'.¹⁴ The Clann Ghormáin presence in Slieve Margy appears to have come

⁸ The first reference to them as a learned kindred dates from when Seaán Buidhe Mac Bruaideadha composed a poem for Mathghamhain Ó Briain in c.1365–69. However, there is a hiatus in the historical record until they appear in the annals in the mid-sixteenth century as *ollamhain* of Uí Bhreacáin and Uí Fhearmhaic. See Lambert McKenna, S.J., 'Poem to Ó Briain', *The Irish Monthly* 49 (1921), 112–17. Also see *AFM, sub annis* 1563, 1582, 1599, 1602.

⁹ *AFM, sub anno* 1582.

¹⁰ Giacomo Fideli, Luke McNerney and Brian Ó Dalaigh (eds), *Culture, contention and identity in seventeenth-century Ireland: Antonius Bruodinus' anatomical examination of Thomas Carve's apologetic handbook* (Cork, 2022), 355 n. 295. Also see Cathal Ó Háinle, 'The Pater Noster in Irish: Reformation texts to c.1650', *Celtica* 22 (1991), 145–64, 159.

¹¹ Rev. Patrick Woulfe, *Sloinnte Gaedheal is Gall* (Dublin, 1923), 381.

¹² Genealogies for the Uí Bhairrche are contained in Rawlinson B 503, ff. 121–22. Also see the genealogical tract headed *Genealach rígh Ua mBairrce i. Mac Gormain*, which linked the Clann Ghormáin to the kingly lineage of the Uí Bhairrche. See Nollaig Ó Muraíle (ed. & trans.), *The great book of Irish genealogies* [...], vol. 2 (Dublin, 2004), 248–49.

¹³ James Carney (ed.), *Topographical poems by Seán Mór Ó Dubhagáin and Giolla-Na-Naomh Ó Huidhrín* (Dublin, 1943), 33, 39 (the second reference is a continuation of the poem by Giolla na Naomh Ó hUidhrín and was extended from the initial poem by Seaán Ó Dubhagáin).

¹⁴ *AFM, sub anno* 1124.

under pressure in the period following the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, and this is believed to have been the ultimate impetus for their migration to Thomond.

The poem contains little information on the departure of the Clann Ghormáin from Leinster, only that their lands were 'seized from them' (v. 4) by 'warriors in a fleet' (v. 5)—an apparent reference to the Anglo-Normans, though it could be an oblique kenning for the Norse origins of the Normans. Later analysis suggests that they were dispossessed of their lands by the Anglo-Norman coloniser, Walter de Riddlesford (d.1226).¹⁵ However, at least one commentator has raised the possibility that their departure from Leinster was prompted by an act of violence at the hands of the Meic Mhurchadha in 1141.¹⁶ According to the *Annals of Tigernach*:

Seventeen men of the kinfolk of Leinster were killed and blinded by Murchadh son of Murchadh, including Domnall son of Faolán and Muirheartach son of Giolla MacColmóg and Murchadh Ó Tuathail and three sons of Mac Gormáin.¹⁷

The Clann Ghormáin might equally have migrated from Leinster for reasons other than violent upheaval. The changing political realities following the Anglo-Norman invasion of the 1170s, and the subsequent subinfeudation of Leinster in the ensuing decades, plausibly created an environment in which the Clann Ghormáin faced impoverishment or, at least, a diminution in their standing. It is tempting to speculate that better prospects in the relatively underpopulated region of Thomond served as an inducement to migrate. References in the poem to Ibrickan as a wild, uncultivated land, implies that it was sought as much for its sparseness of inhabitants as for its potential for development.

Settlement in Thomond

In v. 6 of the poem, Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaidealha describes how one section of the Clann Ghormáin journeyed to Ulster, while a separate branch migrated to Munster (v. 7). The latter settled for a time in Owey (vv. 6–7) in east Limerick before undertaking a further migration to a section of Corca Bhaiscinn in southwest county Clare (v. 9). They renamed these lands Ibrickan (Uí Bhreacáin) in an evocation of the kindred's original tribal name in Leinster. The poem, in allegorical terms, narrates that in these 'gloomy lands' the Clann Ghormáin prospered 'under the well-proven race of the noble O'Briens'. This poetic narrative regarding their migration probably drew on the prevailing *seanchas*-tradition expounded by Clann Bhruaidealha as learned *seanchaidhthe* patronised by the Clann Ghormáin and

¹⁵ John O'Donovan (ed.), *The book of rights* (Dublin, 1847), 213, n. m.

¹⁶ Marie Therese Flanagan, *Irish royal charters: texts and contexts* (Oxford, 2008), 314.

¹⁷ *Annals of Tigernach*, sub anno 1141. This Murchadh Mac Murchadha was the brother and enforcer of the famous Diarmaid Mac Murchadha, king of Leinster.

other leading Gaelic lineages.¹⁸ Once established in Ibrickan, and for the next 400 years, Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha states in v. 10 that the Clann Ghormáin were generous and charitable patrons who supported artists and fed the poor. While this reflected stylised language found in medieval praise-poems, it nonetheless emphasises the elevated social status of the Clann Ghormáin in Gaelic society. Such literary devices served to portray them in traditional terms invoking hospitality, charity and magnanimity, and thus worthy patrons of the *aos dána* ('people of art'), whose chief representatives were the *filí* (poets) and *seanchaidhthe* (chroniclers).

Later commentators have identified individuals in the poem as leading various waves of Clann Ghormáin migration. According to antiquary John O'Donovan, the first of the lineage to settle in Munster was Murchadh, who appears as the son of Eithighern in v. 22 (although O'Donovan states that he is the son of Donogh Mac Gormáin).¹⁹ This represents the initial Clann Ghormáin migration to Owey. A commentary attached to a reproduction of the Uí Bhairrche genealogy asserts that it was Cú Mheadha ('Cumeth'),²⁰ son of Murchadh, who completed the onward transfer of the Clann Ghormáin to Ibrickan.²¹ That said, Cú Mheadha is cited in v. 22 of the poem but is not described as leading the migration into Thomond. It is unclear on what basis these later commentators made their assertions. One supposition is that certain names were selected, based on a calculation of generations working back from Domhnall Mac Gormáin; alternatively, names were identified using oral traditions associated with the Clann Ghormáin migration. It is clear, however, that Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha was broadly correct to assert that the Clann Ghormáin had been established in Thomond for 400 years, indicating an arrival date of *c.*1200.

The allusion to Uí Bhriain patronage in v. 9 is a key component in the establishment of the Clann Ghormáin in Ibrickan. Antiquary T. J. Westropp suggested that the Clann Ghormáin were received into Thomond by King Domhnall Mór Ó Briain (reigned 1168–94) and settled across a cluster of contiguous lands covered by the modern-day parishes of Kilfarboy, Kilmurry-Ibrickan, Kilmacduane and Kilmihil. This was apparently done to garrison a weak and underpopulated district of Thomond against Anglo-Norman encroachment.²² Presumably the threat of incursion came from Connacht, which was increasingly under the sway of the Anglo-Normans in the period after 1235—alongside a growing threat of Anglo-Norman colonisation

¹⁸ While Maoilín Óg and Tadhg mac Dáire Mhic Bhruaideadha served as 'court poets' to the fourth earl of Thomond, the fact that the annalists refer to the Clann Bhruaideadha in 1563 as *ollamhain* of Uí Bhreacáin and Uí Fhearmhaic indicates that their local presence in Uí Bhreacáin likely saw them benefiting from Clann Ghormáin patronage for a significant period prior to the composition of Maoilín Óg's poem.

¹⁹ John O'Donovan and Eugene Curry, *Ordnance Survey letters: the antiquities of County Clare* (Ennis, 2003), 279.

²⁰ The name 'Cueva' is based on the forename Cú Abha, which appears to be common among the Clann Ghormáin. See Flanagan, *Irish royal charters*, 366, n. 9.

²¹ [Anonymous], *Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland* 3:24 (1875), 475–86 [*viz.* nos. 82–83 of the pedigree].

²² Westropp, 'Cahermurphy castle', 120.

of the estuarine lands of the Shannon in southwest Clare from the 1250s onwards. In addition, it is speculated that their presence in Ibrickan was intended to dominate the former lordship of Corca Bhaiscinn.²³ The Corca Bhaiscinn, a kingly dynasty who dominated southwest Clare and the Shannon estuarine region, had remained a largely independent polity prior to the eleventh century and, in common with the Corca Mruadh dynasty to the north, proved formidable opponents of the Dál gCais, resisting the latter's westward expansion into their territories.

The earliest reference to the Clann Ghormáin concerns their relationship with the Uí Bhriain in the context of the latter's struggle against Anglo-Norman incursion into Thomond. In an extract from a Pipe Roll dating from the reign of Henry III under the year 1264, a 'Guylone [?] O Kenedi & Coave [Cúebha] MacGorman' appear in connection with one 'Turri Obren' (Toirdhealbhach Ó Briain) and other local kindreds from Thomond.²⁴ This shows that the Clann Ghormáin had achieved prominence by the mid-thirteenth century in Thomond and stands as further evidence that they settled some fifty years earlier, around c.1200.

As a primarily genealogical composition the poem contains little information on the landholdings of the Clann Ghormáin. This lacuna should be addressed by an examination of the Clann Ghormáin proprietorial position in Thomond. As might be expected of a military kindred, the Clann Ghormáin are associated with several castles and fortified sites—the most significant of which is Cahermurphy (Cathair Mhurchadha or Murchadh's fort) in the parish of Kilmihil.²⁵ This fortification was perhaps named after the aforementioned chief who led the Clann Ghormáin out of Leinster.²⁶ Analysis by Martin Breen and Risteárd Ua Cróinín reveals that, while little now remains of its late medieval towerhouse structure, its history has been closely intertwined with the Clann Ghormáin.²⁷

It would appear that Cahermurphy castle was a significant structure and a notable place in the landscape. It is referred to in the *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill* (Life of Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill) as where Ó Domhnaill's forces reached on a plundering expedition into Thomond in 1600 as they swept from the barony of the islands into

²³ Ibid., 119–20.

²⁴ RIA MS 12/D/10, 2 [Pipe Rolls, Ireland, 1264–1543]. Donnchadh Cairbreach (d.1242), the name of a former Ó Briain king of Thomond is mentioned in the same Pipe Roll record.

²⁵ Not to be confused with the same name of a ring-fort in Cahermurphy townland. Cahermurphy castle, referred to here, situates in the adjacent townland to the south of Cahermurphy townland, at Castlepark. The ruins of the towerhouse are encased within earthen enclosures and it locates to the east of Cahermurphy Lough, past the Cahermurphy bridge, overlooking a river to its south. The two sites—Cahermurphy ring-fort (sometimes called Cahirmore) and Cahermurphy castle in Castlepark townland—are recorded separately in the 1659 'census' for Kilmihil parish. See Séamus Pender (ed.), *A census of Ireland, circa 1659* (Dublin, 1939), 181.

²⁶ Westropp 'Cahermurphy castle', 120.

²⁷ National Monuments Service (NMS) no. CL048–00902 (*viz.* Historic Environment Viewer Map). In 1604 Cahermurphy was included in a grant by King James I to Sir Daniel O'Brien, brother of the fourth earl of Thomond. The grant included Cloghanbeg, Cloghanmore and Cahirmoraghowe. This grant encompassed much of the Clann Ghormáin estate. See M. C. Griffith (ed.), *Irish patent rolls of James I* (Dublin, 1966), 52.

west Corca Bhaiscinn.²⁸ According to an inquisition in 1637, Cahermurphy consisted of a hall and courtyard, denoting it a high status site as would be expected for the dwelling place of the Gaelic elite.²⁹ Westropp writes of it containing an enclosure with two great mounds twelve feet high, surrounded by fosses.³⁰ It appears to have been a late medieval towerhouse constructed of flagstone and situated inside an earlier ringfort, characterised by earthworks and enclosures. Its importance is clearly denoted in the etymology of the townland where it stood: Castlepark. The complex structure of Cahermurphy castle suggests continuity of settlement. While it is not possible to identify whether Cahermurphy served as the original *ceannáit* of the Clann Ghormáin upon their initial settlement in west Clare, it remains a possibility given Cahermurphy's original incarnation as a defensive enclosure typical of the early medieval era, replete with late medieval adaptations by the Clann Ghormáin.³¹

As late as 1570 'Cahir muroghowe' was held by 'Teig o bryene the sherif' but probably tenanted by the Clann Ghormáin.³² Other fortifications under Clann Ghormáin control included the castle of Doonogan, which the kindred held from Toirdhealbhadh Ó Briain in 1570.³³ It is likely that the Clann Ghormáin held Doonogan under a favourable arrangement from the Uí Bhriain.³⁴ In 1615 Doonogan and its lands were held by one of Donnchadh Ó Briain, fourth earl of Thomond's court poets, Tadhg mac Dáire Mhic Bhruaidealha.³⁵ This suggests that Doonogan had the status of service land and was leased to officials and retainers of Ó Briain. While references to the military attributes of the Clann Ghormáin are found throughout the poem, it is notable that there are no descriptions of fortified settlements, which we find in other contemporary poems.³⁶

²⁸ Paul Walsh (ed. & trans.) *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill: life of Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill* (Dublin, 1948), 254–55.

²⁹ James Frost, *The history and topography of the county of Clare from the earliest times to the beginning of the 18th century* (Dublin, 1893), 325. The inquisition states that two bed chambers were owned by Scanlan Mac Gormáin, implying that the castle was divided between kinsmen. This inquisition also details the sub-denominations of Cahermurphy: Gortnebarnard, Ardgowny, Killkarhaghmorochove (this suggests a wooded place: *Coill Chathair Mhurchadha*); Cloggagh and Cnockeanvill. See RIA MS OS EI/11/2, 3.

³⁰ Westropp, 'Cahermurphy castle', 117–37; see also Thomas J. Westropp, 'Antiquities near Miltown Malbay, county Clare', *Limerick Field Club* 2:8 (1904), 255–56.

³¹ Westropp suggested that Cahermurphy (Cathair Mhurchadha) took its name from Murchadh, the chief of the Clann Ghormáin, who was the first to settle in Thomond and who might have been responsible for the construction of the enclosure and fosse at Cahermurphy castle. See Westropp, 'Cahermurphy castle', 120.

³² Martin Breen, 'A 1570 list of castles in county Clare', *NMAJ* 36 (1995), 130–38; 133.

³³ Breen, 'A 1570 list of castles', 133. No forename is given, only 'Macorman'. However, in 1584–85 the Fiants record 'Donell mcTho. McGorman, of Donagan' [Doonogan] and 'Teig mcThomas McGorman of same'. See Kenneth Nicholls and Tomás G. Ó Canann (eds), *The Irish fiants of the Tudor sovereigns [...]* (Dublin, 1994), no. 4568.

³⁴ *AFM*, sub anno 1484.

³⁵ Luke McNerney, 'The earl of Thomond's 1615 survey of Ibrickan, Co. Clare', *NMAJ* 53 (2013), 173–91, 186.

³⁶ See, for example, the poem by Tadhg mac Dáire Mhic Bhruaidealha in c.1600 to Giolla na Naomh

Landholding in Ibrickan

The Clann Ghormáin controlled an array of lands in west Clare, which served to generate economic wealth and thereby maintain their social standing as a leading lineage in the late medieval Uí Bhriain lordship of Thomond. In addition to the lands adjacent to Cahermurphy castle, the Clann Ghormáin held estates to the west at Dromellihiy (Droim Oilche) in the parish of Kilmacduane. An inquisition taken in 1627 reveals that, in 1580, Melaghlín (Maolsheachlainn) Mac Gormáin died and his estates of Cahermurphy and Drumellihiy passed to his son and heir, Dermot (Diarmuid) Mac Gormáin.³⁷ At this point, the two estates became unified under single ownership. But a deed of 1594 states that ‘Mathghamhain mac Duinn Me[i]g Cormáin ó Cathair Murcha’ (i.e. of Cahermurphy) surrendered his share of the castle of Dunmore³⁸ and its associated lands to the fourth earl of Thomond (a transfer that was witnessed by two members of learned Clann Bhruaideadha).³⁹ This implies that Mathghamhain held Cahermurphy but not Dromellihiy. By the close of the sixteenth century, therefore, the estate had been partitioned among male heirs.

By the 1640s, a group of kinsmen of the Clann Ghormáin retained proprietorial interest in Cahermurphy (‘Carramorohow’),⁴⁰ while Daniel and Caher Mac Gormáin held portions of Dromellihiy.⁴¹ The Cromwellian confiscations removed both landholdings from the hands of the Clann Ghormáin. Despite the devastating impact of the Confederate Wars and the subsequent Cromwellian campaign on the local population, the 1659 ‘Census’ records the anglicised surname variant, ‘Gorman’, as one of the chief families in the barony of Moyarta, thus indicating that the Clann Gormáin maintained an important local presence.⁴²

Other important Clann Ghormáin landholdings include Tullycreen in Kilmurry-Ibrickan parish. During the late fourteenth-century, Tullycreen (Tullaigh Crainn) was included in the list of tributary lands known as Suim Cíosa Ua Briain (‘rental

Óg Uí Dhuibhdábhóireann, law-brehon, in which he refers to the ‘lime-white *lios*’ of Cahermacnaughten in the Burren. See George U. Macnamara, ‘The O’Davorens of Cahermacnaughton, Burren, Co. Clare’, *Journal of the North Munster Archaeological Society* 2 (1913), 202–11.

³⁷ Frost, *The history and topography*, 303–04. Also see RIA MS OS EI/10/57, 173–74.

³⁸ Dunmore is an alternative name for Cahermurphy.

³⁹ James Hardiman (ed.), ‘Ancient Irish deeds and writings chiefly relating to landed property from the twelfth to seventeenth century: with translation, notes and a preliminary essay’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 15 (1826) 1–95, 83–84 (deed no. 34). Also see the reference in the 1640 register of the Thomond papers to the same deed wherein it is described as ‘Mohon mcGorman’s deede to my Lord of his wives third in Dune=more & the order betwtixt his Lapp and the said Mohan’. ‘Dunemore’ here is incorrectly identified as Doonmore in Killard, but it is in fact an alternative name for Cahermurphy, the seat of Clann Ghormáin. See Luke McInerney, ‘A 1640 register of the Thomond papers at Petworth House’, *Archivium Hibernicum* 74 (2021), 27–134, 117.

⁴⁰ Robert C. Simington (ed.), *Books of survey and distribution [...] 1636–1703, vol. iv, County of Clare* (Dublin, 1967), 350–51. They were Teige, Manghan, Skanlane, Daniel the elder, Conor, Thomas, Daniel the younger.

⁴¹ Simington (ed.), *Books of survey and distribution*, 373.

⁴² Pender, *Census of Ireland*, 185. The 1659 census also records a Loghlen Gorman as a ‘Titulado’ (landholder) of Drumellihiy. *Ibid.*, 184.

of O'Brien'), which enumerated the tribute imposed on vassals in Thomond by the ruling Uí Bhriain (valued at 20 shillings).⁴³ The Tullycreen lineage was a collateral branch of the family seated at Cahermurphy and Dromellihiy, and it is likely that they acquired Tullycreen at a later date. The Clann Ghormáin was well established at Tullycreen in the seventeenth century: an inquisition of 1630 states that the death of Teige (Tadhg) Mac Gormáin in 1624 resulted in Tullycreen passing to his son, Donald (Domhnall).⁴⁴ A generation later, Thomas, Daniel, Melaghlin and Murtagh Mac Gormáin held part shares in the land, which was of significant acreage.⁴⁵

A curious story preserved in the Latin writings of Antonius Bruodin, OFM (c.1618–80) involves a miracle that occurred to a Tullycreen woman named Maria MacGorman whom he describes as of 'ancient nobility' (*antiquae nobilitatis*).⁴⁶ This woman belonged to the Clann Ghormáin at Tullycreen and was cured of sciatica and kidney pains after frequenting the holy well of St Michael at Kilmihil in 1632, which she herself found on the divine direction of St Michael, the archangel, in a series of dreams.⁴⁷ She might have been the Maria, daughter of Thomas MacGorman of Drumellihiy, who married James, the eldest son of *ollamh*-poet Tadhg mac Dáire Mhic Bhruaideadha (d.1625/26).⁴⁸ This further illustrates not only the important marital links contracted between the Clann Ghormáin and prominent local families, but also the interconnectiveness between the Clann Ghormáin branches of Tullycreen and Dromellihiy.

A conspectus of the Clann Ghormáin proprietary settlements can be found in the unpublished Great Office for Clonderalaw Barony in 1618.⁴⁹ It shows that their hereditary estates were held by partible inheritance ('gavelkind' inheritance) between agnatic co-heirs from kindred branches:

Thomas oge McGorman of Tullicrin gent: 1 cartron or 4th part of the qr of Tullicrine; and the ½ qr. of the qr. of Dromlligis al[ia]s Binvara⁵⁰

Teige McGorman of Tullicrine aforesaid gent: another cartron or 4th part of the qr of Tullicrine aforesaid

⁴³ Hardiman, 'Ancient Irish deeds', 36, 39.

⁴⁴ Frost, *The history and topography*, 315. Also see RIA MS OS EI/10/107, 246.

⁴⁵ Simington (ed.), *Books of survey and distribution*, 358. Tullycreen consisted of 716 unprofitable acres and 631 profitable acres (Irish plantation acres).

⁴⁶ Antonius Bruodinus, *Propugnaculum Catholicae veritatis* [...] (Prague, 1669), 961.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Fideli, McInerney and Ó Dalaigh (eds), *Culture, contention and identity*, 203. On James see 127.

⁴⁹ Petworth House Archive MS 16 D.1. [Great Office 1618—Clonderalaw & Moyarta baronies].

⁵⁰ An inquisition held in 1630 found that Thomas Mac Gorman (d.1630) in 1623 demised the land of 'Dromdigus' in Tullycreen to Henry Thornton and Daniel Molony in trust for his own use and the remainder to his son and heir Thomas. 'Dromlligis' recorded in 1618 appears to be the Dromdigus of this conveyance. See Frost, *The history and topography*, 314. Binvara is the modern Binvoran, which is recorded as 'Bind M[h]orain' in the fourteenth-century *Suim Ciosa Ua Briain*. Both Dromdigus and Binvoran were held by a Thomas McGorman in 1641. See Hardiman, 'Ancient Irish deeds', 36; Simington (ed.), *Books of survey and distribution*, 358.

Scanlan McGorman of Cahermorrhough, gent: 1 cartron or moiety of the ½ qr. of Cahirken[evan]⁵¹

Thomas mcMoertagh McGorman of Caherkenevan aforesaid, gent: the other cartron or moiety of the ½ qr of Caherkenevan aforesaid

Scanlan McGorman, Donnell McCowe of Aghega [...] and Melaghlin McGorman of Caranreagh,⁵² gent: are seised of the cartron of Aghaga, parcel of the qr. of Deri[crossan]⁵³

The said Mellaghlin McGorman: 1 cartron or moiety of the ½ qr. of Car[r]anreagh

Donnell mcThomas McGorman of Carranreagh aforesaid, gent: the other moiety of the said ½ qr. [...]

Similarly, the 1618 Great Office for the barony of Moyarta records the Clann Ghormáin settlement at Dromellihy:⁵⁴

Mahowne mc Teig and Connor mcJ[J?]oine McGorman of Moifadamore aforesaid gent: the other 3rd part of the said qr. of Moifadamore

Dermott mcMelaighlin McGorman of Dromelhy? gent: 5 cartrons or 5 parts of the 2 qrs. of Dromelhy in 8 parts to be divided; ½ cartron or 16th part of the 2 qrs. of Ca[...] Cahermorrhough⁵⁵ [in margin: '4 qrs. Sir Daniell O Brien claims']

Downe McGorman of Dromelhy aforesaid, gent: 1 half qr of the said 2 qrs of Drumelhy

Cahir McDonnell of Dromelhy,⁵⁶ gent: 1 cartron or eight parts of the said 2 qrs of Drumelhy

⁵¹ Cahercannavan, west of Kilmihil.

⁵² In 1641 it was recorded as 'Carrenreah al[ia]s Knockaloughe'. This would imply that 'Carrenreah' was in or adjacent to Knockalough. See Simington (ed.), *Books of survey and distribution*, 352.

⁵³ Ahaga in Kilmihil parish. Derrycrossan has not survived as a townland but located south of Ahaga, encompassing the lands around the bridge over the Doonbeg river, the name of which preserves its memory in the local landscape (Derrycrossaun Bridge). Clann Ghormáin proprietorship of Cahercannavan, Ahaga, Derrycrossan and Tullycreen represented a corridor of contiguous estates in excess of 2,500 acres.

⁵⁴ Petworth House Archive MS 16 D.1. [Great Office 1618—Clonderalaw & Moyarta baronies].

⁵⁵ Cahermurphy in Kilmihil parish.

⁵⁶ He was the son of Domhnall (Daniel) of Dromellihy who died in 1594 and whose co-heirs were: Conor (eldest son and heir), Melaghlin and Caher (the last two recorded here in 1618), according to an

Mlaughlin McGorman of Dromelhy, gent: [...]

Teig mcMlaughlin McGorman, gent: other cartrons [...] qrs. of Cahermurrogh

Other important landholding segments of the Clann Ghormáin were settled further west of their estates at Cahermurphy and Dromellihy, such as at Cloghaun and Clohanes on the Atlantic coast. The geography of their settlement encompassing these lands resembled an arch-like pattern positioned across the ancient northern boundary of Corca Bhaiscinn, with a separate corridor of lands extending south from Cahermurphy castle to Tullycreen. This corridor was likely acquired much later to their grants across northern Corca Bhaiscinn, as can be evinced by their proximity to the nerve-centre of the Clann Mhathghamhna lordship at Clonderalaw. The arch of their lands was characterised by a diversity of landscapes, ranging from heather uplands and waste bog to thickets of woods and arable pasture and tillage.

It is not uncommon to find ecclesiastical and learned kindreds receiving grants on territorial boundary lands, in part because their neutral status and recognised immunities made them ideal tenants in areas subject to disputed claims.⁵⁷ While the Clann Ghormáin do not fall into the classification of either an ecclesiastical or learned kindred, their proprietorial presence on the margins of Corca Bhaiscinn's borderscape is rather conspicuous and may reflect an initial reflex by the Uí Bhriain to ensure that Dál gCais claims over the Corca Bhaiscinn dynasty prevailed.

Clann Ghormáin of Cloghaun (An Clochán)

The poem pays particular attention to one landholding unit of the Clann Ghormáin in Kilmacduane parish—the townland of Cloghaun (Clochán). This would suggest that Cloghaun was regarded as one of their principal estates. The poem speaks of Clochán as a fortified settlement where hospitality was generously dispensed. The poet provides detail on the type of dwelling-place at Clochán calling it a *brog* (*brugh*), which implies a mansion or high-status residence. A connection between the Clann Ghormáin and Cloghaun is suggested in other sources. According to the

inquisition held at Sixmilebridge in 1626. The division of lands upon the death of Domhnall is regarded as characteristic of the Gaelic system of collective landholding, otherwise termed 'gavelkind'. On Domhnall's death in 1594 his 3,622 Irish acres estate was subdivided between his three sons, who are listed in the 1626 inquisition. Evidence from Gaelic freeholders shows that the abandonment of the traditional system of landholding was not definitive or rapid and an examination of landholding in the 1640s indicates that collective landholding continued on the estates of many Gaelic freeholders, great and small, up to that point. See Patrick Nugent, 'The interface between the Gaelic clan system of Co. Clare and the emerging centralising English nation-state in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century', *Irish Geography* 40 (2007), 79–98, 89–90; Frost, *The history and topography*, 302. Also see RIA MS OS EI/10/44, 158–59.

⁵⁷ On boundary lands and their historical role as settlement places for groups in Irish society, see Pádraig Ó Riain, 'Boundary association in early Irish society', *Studia Celtica* 7 (1972), 12–29.

1581 *Inquisition Post Mortem* of Conor O'Brien, third earl of Thomond, a 'Dermity Mc Gorman' of 'Cloghan more' is given as one of the jurors empanelled on that inquisition.⁵⁸ Four years later, as part of the so-called 'Composition of Connacht', Cloghaun appears again, this time as a parcel of land, which the fourth earl of Thomond disputed as subject to the queen's 'composition levy', claiming that it was part of his 'household officers'.⁵⁹ This reference implies that Cloghaun enjoyed a special status where followers of O'Brien were settled.

Other landholding segments of Clann Ghormáin are to be found in the vicinity in 1615. According to a survey of the earl of Thomond's Ibrickan estates in 1615, the lands of 'Cnock na hoylly' (Knocknahila in Kilmurry-Ibrickan parish) were held by 'Cnonor Gormane' (Conchubhar Mac Gormáin) and that 'Balymcear' (Ballymackea) and its three quarters were held by 'Downe mc Teig Mc Gorman' and 'Mortagh Mc Gorman', who might have been the sons of Donn ruadh an Fhíona Mhic Ghormáin (d.1626).⁶⁰ These estates are situated near Cloghaun, with Knocknahila adjacent to present-day Cloghaun More and Cloghaun Beg in Kilmacduane parish.

Further evidence on the Clann Ghormáin settlement at Clochán is found in an unexpected source. In a travel journal compiled in 1800, the notable antiquary Chevalier Thomas O'Gorman enumerates a number of sites in west Clare that he visited, accompanied by Fr Conor McGorman, parish priest of Cross, and Anthony Nolan of Carrigaholt. Of his journey from Doonbeg to Kilmacdaune he writes:

[W]e halted at the lake of Clohanes or Doughmore and on the south side of the lake we discovered the remains or ruins of the house of Donal Mór Mac Gormáin na gCloc[h]án., who forfeited in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. After a little stay here we went to Mr O'Gorman of Maimo [*recte* Marino] where we spent the evening agreeably and next morning rode after breakfast to see the ruins of Scanlan McGormáin's house, in Irish *Áit tigh Sganláin*. It stood on a rising ground over a very deep river called Athnacórach [Annagreeragh, Áth na gCaorach], surrounded with a ditch 21 feet wide, which can be still had [*sic*], enclosing a Barton [*recte* bastion] or Davenport Ditch—into the outward ditch he could let in the water by raising the watergates—and thus completely fortify himself against his enemies [...] The house was large with offices and stabling and supposed to be of stone as the firing show. Here we went to see Leacht Dhonnaill, a heap of stones raised in memory of the last aforementioned [Donal Mór Mac Gormáin] his funeral procession

⁵⁸ Petworth House Archive (PHA) MS 1140.

⁵⁹ A. Martin Freeman (ed.), *The compasscion booke of Conought* (Dublin, 1936), 14. The reference refers to Cloghaun as 'Clogheane Dromordeloge consisting of 2 Quarters'. It is not clear what denomination 'Dromordeloge' refers to. The ending might be an anglicisation of Dubhloch (Doolough), but this is not certain.

⁶⁰ McNerney, '1615 survey of Ibrickan', 187. The 1615 survey reads next to their names 'the saide Downe sonnes', but it is unclear which Downe (*recte* Donn) is meant here.

having stopped here. This Dom[h]nal died in 1601 and was buried at Kilmurry Church—his family burial place.⁶¹

It is clear from these remarks that two dwellings of the Clann Ghormáin were situated in this westerly corner of Ibrickan. The first was at Cloghaun Lough, which has since been drained but stood in Carrowmore North to the west of Kilnacloghaun graveyard. In this area to the south of the lough, according to Chevalier O’Gorman, stood the dwelling place of Domhnall Mór Mac Gormáin na gClochán who features in the poem in v. 18. The second residence is more difficult to identify. O’Gorman’s description suggests that the residence called Áit tigh Sganlái (‘the place of Scanlái’s house’) was a ring-fort or earthen enclosure situated on or close to the Annagreeragh River, which runs east from Lough Donnell near Clohanes to Doo Lough. His description implies that it may have been located⁶² on that part of the river near to Killehaun graveyard, which would have been a short ride from Mr O’Gorman of ‘Maimo’ (*recte* Marino), which appears to have been the (now demolished) lodge house in Carrowmore North, and was situated between Lough Donnell and the now drained Cloghaun Lough marked on the Ordnance Survey map.⁶³ It is unclear who Scanlái Mac Gormáin was or, indeed, which generation he belonged to, the forename Scanlái being a favourite among the Clann Ghormáin. However, the historical record tells of a Scanlái son of Mathghamhain who was living in 1637 and in possession of Cahermurphy castle, who might be considered a plausible candidate.⁶⁴ On this basis it is possible that O’Gorman’s description of Áit tigh Sganlái was that of Cahermurphy castle, which is situated within enclosed earthworks above the Creegh river.

Military status

The military attributes of the Clann Ghormáin are important touchstones of the poem by Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha. The Clann Ghormáin probably fulfilled a variety of military functions in Thomond. The seventeenth-century historian and priest, Seathrún Céitinn, described them as ‘marshal of the hosts’ (‘a mharuscáil sluaigh’), indicating that they commanded the Uí Bhriain cavalry forces.⁶⁵ This

⁶¹ Tomás S. Ó Broin, ‘A journey through West Clare 1800 A.D.’, *The Other Clare* 5 (1981), 37–41, 39.

⁶² The location of this fortified site is not certain. An alternative view is that the description is of Cahermurphy castle near Kilmihil, which stands on an enclosed fortified site above the Creegh river. Some of the dimensions recorded by the Chevalier O’Gorman correspond to those taken by Westropp at Cahermurphy castle. It is possible that he confused Athnacórach with the Creegh river. See Westropp, ‘Cahermurphy castle’, 127.

⁶³ This suggestion was made by Declan Barron of Newpark House, Ennis. It also appears to be confirmed in an advert from 1805 in the *The Ennis Chronicle*, where it is recorded as Marino House owned by J. O’Gorman, Esq. with 25 acres of the ‘Demesne of Marino’, a minute’s walk from ‘the most excellent bathing shore and near two sporting lakes’. See *The Ennis Chronicle and Clare Advertiser*, vol. XXII (29 April 1805).

⁶⁴ Frost, *The history and topography*, 325. Also see RIA MS OS EI/11/2, 3.

⁶⁵ Dinneen (ed.), *Foras feasa ar Éirinn le Séathrún Céitinn*, vol. 3, 12–14.

resonates with references in the poem to mounted warfare in v. 64 ('a troop of horsemen') and v. 68 ('a house for horsemen'). Command of Ó Briain's cavalry forces was a mark of distinction, because mounted troops were considered an elite force typically composed of the Gaelic-Irish nobility.⁶⁶ In some cases they were a standing force attached to a ruler's household or his *lucht tighe* and settled on specially designated lands supported by fiscal and other privileges.⁶⁷

In the prevailing form of warfare in late medieval Gaelic lordships cavalry was used to protect the bulk of a lord's forces (comprised of *ceithern*, or kernes) as they withdrew with the 'prize' after conducting a *creach* or cattle raid. Galloglass troops supplemented this defensive capability and it is noteworthy that the Clann Suibhne (McSweeneys), the premiere galloglass lineage in Thomond, were significant landholders at Kilkee in west Clare, close to the Clann Ghormáin estates in Cahermurphy, Dromellihy and Tullycreeen.⁶⁸ We know from an assessment of the military strength of Irish lordships in c.1490 that the Uí Bhriain and the Meic Conmara of Thomond could field 200 fully equipped horsemen each and, in the case of the Uí Bhriain, two battalions of galloglass.⁶⁹ It may be remarked that the Clann Ghormáin, as the 'marshal of the hosts' to the Ó Briain, would have led this troop of horsemen and likely augmented it with their own followers.

A different perspective on the Clann Ghormáin military service is offered by the mid-fourteenth century saga-narrative of the dynastic wars in Thomond, the *Caithréim Thoirdealbhaigh* (henceforth *CT*).⁷⁰ In one section of the *CT*, Cúebha Mac Gormáin is described as 'his close door of protection ('chianchomla dlúthdorais') to King Toirdhealbhadh Ó Briain while he slept and, on the battlefield, the shield that covered him'.⁷¹ That the Clann Ghormáin fulfilled a bodyguard function to Ó Briain is not mentioned in the poem. But if this was the case, they were likely attached to the personal retinue or household of the Ó Briain. Steadfast military service ensured that the Clann Ghormáin remained in close proximity to the ruling Uí Bhriain well into sixteenth century, as is shown by the inclusion of a 'Captain MacGorman' in the list of witnesses to the 1551 will of Murchadh Ó Briain, first earl of Thomond.⁷² This implies continuity of their military role and its hereditary nature into the early modern period.

⁶⁶ Katharine Simms, *From kings to warlords* (Woodbridge, 2000), 124.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ See Luke McInerney, 'The galloglass of Thomond: *Gallóglagh Thuadhmhúhain*', *NMAJ* 55 (2015), 21–45, 33.

⁶⁹ Christopher Maginn and Steven G. Ellis, *The Tudor discovery of Ireland* (Dublin, 2015), 40, 83–84; Liam Price, 'Armed forces of the Irish chiefs in the early 16th century', *JRSAI* 2:2 (1932) 201–07, 204.

⁷⁰ Seán mac Ruaidhrí Mhic Craith, *Caithréim Thoirdealbhaigh: the triumphs of Turlough*, vols 1 & 2, S. H. O'Grady (ed. & trans.) (London, 1929).

⁷¹ Mhic Craith, *Caithréim*, vol. 1, 7 (and in *Caithréim*, vol. 2, 8). Toirdhealbhadh ruled Thomond in 1276–1306.

⁷² Brian Ó Dálaigh, 'A comparative study of the wills of the first and fourth Earls of Thomond', *NMAJ* 34 (1992), 48–63.

There is further significance to the reference in the *CT*. Mentions of Cúebha Mac Gormáin under key events in the year 1277 (and later his sons in 1317) stand as among the earliest record of the Clann Ghormáin in Thomond and appear particularly concerned with displaying the kindred's links to Ó Briain. This suggests, apart from its propaganda value, that the Clann Ghormáin exercised a military function in the form of personal retainers to Ó Briain from the late thirteenth century, akin to the role exercised by galloglass auxiliaries alluded to earlier. The *CT* records that the Uí Choimín (*anglice*, Comyn) kindred were invited to settle in the western districts of Thomond and who also undertook mercenary service for the Uí Bhriain.⁷³ This indicates that a number of lineages were settled in Thomond to provide military service during a period of political upheaval in Thomond. Westropp summarises the circumstances that occasioned the Clann Ghormáin settlement:

The Mac Gormans, bound by ties of deep gratitude, were in reality a Dalcassian garrison, being personally attached to the O'Brien chiefs, even in the most precarious period of their fortunes.⁷⁴

In this context the Clann Ghormáin settlement in the northern part of the large area of Corca Bhaiscinn acted as a buffer zone in an underpopulated area under threat of Anglo-Norman incursion.⁷⁵ Planting military-vassals in this area acted to secure a belt of fortified settlements from Kilmihil to Doonbeg in an area historically associated with a rival dynasty to the Dál gCais, the Corca Bhaiscinn. This dynasty was eventually subdued by the overlordship of a Dál gCais kindred, the Clann Mhathghamhna, who settled there prior to the end of the thirteenth century.⁷⁶

Geography had a significant influence on the settlement pattern of the Clann Ghormáin. To the east lay Uí Chormaic that served as borderland to the Uí Bhriain-controlled township of Ennis and their fortified dwelling nearby at Clonroad. Along that border lay the thicket of woods at Furror (Forbair, as recorded in the *CT*)

⁷³ Mhic Craith, *Caithréim*, vol. 1, 61, 69, 71, 78 (and in *Caithréim*, vol. 2, 57, 65, 70, 76).

⁷⁴ Westropp, 'Cahermurphy castle', 119.

⁷⁵ In a series of grants, King Henry III granted Tradraige in 1251 to Robert Musegros while the cantred of the Islands which included the Uí Bhriain royal dwelling place at Clonroad was granted to John FitzGeffry, and, whilst they may not have been actualised, their existence undermined Uí Bhriain claims to these territories. See Thomas J. Westropp, 'The Normans in Thomond, Part I: 1275–1287', *JRS* 1:4 (1890), 284–93, 286–87. John FitzGeffry held the farm of the cantred of 'Insula in Twom' (Islands Barony in Thomond) still paying an annual duty of 43 marks up to 1291, proof enough that Anglo-Norman ambition—theoretically—extended to the border of Ibrickan. UK National Archives, MS TNA E 101/231/27 [Receipt roll of rents, Michaelmas 1290 to Michaelmas 1291: Nicholas de Clere, Treasurer of Ireland].

⁷⁶ The Clann Mhathghamhna are referenced under the years 1277 and 1278 in the *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh* as the chief lineage in Corca Bhaiscinn. However, it is not until the mid-fourteenth century when their political dominance receives attention in the annals, a situation that continues unabated into the following century. See Mhic Craith, *Caithréim*, vol. 1, 6, 10 (and in *Caithréim*, vol. 2, 7, 11); see also *AFM*, *sub annis* 1359, 1383, 1426, 1432, 1460, 1488.

which, in the thirteenth century, served as a refuge for armies and fugitives.⁷⁷ To the north lay the territory of Cinéal Fhearmhaic, which was ensconced in bog-land and wild woods known unfavourably as *Bréantír* (foul-land). Thus, their settlements in northern Corca Bhaiscinn and west into Ibrickan were remarkably sequestered from competition with the Clann Mhathghamhna, who dominated the riverine parishes of southern Corca Bhaiscinn. This location also removed the Clann Ghormáin from the emerging sphere of Uí Bhriain influence that emanated from the lands around the Fergus where Ennis stood and which, by the sixteenth century, had extended into Ibrickan itself. This demarcation served to largely contain the Clann Ghormáin within the borders of Ibrickan and northern Corca Bhaiscinn. Despite the relatively meagre pasture and tillage land available to Clann Ghormáin, their long association as military vassals to the Uí Bhriain must have conferred benefits in terms of emoluments and other privileges.

There is evidence to suggest that the close connection between the Clann Ghormáin and the Uí Bhriain of Thomond was put onto a formal footing in the late medieval period. An annalistic reference in 1494 describes Domhnall Mac Gormáin as ‘O’Brien’s servant of trust’ (‘fear gradha’), as well as being the wealthiest man in Ireland in head of cattle.⁷⁸ The Clann Ghormáin possibly occupied this position on a hereditary basis, as well as fulfilling the function of standard-bearer to Ó Briain.⁷⁹ Their standing within the household of Ó Briain is demonstrated in the aftermath of the submission of Brian Ó Briain, ruler of Thomond, to King Richard II, on 1 March 1395. On his return to Thomond, Brian Ó Briain gathered his leading vassals at the inauguration place of Magh Adhar near Quin to submit to the earl of Nottingham. Among the roll call of his vassals were ‘Coueva Mac-Gorman of Hybrekane and his son Melachlin Mac Gorman’, as well as other prominent lineages such as the Meic Conmara (McNamaras), Meic Mhathghamhna (McMahons) and the Uí Dheaghaidh.⁸⁰ These individuals are positioned in close proximity to the Uí Bhriain leadership of Thomond.

Other expulsions

Expulsions and voluntary relocations of lineages are well attested in Gaelic Ireland. This was especially the case with the peripatetic classes such as the poets and historians whose professional standing meant that they often journeyed to aristocratic courts in the search of patronage. In late medieval Thomond evidence exists for a number of learned kindreds who settled there from elsewhere. For example, a branch of the Westmeath Uí Dhálaigh poets settled at Finavarra in the north Burren

⁷⁷ Mhic Craith, *Caithréim*, vol. 1, 11–12 (and in *Caithréim*, vol. 2, 12–13). The author calls these woods ‘maothcoilltib Forbair’ (‘luxuriant woods’) in Mhic Craith, *Caithréim*, vol. 1, 11 (and in *Caithréim*, Vol. 2, 12).

⁷⁸ *AFM*, sub anno 1484.

⁷⁹ Ronan, ‘MacGormans of Ui Brecane’, 7.

⁸⁰ Myles Ronan, ‘Some mediaeval documents’, *JRSAI* 7:2 (1937), 229–41; 229–30.

during the fourteenth century. The annals attest that they were well established by the early decades of the fifteenth century and, in contrast to many poetic lineages, literary descriptions of their bardic school exist.⁸¹ One branch of the Uí Dhálaigh poets relocated to Scotland in the thirteenth century, where they became attached to the Clann Dòmhnail, Lords of the Isles, and provided a line of poets down to the eighteenth century.⁸²

Similarly, a branch of the Connacht chroniclers, the Uí Mhaoilchonaire, settled in the Meic Conmara lordship of Clann Chuiléin in the sixteenth century. They established a school of *seanchas* at Ardkyle near Bunratty, and they served as councillors and officials to Donnchadh Ó Briain, fourth earl of Thomond (d.1624).⁸³ A number of clerical families also settled in Thomond, not least the Meic Catháin, who apparently took up lands on the estate of Corcomroe Abbey in the Burren in the fourteenth century, but whose members are best known as *comharbaí* of Inis Cathaigh on the Shannon, where they had custody of the *tearmann* lands of Saint Senán. The Meic Catháin are believed to have had their origins in Ulster, where they were associated with Dungiven Augustinian priory.⁸⁴

Relocation to Thomond was not limited to the learned or clerical kindreds. By the sixteenth century a branch of the powerful Clann Shuibhne were providing galloglass to their Uí Bhriain overlords and they held the castle of Kilkee by right of being Ó Briain's 'constable of galloglass'.⁸⁵ Set against this context, the expulsion of the Clann Ghormáin from their original patrimony in Leinster and subsequent settlement in the west of Thomond was not an extraordinary occurrence, although the entrenched duration of their hereditary tenure in Ibrickan is noteworthy.

Concluding remarks

The poem by Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha sheds light on the traditions associated with the expulsion of the Clann Ghormáin from Leinster and their arrival in Thomond. As a largely genealogical composition laden with *seanchas*, it provides information on the ancestry of the Clann Ghormáin. By cross-referencing the poem's content with contemporary source material, it is evident that the Clann Ghormáin

⁸¹ *AFM, sub annis* 1404, 1415, 1420, 1514. Also see Eoghan Ó Neachtain, 'Tochmarc Fhearbhlaide', *Ériu* 4 (1908), 47–67.

⁸² These poets were the Mac Mhuireadhach (*anglice* MacVuirich) who became conspicuous in the literary history of Gaelic Scotland. On their migration from Ireland to Scotland in the thirteenth century, see Brian Ó Cuív, 'Eachtra Mhuireadhaigh Í Dhálaigh', *Studia Hibernica* 1 (1961), 56–69.

⁸³ Brian Ó Dálaigh, 'The Uí Mhaoilchonaire of Thomond', *Studia Hibernica* 35 (2008–09), 45–68.

⁸⁴ On the ecclesiastical families settled in and around Inis Cathaigh, see Luke McNerney, 'Clerical lineages of Inis Cathaigh', *The Other Clare* 37 (2013), 57–64; and Luke McNerney, 'Priors of Inis Cathaigh: the Gilsenan or Ó Giolla Sheanáin family of Kiltelin', *NMAJ* 59 (2019), 31–48.

⁸⁵ McNerney, 'The galloglass of Thomond', 33–34. The settlement of the Clann Suibhne in Thomond pre-dates the mid-sixteenth century, but by how much has not been established. They held Kilkee towerhouse in 1570. See Breen, 'A 1570 list of castles', 130–38, 133. Also see *AFM, sub anno* 1559 (this is earliest reference to the office 'Constable of Thomond').

carved out sizeable estates in Ibrickan and established themselves in service to the ruling Uí Bhriain. The many poetic references to warriors and warfare reflect the position of the Clann Ghormáin as marshals of cavalry and bodyguards attached to the Ó Briain household. But wider analysis suggests that they might have fulfilled a variety of different military functions from as early as the thirteenth century.

The poem depicts the Clann Ghormáin being close to the centre of political power in Thomond—a proximity evinced in other source material. Despite their ejection from Leinster in the twelfth century, the Clann Ghormáin proved to be adaptive outlanders in Thomond and enjoyed prominence and prosperity into the seventeenth century. Thanks to the poem by *ollamh* Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha and in no little way to the writings of that renowned Clann Ghormáin scion of the eighteenth century—Chevalier Thomas O’Gorman—evidence has survived that sheds light on the settlement and resettlement of this noteworthy Gaelic lineage in late medieval Ireland.

Appendix 1

Poem on the expulsion of the Clann Ghormáin by Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha

*Deoraidh sonna sliocht Chathaoir*⁸⁶

1 Deóraidh sonna sliocht Chathaoir,
lucht na siodhbhrogh sochlachaoín;
fóir liag na leómhain cheannsa,
deóraidh iad san oirear-sa.

2 Deoraidh sonna an chaor churadh
fá shíol cCais chláir fhionnMhúmhan,
fá mbiodh túr bailbhinnsi Breagh,
na Laighnigh-si ó mhúr Maisdean.⁸⁷

3 Aithne dhamh go ttárla ar ttús
sliocht Cathaoir, cuid dá n-íomthús;
fóir deaghfhear gan díoth tuirsi,
críoch Laighean fán laochraidh-si.

4 Ar tteacht don tromhdáimh-si a-nall,
roighne laoch chríche Cualann,
fonn snasbhog ór dheacra dul,
do ghabhsad rompa rugadh.⁸⁸

5 Mar sin dáibh ag díol a bhfonn
go ttáinigh laochradh Lochlonn,
loingeas greadh slaitleabhar seang,
tar lear d’aittreabhadh Éireann.

6 Críoch a n-imirce ón tír thoir:
do ghabh drong díobh a nUtaibh
is drong eile a n-Uaithnibh Cliach,
fán ndoire shuaitnigh sheinliath.

⁸⁶ This text is based on that published in McManus and Ó Raghallaigh (eds), *A bardic miscellany*, 212–14, and included in the *Bardic poetry database*. As previously noted, the source is TCD MS H.6.7 (1411). Many of the amendments suggested by the transcribers, and others suggested by the *Bardic poetry database* editor, are adopted here, with some further amendments proposed by the translator. Where the amendments involve only one or two letters, they are made silently; more extensive changes are footnoted.

⁸⁷ Manuscript, line 3: *fá mbiodh tnúith bailbhinnsi Breagh*, where *tnúith* and *mhúr* in the following line do not perfectly rhyme.

⁸⁸ *rompa* does not properly rhyme.

Cathaoir's Descendants Are Strangers Here
(Translation by John Minahane)

1 Cathaoir's descendants are strangers here
(well-famed folk with peaceful houses,
these kindly lions are a help for troubles) –
they are strangers in this territory.

2 Strangers here are the fiery heroes
(under Cas's race on the pleasant plain of Munster)
who once had pasture-land in Brega's murmuring
isle,
Leinstermen from the fortress of Maistiu.¹⁰⁵

3 A period of the history of Cathaoir's race,
in earlier times, is known to me;
Leinster's territory was under these heroes' rule
(a body of fine men without sad misfortune!).

4 When this exacting company came over here,
the most select of the Cuala region's heroes,
the smooth and shining land (so hard to leave)
that they had possessed was seized from them.¹⁰⁶

5 They had been thus, enjoying their lands,
till the champions from Lochlann came,
warriors in a fleet of smooth-ribbed slender ships,
over the sea to settle in Ireland.¹⁰⁷

6 Finally, when they moved from the eastern land,
one body of Leinstermen went into Ulster
and another body into Owneybeg,
round the famed wood of Derryleigh.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Cas's race = the Dál gCais of North Munster. Brega = Meath / Louth / North Dublin but used here to represent Ireland. Maistiu = Mullaghmast, Co. Kildare.

¹⁰⁶ Line 1, 'exacting company', a humorous note. The word 'tromdhámh' (see also v. 67) always evokes *Tromdámh Guaire*, where the chief poets Dallán and Senchán travel with enormous retinues and make the most outrageous demands, threatening to ruin any king who gives them hospitality. See Maud Joynt (ed.), *Tromdámh Guaire* (Dublin, 1941). Cuala = Wicklow.

¹⁰⁷ These invaders, as soon becomes clear (cf. v. 10), are the English/Anglo-Normans, despite being poetically called Norse.

¹⁰⁸ Uaithne Cliu = Owneybeg, in Limerick. Doire Sheanliath = possibly Derryleigh in Co. Tipperary.

7 Do líonsad Uaithne an fhóid ghil,
clann Ghormáin iad an uair-sin;
ógbhaidh Chearma ag soighidh siar,
dealbha is do ghroidhibh Gailian.

8 As an ttír-sin le cloinn Chais
teagaid so ar seachna a ndúthchais,
críoch ó mBóirche is ó mBuighe,
ní fríth coibhche a ecosmhuile.

9 Do thoghsad ar tteacht a-nall
Uí Bhreacáin, fraochdha an fearann;
fonn dorcha is deighshén 'na dhiaigh,
fá ceinél bhfromhtha bhfinnBhriain.

10 A-tá an dream-so is bibhtheó bladh
le ré cheithre chéad bliaghan
ag riar dámh, ag tógbháil truagh,
ós an cclár bhfódbháin bhfionnfhuar.

11 Ní chuala ón ló sin a-lé
clann Ghormáin na ngreadh síthe
gan ursa theann deighfhir díobh,
dream lér dheiligh gach doighníomh.

12 Mairidh deighfher díobh a-niogh
'gár fágghadh fonn a shinnsear,
longphort congmhála cliar ndoirbh,
fán bhfial gormánda ghreadhshoirbh.

13 Fear nách téid troig lé fánaidh,
ceannuighe an fhoinn Bhreacánaigh,
oighre Mhaoil armghloin Eachluinn,
ó Charmoin chaoil chaisealchuirr.

14 Fear nách iomdha a aithghin d'fíor,
an síol tTáil-si léar tréigeadh
fonn síodhfhoirfe sean saingeal,
fear síodhaighthe saobhchaingean.

15 Domhnall an deighfhear grádha,
fear fraochdha feadh teagmhála,
ag sin fear caomhna a chinidh,
fear as aobhdha a n-óiltighibh.

16 Fear 'ga bhfuil ceannas chloinn Táil
is dúil oiníg fhear Gabhráin;
fear nár chuir comhardha ar chradh,
'sá bhfuil solabhra seanchadh.

17 Fear is ionnamhail d'athaoil
chuirfeas mé go mórChathaoir;
iongnadh a mhéad do mheabhair
tré fhioghradh ghéag geinealaigh.⁸⁹

18 Dómhnall fírbheach na bhfer ghráidh
mac Maoileachluinn Clann Ghormáin
mheic Maoil Eachluinn daithghil duibh
chaitmhhigh shaoir neamhchruinn náirigh.

19 Meic Duinn meic Maoil mhaith Eachluinn
meic Con Eabha an earragthroim,
ceann sleachta Dhiarmada is Duinn,
ealta is grianbhoga gormfhuinn.

20 Dob é ceap na bhfear bhfearrdha
Cú Eabha an airm loinneardha,
fód seangshlat is ceann críoch⁹⁰
meic Seagháin deaghmhac Dáibhíodh.

⁸⁹ 'athaoil' = evoking athshaoil, 'new life', 'reincarnation'.

⁹⁰ The third line is minus a syllable and does not cohere metrically with the fourth.

7 They peopled bright Owney,
they were called Clann Ghormáin then:
the young men of Cearma, advancing westwards,
likenesses of Gailian warriors.¹⁰⁹

8 Leaving that land, to the race of Cas
they came, renouncing their patrimony
(the territories of Uí Bhóirche and Uí Bhuíghe –
but no settlement was found as good as those).¹¹⁰

9 On arriving here, they chose
Ibrickan¹¹¹, heath-covered,
gloomy land, but prospering
under the well-proved race of the noble Uí Bhriain.

10 This group, of imperishable fame,
has been for four hundred years
supporting artists and sustaining the poor
over the bright and pleasantly cool plain.

11 I have not heard from that day onwards
that Clann Ghormáin of the disciplined fighters
were without a good strong man
(a group that no evil deed was ever linked with!).

12 They have a good man living now
who has inherited his forebears' land,
a fortress¹¹² that supports the 'sullen artists',
under the (Mac)Gormáins' generous, cheerful leader!

13 A man who never puts a foot astray,
the merchant of the land of Ibrickan,
the heir of bright-bladed Mael Seachlainn
from the compact round cashel of Cearma.

14 A man who does not have many equals
in this land of Tál¹¹³ (for which a calm and perfect
land of old churches was abandoned),
a man who pacifies foolish disputes.

15 Domhnall, the good caretaker,
a furious man in time of conflict:
he is the man who protects his kindred,
a pleasant man in the alehouses.

16 A man who has headship from Clann Táil¹¹⁴
and the craving for honour of Gowran men;¹¹⁵
a man who has set no value on wealth
and converses pleasantly with historians.

17 A man who is as like as a new coat of lime:
I will take him back to the great Cathaoir;¹¹⁶
wonderful how much can be remembered
through the branching figures of genealogy!

18 Dómhnall, a true bee among men of rank,
son of Maoleachluinn son of Gormán¹¹⁷
son of dark-haired bright-famed Maol Eachluinn
the warlike, noble, not stingy, of good repute.

19 Son of Donn son of good Maol Eachluinn
son of Cú Eabha the heavily armed,
chief of the race of Diarmaid and Donn,
a flock that had the sunniest, mild, fine land.

20 Cú Eabha of the shining blade
was the forebear of those virile men
(whom slender branches grew from, a chief of
territories [?]),
son of Seaghán son of Dáibhíodh.

¹⁰⁹ Gailian, Gaileoin = archaic name of the Laigin, the Leinstermen.

¹¹⁰ Race of Cas = Dál gCais, in modern Clare. Uí Bhóirche/Uí Bhairrche = in Kildare. Uí Bhuidhe = around Leighlin, Carlow.

¹¹¹ Uí Bhreacáin = the barony of Ibrickan in west Clare.

¹¹² The term *longphort* has a variety of meanings, including a fortified enclosure, a camp or stronghold.

¹¹³ (Tál) Cas was the ancestor of the Dál gCais, the kin-group to whom the Uí Bhriain belonged.

¹¹⁴ This implies that the Clann Ghormáin received their rights in Thomond under the chief family of Clann Táil, the Uí Bhriain.

¹¹⁵ Gabhrán = Gowran, Co. Kilkenny.

¹¹⁶ This was Cathaoir Mór, a high king of Ireland who lived in the second century and about whom there is much legendary lore. He was believed to have been an ancestor-figure of the Laigin (Leinsterman) and the progenitor of the Clann Ghormáin.

¹¹⁷ Some pedigrees omit Gormán.

21 Meic Con Eabha an earraigh throim,
mac Con Mheadha mac Dómhnaill
mac Conchubhair, seagh gach slóigh,
fear go tromchulaidh ttionóil.

22 Meic Con Mheadha meic Murchaidh
meic Eithigheirn fhionnthalchaigh
meic Sgannláin an chómhraídh chaoimh,
Clann Ghormáin ághnár ionntaoibh.

23 Mac Muircheartaig meic Donnchaidh
meic Aodha an chuilg chómhartaigh,
meic Treasa meic Duachdhuibh duinn,
mar luathChoin chleasa Culainn.

24 Meic Gosáin nár chongaibh cradh,
meic Dúnagáin duinn Almhan,
meic Ghormáin ór chin an chlann,
fir do chreit collbháin Cualann.

25 Meic Eachach dárab sliocht so,
meic Caibhdean meic Maoil Úmha
meic Suibhne na sleagh mbarr ghlan
fear glan suirghe na seangbhan.⁹¹

26 Meic Dómhnaill chaoimhmac Cormaic
mac Diarmada duasoirdhreic;
mac Eochaidh Ghuinigh greadhnaigh,
an mhuirir dá mhínleanmhuin.

27 Eochaidh Guineach um ghníomh ga,
mac Aongusa meic Earca
meic Bracháin bhuaidhaig meic Féig,
do ba lánoirdheirc laoiachmhéid.⁹²

28 Meic Dáire barraigh bláith bhinn,
meic Cathaoir mhóir meic Feidhlim:
iul glan a-támaoid do thriall,
triúr do ráinig magh Mhaicniadh.

29 Ríoghra Laighean na learg mbreac,
Cathaoir mór dob é a n-aoincheap;
fear ngruaidh ngil is nglac ttana,
uaidh do chin mac Muirchadha.

30 Géag shaor ór sioladh Branaigh
's na laoiach tromdha Thuathailigh
's Uí Fhailge na bhfonn ttoraidh,
fonn fá daingne ar Dhanaraibh.

31 Do chloinn Chathaoir nár char luach
Ó Fearghuil, flaith na bhfortuath;
dursan claondáil Gall 'na ngar,
Í Fhaoláin is clann Cholgan,

32 Uí Dhíomasaidh is Uí Dhuinn;
uaidh is Uí Bhairrce an bhogfhuinn,
ór chin an chlann-sin Ghormáin,
fir nár thaibhsigh tromchongháir.

33 Fillfe mé, ní meanma shlim,
ar Chathaoir fionnmac Fheidhlim,
mac do Chormac gealta gaoth,
ealta ndonnbhrat fá deaghlaoch.

⁹¹ The word 'mbarr' does not rhyme properly with the next line, and the word divisions are not natural.

⁹² The word 'lánoirdheirc' does not rhyme with the previous line.

21 Son of Cú Eabha the heavy-weaponed,
son of Cú Meadha son of Dómhnull
son of Conchubhar, strength of every army,
a man with a heavily equipped muster.

22 Son of Cú Mheadha son of Murchadh
son of Eithighern of the bright hill
son of Sgannlán, who conversed so pleasantly,
son of Gormán, proud warrior, the trusted.

23 Son of Muircheartach son of Donnchadh
son of Aodh of the well-noted sword
son of Treas son of noble Duachdhubh
(who was like the quick and ingenious Cú Chulainn).

24 Son of Gosán who did not hoard wealth,
son of brown-haired Dúnagán of Allen
son of Gormán, from whom the clan begins,
men of the stock of white-hazelled Cuala.¹¹⁸

25 Son of Eachaidh, from whom this kindred comes,
son of Caibhdean son of Maol Úmha
son of Suibhne of the clean-topped spears,
a man who honourably wooed graceful women.

26 Son of Dómhnull mild-mannered son of Cormac
son of Diarmaid renowned for his gifts
son of hard-striking Eochaidh Guineach –
thus we follow the family smoothly.

27 Eochaidh Guineach, wielder of the spear,
son of Aongus son of Earc
son of Brachán the victorious son of Féag,
a truly illustrious man with a hero's stature.

28 Son of Dáire Barrach, the elegant, sweet,
son of Cathaoir Mór son of Feidhlim:
we are on the path of pure knowledge;
those were three who arrived in Macniadh's plain.

29 The royalty of Leinster's varied slopes,
Cathaoir Mór was supreme in it;
a man of bright cheeks and slender hands,
Mac Murchadha¹¹⁹ is derived from him.

30 Noble stock from which the Branaigh¹²⁰ sprang
and those weighty champions the Uí Thuathail,¹²¹
and Uí Fháilge¹²² of the fertile fields,
a land that held firm against Foreigners.

31 Of the family of Cathaoir who did not love money
is Ó Fearghuil¹²³, prince of over-kingdoms;
pity the evil host of English who came near
to Ó Faoláin and Clann Cholgan,

32 Uí Dhíomasaidh and Uí Dhuinn;
from him is Uí Bhairrche, with their pleasant land,
whom that family of Gormán sprang from,
men who had not mere dreams of the din of battle.¹²⁴

33 I will return – it is no lapse of mind –
to Cathaoir, noble son of Feidhlim
son of Cormac the bright-minded and wise,
a family of fine fighters in noble mantles.

¹¹⁸ Almhan = Allen, Co. Kildare.

¹¹⁹ This is the Mac Murchadha lineage who held the kingship of Leinster.

¹²⁰ The O'Byrnes.

¹²¹ The O'Toole lineage, who were once powerful in Wicklow.

¹²² The kingdom of Uí Fháilge encompassed parts of Offaly, Kildare, Laois. The ruling lineage was the O'Connor Faly. On the O'Conors and other midland families see F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, *The Midland Septs and the Pale* (Dublin, 1908).

¹²³ The O'Farrell lineage, who were established in the Irish midlands.

¹²⁴ Line 1: The kindreds of O'Dempsey and O'Dunne. Line 2: verses 31 and 32 are taken as continuous in sense, so that Cathaoir Mór is still being referred to here.

34 Meic Nia Chorb is í Chon Chorb
leanfa mé suas an seanlorg,
mac Conchubhair bhúidh boggluair
confadhaig n-úir n-abhradhruaidh.⁹³

35 Meic Finn deagmhac Rosa Ruaidh
meic Fheargus' fairrge fleadhfhuaire
meic Nuadha Neacht séaghdha sean
mac Séadna do chleacht cóigeadh.⁹⁴

36 Meic Luidheach laochfhinn laoch Náis,
mac Breasail Bhric go mbiathghnáis,
mac Fiacha foibhric gaoith grinn,
mac an laoch oirdheirc Oilill.

37 Meic Fearadhaig nár bhris bóid,
mac Nuadha Fhinn mac Allóid
mac Airt náir mac Modha Airt:
cairt chláir Logha 'na laochchairt.⁹⁵

38 Meic Criomhthain chosgraig gan cheilg
meic Fearadhaig Fhinn airmdeheirg
eochar ghéibhinn Teamhra an triúir
meic Féidhlim fherrdha Fhoirtriúin.

39 Feidhlim Foirtriúin go bhfoghail,
mac Feargusa foirteamhuil,
meic Breasail chaomhbrais churadh,
fá mac Aonguis Ollamhun.

40 Mac Oilioll Bhracháin shaoir sheing
mac Labhraidh Loinnsigh luaidheim;
Oilioll Áine a athair sin,
ba chathair báire ar Bhreaghaibh.⁹⁶

41 Meic Laoghaire Luirc, fá mac
d'Íúghoine Mhór na míonghlac,
meic Eochaidh bhuaadhaigh bhladhmhair,
gan uamhain re n-ollamhnaibh.

42 A-nois buailid fá chloinn cCuinn
clann Ghormáin is clann Tuairim:
ag Iúghoine is ceann dá ccraoibh;
gearr go crúsnoidhe a ccómhghaoil.⁹⁷

43 Don tsíol cCuinn chéadna is congaibh
is sliocht Dá Thí tréanbhládhagh,
sliocht na cColla is clanna Néill,
dronga nár chrannda caithréim.

44 Don tsíol cCuinn-si clann nDálaigh,
fine Ruairc is Raghallaidh,
gabhla fulaing ó bhfuil frais,
go Rinn Umhaill is Iorrais.

45 Don tsíol cCuinn-si is cómhghaol dáibh
ríoghra Mídhe clann Cholmáin
is sliocht Aodha saoir Sláine,
dá chraoibh ghaoldha ghlanáille.

46 Don tsíol cCuinn-si nár chlaon smacht
síol cConchubhair cláir Connacht,
luath choinnmhe Chruachan Meadhbha,
foirne uallcha innfheadhma.⁹⁸

47 Ar shliocht Ughaine, is iúil glan,
a-tá an rí is ríoghroidh Alban;
brath a-nonn uaim-si orthaibh,
drong as uaisle d'Albanachaibh.

⁹³ Manuscript, line 4: 'confadhaig n-úir n-abhrashuaidh', the final word being unmetrical; the *Bardic poetry database* editor suggests 'abhradhruaidh'.

⁹⁴ Manuscript, line 2: 'meic Feargusa fairrge fleadhfhuaire', with a syllable extra.

⁹⁵ The manuscript reads: 'cáin chláir Logha 'na laochchairt'.

⁹⁶ Manuscript: 'do chuir báire ar Bhreaghaibh', syllable missing.

⁹⁷ 'Crúsnoidhe' is unmetrical ('Crobhaidhe', 'branches?').

⁹⁸ Lines 3 and 4 are close but not quite in terms of rhyming.

34 Along the old track I will follow
Meic Nia Chorb and Uí Chon Chorb
son of Conchubhar the gracious and soft-voiced,
warlike, generous, with a druid's brows.

35 Son of Finn the good son of Ros Ruadh
son of cold-feasting Feargus of the sea,
son of Nuadha Neacht,¹²⁵ accomplished old man,
son of Séadna who controlled a province.

36 Son of Lúidhe the champion, of the heroes of Naas,
son of Breasal Breac with lifelong discipline;
son of Fiacha the subtle and keen,
son of the renowned champion Oileall.

37 Son of Fearadhach who broke no vow,
son of Nuadha Finn son of Allód
son of noble Art son of Modh Airt –
Lugh's plain is by charter reserved for heroes! [?]

38 Son of bellicose Criomhthan who had no guile,
son of Fearadhach Finn whose weapons were red,
key to the fortress of Tara of the Three,
son of manly Feidhlim of Foirtriún.

39 Feidhlim of Foirtriún with his plunder,
son of brave Feargus
son of Breasal, mild and mighty, sprung of
champions,
who was son of Aonghus Ollamhain.

40 Son of Oileall Bracháin noble and graceful,
son of Labhradh Loinnsigh¹²⁶ I mention now;
Oilioll Áine was his father,
who was a hero [?] of contests in Brega.

41 Son of Laoghaire Lurc who was son
of sleek-handed Iúghoine Mór
son of Eochaidh the victorious and famous,
who had no fear of master-poets.

42 And now Clann Ghormáin and Clann Tuairim
meet at Clann Chuinn:
Iúghoine is head of the two branches,
I will soon establish [?] their affinity.

43 Holding fast to that same descent from Conn
is the kindred of mighty-famed Dá Thi,
the Collas' kin, and Clanna Néill,
groups whose battle-fame has not run dry.

44 Of Conn's progeny is Clann Dálaigh,
the kindred of Ruarc and Raghallach,
supporting branches with abundant fruit,
to Rinn Umhaill and Iorras.¹²⁷

45 By Conn's progeny they are related
to the royal stock of Meath, the Clann Cholmáin¹²⁸
and the lineage of noble Aodh Sláine,
two related branches of great beauty.

46 Of the progeny of Conn who did not rule falsely
are the Uí Chonchubhair of the plain of Connacht,
who have prompt billeting in Medhbh's Cruacha,¹²⁹
proud and effective battle-teams.

47 Of Ughaine's progeny (this is genuine knowledge)
are the king and royalty of Scotland;
my vision reaches as far as them,
the most noble body of Scots.

¹²⁵ Nuadha Neacht, son of Séadna Sithbhaic, was a high king of Ireland who was slain at the battle of Cliach.

¹²⁶ He was a high king of Ireland and an ancestor of the Laigin, who gave their name to the province of Leinster.

¹²⁷ 'Rinn Umhaill': somewhere in the 'barony of Burrishole, Co. Mayo'. See Edmund Ignatius Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum, Locorum et tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae; An index, with identifications, to the Gaelic names of places and tribes* (Dublin, 1910). 'Iorras' = Erris.

¹²⁸ The Clann Cholmáin were a leading dynasty who claimed links to Colmán Már mac Diarmato. Part of the Southern Uí Néill, the Clann Cholmáin were the kings of Mide (Meath).

¹²⁹ Medhbh anglicised as Maeve, was the queen of Connacht in the Ulster Cycle of mythology. Her royal residence was Cruachan (now Rathcroghan, Co. Roscommon) and she is perceived as an important figure in Irish legendary history.

48 Ar áirimh mé Mórdha a ndáil
 's na fir chródha clann Ghormáin,
 dream do threibh na saorbhrogh séimh:
 dá threibh a haonbhun iad-séin.

49 Ughaine mac Eachaigh áird
 mac Duach laghdhraigh luinn lonnghairg,
 mac Fiacha tolgraigh nár shlím,
 do ordaigh fhiacha ar Éirinn.

50 Meic Muireadhaig bholgraigh bhuaín
 meic Síomóin Bhric, fear feadhmcruaidh,
 meic Aodháin Ghlais fá glas snuadh,
 bras gach aondáil 'gá iomluadh.

51 Meic Nuadhad Finn fáil fearrdha
 mElc Giallachad guirt goirmTheamhra,
 mar doineanna do dháil maoin,
 meic Oilealla áin fholtchaoin.

52 Meic Síorna mac Déin meic Maoin
 meic Roitheachta áird fholtchaoin
 meic Aonguis Ollmhucaidh mhir,
 gan clódh focal re filidh.⁹⁹

53 Meic Fiachaidh Labhrainne ón loch,
 meic Smiorghuill meic Seanbhoth¹⁰⁰
 meic Tighearmhais do thuill toirm
 le loing imealghlais aghghairbh.

54 Mac Follaigh meic Eithrial óig
 meic Irial fáidh go bhfialmhóid
 (níor ghné dearóil gleic na bhfer),
 meic Éireamhóin meic Mileadh.

55 Cúig glúine is tríocha tuillmheach
 ó Éireamhón fhionnbhruidhneach
 dul tar gábhadh is gearr uaim,
 go hÁdhamh ceann na ccaomhshluadh.

56 Mar sin téid meic Maoil Eachloinn
 go ceap cháich, cuaird neamhmhearbhtuill,
 Adhamh aosda an chuain chlannaigh,
 uaigh as taosda thángamuir.

57 Fillfead don dul-so ar Dhómhnall,
 gnúis chaoin, aghaidh abhramhall,
 troig chobhsaidh go ccladh bhfeadhma,
 lámh chosnaimh na caithbheárna.

58 Mac Maoil Eachluinn an airm naoi,
 taobh solus ón sia neamhghnaoi,
 rosg sochair glan mur ghormshreabh
 (dochair car re comhordaibh).¹⁰¹

59 Déad rionnghlan mur fhrais néamhonn,
 gruadh sholusda shaoirghnédhonn,
 nár chréachtuigh ainimh ná aoir,
 ós realtuin d'aighidh fhochoail.¹⁰²

60 Tárta iosdag caolslat ccorr
 san bhfonn dúthchais ag Dómhnall,
 ó nách filltear dáimh doiligh,
 finntreabh go bhfáil bhfioroinigh.

61 Brogh mar bhuíghin Dá Choga
 ag ua Dhuinn is Dhiarmoda,
 le haghaidh aoidheadh do riar,
 saoirfher do ghabhail Gailian.

⁹⁹ Line 4 manuscript: 'gan clódh bfocal re bhfillidh', unmetrical. ('Gan feallfhocail', 'who did not speak false/traacherous words').

¹⁰⁰ Line 2, syllable missing, possibly an adjective, e.g. 'Mac Smiorghuill shaoir'.

¹⁰¹ Manuscript: 'dóchus cár re caomhordaib'.

¹⁰² Manuscript, line 3: 'nár chréachtuigh ainmhí ná aoir'.

48 Together I count the assembled Uí Mhórdha¹³⁰
and the brave men of Clann Ghormáin,
a group that dwelt in noble mansions;
those are two lineages with one foundation.

49 Ughaine son of high Eachaidh
son of Dáibhí the gift-giving, brave and fierce in
fight,
son of forceful Fiach who was not evasive,
who ordered levies imposed on Ireland.

50 Son of Muireadhach the sturdy and persevering,
son of Siomón Breac, a man effective in hard fights,
son of Aodhán Glas whose countenance was bright:
every assembly was prompt to praise him.

51 Son of Nuadha Finn, manly against opponents,
son of Giallcha of splendid Tara's field;
like a cloudburst was the wealth he scattered round,
son of Oileall the bright and gentle-haired.

52 Son of Siorna son of Dian son of Maon
son of Roitheacht, tall with handsome hair,
son of fierce Aongus Ollmhucadh
who had no [false?] words for a poet.

53 Son of Fiacha Labhrainne from the lake,
son of Smiorghull son of Seanbhoth
son of Tighearmhas, who won fame
with a grey-bordered ship for a hard campaign.

54 Son of Follach son of Eithrial Óg
son of Irial the prophetic, vowed to generosity
(no wretched sight were those men when in conflict),
son of Éireamhón son of Milesius.

55 Thirty-five fruitful generations
from Éireamhón of the fine mansions,
if need be, I could briefly relate
down to Adam, head of the noble peoples.

56 And so the sons of Maol Eachloinn go
to the progenitor of all (no illusory journey),
old Adam of the prolific breed;
it was he that we came from first.

57 I will return from this departure to Domhnall,
his pleasant countenance, his face with stately brows;
firm-footed at the barrier with his troop,
a defender's hand in the breach in battle.

58 Son of Maol Eachluinn with his bright new weapon,
shining figure from which all ugliness is far,
steady eye as clear as a blue stream
(it is difficult to make comparisons!)¹³¹

59 Clean sharp teeth like plentiful pearls;
a bright cheek with the marks of nobility,
never wounded by blemish or satire;
a slender face finer than a star.

60 There is a round dwelling of slender rods
in Domhnall's native region
that poets never return from in depression
(the bright tribe that receive true bounty).

61 To cater for his guests,
the grandson¹³² of Donn and Diarmuid¹³³
(nobleman of a branch of the Gaillian)
has a mansion like Dá Choca's hostel.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ These are the O'Moores, a lineage associated with Co. Laois where they were counted as one of the 'seven septs' of that county.

¹³¹ The translation here is uncertain.

¹³² It should be noted that 'ua' can also mean 'descendant'.

¹³³ This appears to be a figurative reference as Domhnall was the lineal grandson of Gormán, who is recorded in v. 69.

¹³⁴ Mentioned here are three of the six famous hostels of Ireland (see the poem *Sé bruidhni Éirenn gan dail*, in Whitley Stokes (ed. & trans.), 'Da Choca's hostel', *Revue Celtique* 21 (1900), 149–65, 312–27, 388–402. Also see Gregory Toner, *Bruiden Dá Choca* (London, 2007), which was edited previously by Whitley Stokes. This hostel was located in East Connacht. Cormac Conloingeas, king-elect of Ulster, died there because he had violated his *geasa* (taboos).

62 Brugh mur bhruíghin Mac Dá Reo
a ccrích Laighean na laeimcheó;
an ccéin rug ar athghnaoi sin,
ní lámhthaoi drud dá dhóirsibh.

63 Brogh so mur bhruíghin Dá Dhearg,
'nár thuit, gá doilge díbhfearg,
fághlach re foraire sgeoil,
Conaire d'armaibh Aincheoil.¹⁰³

64 Brugh so a ccendchar cheárd na suadh,
brugh lán dá lingid marcshluagh,
greadha srianbhoga crua ccorr
um ua Dhiarmoda uim Dhómhnoll.

65 Do-gheabhtha sa ghlanbrogh fhionn
bró churadh ós cionn fithchioll
's bró mhallbhan ag cur chorthar,
brogh léar snadmhadh sobharthan.

66 Tig 'na cceann ar cionn oidhche
lucht cúmtha sgéal sgiamhfhoirfe,
don treibh thaobháird nách treabh shlim,
fer do gach aonáird d'Éirinn.

67 Tig an fhlaith 's an fear fágla
don tigh-si is tigh ríoghdhámhna;
tig an file 's an fear gráidh,
san teagh oire re tromdháimh.¹⁰⁴

68 Port oinig iarthar ó tTáil,
iosdadh chaithmheach an Chlocháin,
port na n-ógbhan 's na n-eachlach,
ródbhrogh bocht is baintreabhach.

69 Mac Mheic Gormáin glac bháirrgheal,
ar ndias abaigh ionfháidheadh,
ar cceann síodha, ar ngealladh gair,
carradh díola gach deoraidh.

¹⁰³ Manuscript, line 1: 'Brogh so mur bhruíghin Dá Bhreagh'.

¹⁰⁴ Manuscript: 'san tig oirdheirc re tromdháimh'; the word '*oidherec*' is unmetrical and gives poor sense.

62 A mansion like Mac Dá Reo's hostel
in Leinster of the fiery mists;
while it was achieving that beauty once again,
one could not dare approach its door.¹³⁵

63 A mansion like Dá Derga's hostel,¹³⁶
where died (what harsher punishment? —
a plunderer against an exemplary guardian)
Conaire, by the weapons of Aingcél.¹³⁷

64 A mansion especially loved [?] by sages,
a full mansion from which a troop of horsemen leap,
hard fighters with reins relaxed, grouped in a circle
round the grandson of Diarmaid, round Domhnall.

65 One might find in that gracious mansion
a crowd of warriors over *ficheall*-games¹³⁸
and a crowd of graceful women embroidering —
a mansion that joined wellbeing in a whole.

66 Arriving there at nightfall
are the makers of stories of perfect beauty;
men of the tribe from the heights (no meagre tribe)
come there from every single part of Ireland.¹³⁹

67 The prince comes and the plunderer
to that house, the house of one fit to be king;
the poet comes and the patron;
the 'heavy troops' are a burden on the house!

68 Fortress of generosity in the west [of the land] of
Táil,¹⁴⁰
free-spending hospitality in the Clochán,¹⁴¹
house for young women and for horsemen,
mansion on their route for the poor and widows.

69 Grandson of Gormán, bright open hand,
our ripe corn-ear, fit for a prophecy;
our peacemaker, our promise near at hand,
our riches that has payment for every stranger.

¹³⁵ This hostel was in Bréifne. The three legitimate kings of Ireland were massacred there by plebeian rebels. See Eoin MacNeill, *New Ireland Review* 24 (1906), 99ff.

¹³⁶ On Dá Derga's hostel, which is believed to have been located on the Dodder River in south Co. Dublin or Co. Wicklow. See the early narrative text, *Togail Bruidne Dá Derga* ('The destruction of Da Derga's hostel'). See Eleanor Knott (ed.), *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (Dublin, 1936) and for a translation see Whitley Stokes (ed. & trans.), 'The destruction of Dá Derga's hostel', *Revue Celtique* 22 (1901), 9–61, 165–215, 282–329, 390–437, 260. Scholarly debate has occurred as to the location of the 'bruidhean'. On the various proposals see Henry Morris, 'Where was Bruidhean Dá Derga?', *JRS* 5:2 (1935), 297–312.

¹³⁷ Conaire, despite his gifts for kingship, dies when he violates his personal *geasa*. His killer is the outlaw Aingcél, whose name means 'ill omen'. See Stokes, 'Da Derga's hostel', 9–61, 165–215, 282–329, 390–43.

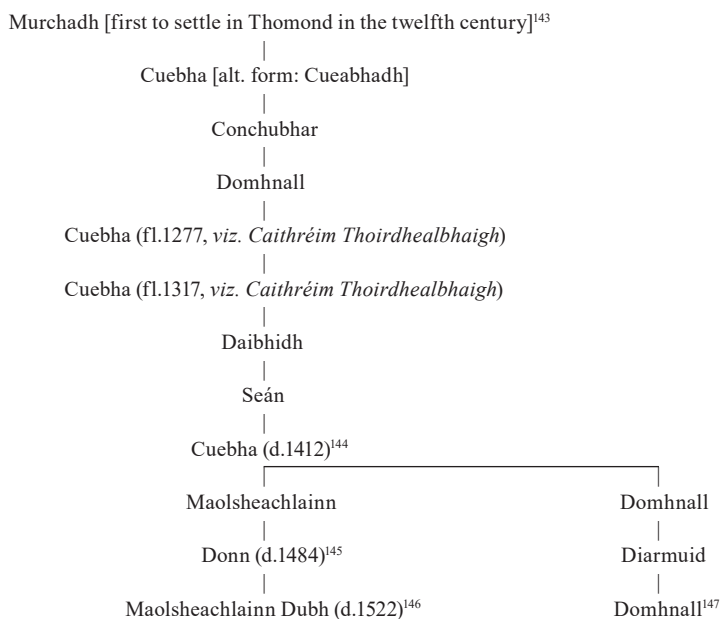
¹³⁸ *Ficheall* was a popular board game in medieval Ireland played in the courts of the Gaelic elite. In modern times the word *ficheall* denotes chess.

¹³⁹ The final two lines still refer to the poets, *Treibh thaobháird*, 'tribe of the high slopes (?)'. This phrase would surely have evoked something like 'treibh aodha bháird', 'the tribe of bardic fire'.

¹⁴⁰ The land of the Dál gCais (Co. Clare).

¹⁴¹ Cloghaun in Kilmacduane parish.

Appendix 2

Simplified genealogy of the Clann Ghormáin¹⁴²

¹⁴² Some of the lines of the pedigree are uncertain. Apart from where citations are given, the details derive from Frost, *The history and topography*, 150; and Westropp, 'Cahermurphy castle', 121–22.

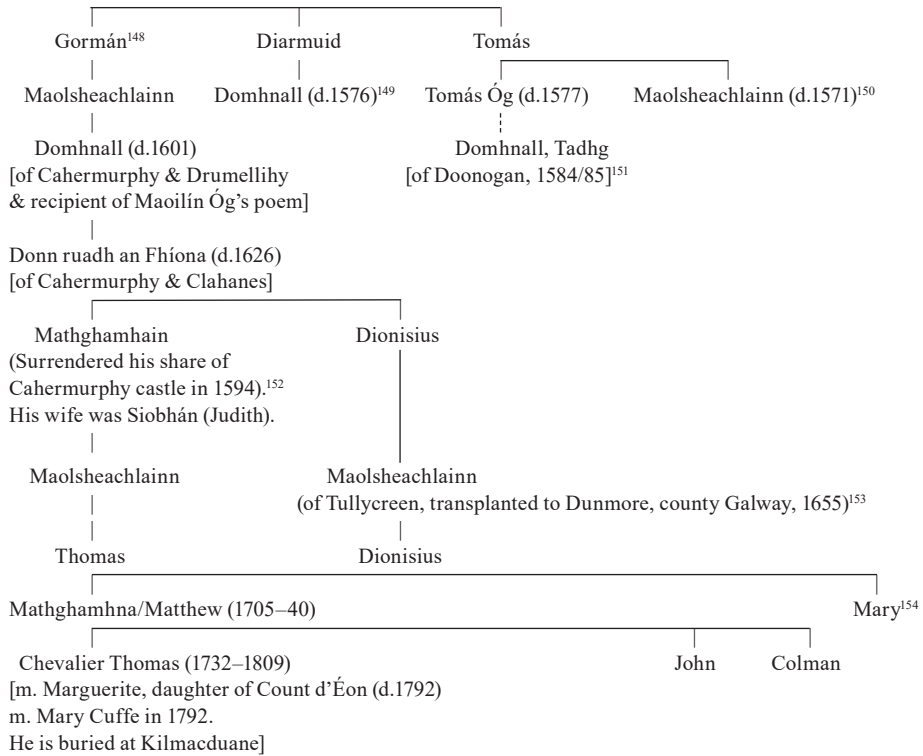
¹⁴³ According to some genealogies he was: 'an cead duine tainic do Mumhain do laighnibh do sliocht daire barraigh do reir droinge re Seanchus' ('The first man who came to Munster from the Leinstermen, of the progeny of *Daire Bharraigh* [i.e. the Uí Bhairrche descendants of Cathaoir Mór], according to the historical-lore'). See O'Donovan and Curry, *Ordnance Survey letters*, 280–81. For an alternative ancestry from Murchadh to his great-great grandfather Muirchertach claiming that it was he who first settled in Thomond, see RIA MS 23.F.14, 286.

¹⁴⁴ *AFM*, sub anno 1412; *Annála Connacht*, sub anno 1412. The annalists call him a *fer grada d'Ó Briain* 'an officer of O'Brien'. In 1395 he did liege homage to Richard II at Magh Adhar near Quin, along with his son Maolsheachlainn. He was recorded as 'Coueva Mac Corman, chief of his kindred of Hybrekane'. See Ronan, 'Mediaeval documents', 231–32.

¹⁴⁵ *AFM* sub anno 1484. He is referred to by the annalists as Domhnall, though the genealogies give him as Donn.

¹⁴⁶ *Annála Connacht* sub anno 1522. He is recorded as having a 'tech oighed don aos gradha' ('house of hospitality for the learned orders').

¹⁴⁷ This descent back to Cuebha (d.1412) is recorded in the old book possessed by Cathal Ó Conchubhar ('*Seanleabar i seilbh Cathal Uí Conchobair*') and copied in O'Donovan and Curry, *Ordnance Survey letters*, 280–81. This branch is recorded in *Linea Antiqua*, compiled in c.1709, with a slight alteration [e.g. Donald m. Dermot m. David m. Coueva m. John m. David m. Coueva m. Cumeadh m. Donald m. Conor m. Cumeadh m. Moroch m. Ectigern m. Scanlan m. Gorman m. Murtach m. Donoch]. See NLI MS GO 155, 187.

**Legend**

--- = conjectured descent

¹⁴⁸ Gormán is sometimes omitted from pedigrees. However, he is recorded in Maoilín Óg's poem here.

¹⁴⁹ *AFM*, sub anno 1576. He is called by the annalists an 'éin-fher gradha' ('a servant of trust').

¹⁵⁰ *AFM*, sub anno 1571. He is recorded as having a 'tighe n-aoidheadh' ('house of hospitality').

¹⁵¹ This part of the pedigree is conjecture. See Nicholls and Ó Canann (eds), *Irish fiants*, no. 4568.

¹⁵² Hardiman, 'Ancient Irish deeds', 83–84 (deed no. 34). Read Dunmore for Cahermurphy.

¹⁵³ Robert C. Simington, *The transplantation to Connacht, 1654–58* (Dublin, 1970), 112.

¹⁵⁴ Mary married Thomas MacIneiry of Castletown MacEniry. See Richard J. Hayes, 'Some letters of a Thomond antiquary', *NMAJ* 3:3 (1943), 162–68, 165–66.