

Excerpts from  
The Ancestors of McDonalds of Somerset

by Donald M. Schlegel

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II  
Carthend

Pagan Life and Beliefs

The pagan Celts of Ireland lived in a world of fear, from which the loving God was far removed, and in which they were at the mercy of monstrous spirits and arbitrary, insubstantial reality. They were people bound by unreasoned custom and superstition, for they thought that the world was full of hidden "traps" that were triggered by the violation of taboos. The power of the kings was rivaled or even eclipsed by that of the priests, who were called druids. The druids officially ranked next to the kings in social standing, but they usually exercised paramount sway, for no undertaking of any moment was begun without their advice. They were skilled in astronomy and healing; they practiced sorcery in the seclusion of oak groves, where their doings were hidden from the common people; and, through the power that they exercised over the whole society, they imposed upon the common people.

The pagans adored a divine being (though not necessarily always and everywhere the same one) to whom they offered sacrifices and from whom they sought all blessings, temporal and eternal. Crom Cruach, the "prince" of all idols in Ireland, stood on Magh Slecht, the "plain of prostration" near the Gothard River, now in the barony of Tullyhaw, County Cavan. This "plain" was a limestone ridge some 400 by 85 yards in extent. From the base of its eastern escarpment issues a strong, clear, and rapid spring, as if a river-god dwelt within his rocky halls beneath the ridge and poured forth this perennial fountain. The pagan kings and nobility offered firstlings of animals and other sacrifices to the idol. One source says that it was embossed with silver and gold and had twelve bronze statues ranged around it.

The pagan Irish theology embraced belief in the immortality of the soul, the transmigration of the soul, and a heaven and a hell.

Their heaven had perennial spring, immortal youth, and unending sunshine. Gentle breezes fanned it; pleasant rivers watered it; trees alive with celestial music and bowed with flowers and fruit sheltered it. There the wicked ceased to trouble and the weary found rest; the inhabitants, strangers to anything that could give pain, enjoyed an unending scene of calm festivity and gladness.

Their hell was a dark and dismal region where no ray of light ever penetrated. It was infested with every animal of vile and venomous kind. Serpents hissed and stung; lions roared; wolves devoured. The cold was so intense that the bodies of the wicked, of a gross nature on account of their crimes, might have frozen to death, had death been possible for them.<sup>1</sup>

The pagan Irish year was punctuated by four great feasts. The year began on November 1 with the feast of Samhain. At this juncture of the old and new years, it was said the otherworld became visible and spirits roamed the world of men. (This was the origin of the celebration of Halloween.) Livestock was rounded up and sorted for slaughter or breeding at this time. Imbolc or Oímelc was celebrated on February 1, the time of the lactation of ewes. Its place in the Irish year was later taken by the feast of St. Brigid of Kildare. Beltaine was held on May 1, when the Mordháil or great assembly was held at Uisneach in today's County Meath, at which goods, wares, and jewels were exchanged. Sacrifices to the god Bel were associated with it and the druids lit two fires between which cattle were driven to protect them from disease. All fires were extinguished and new fire was brought to each hearth from the Bel-fire. This was also the time of the annual beginning of pasturing in the open. The fifteen-day festival of Lughnasad, honoring the god Lug, began on August 1 and was connected with the harvest.

### Establishment of Tir-Keeran

In the generations following the three Collas, the claimed high-kingship of Ireland stayed in the family of Muiredach Tireach, passing to his grandson Niall Noighiallach around the year 400.

It was perhaps in the 420s that three sons of Néill Noighiallach named Conall, Eoghan, and Enda conquered from the Cruithne or Bolgraidhe (i.e. the western Fir-Bolg, and perhaps their Ulaid overlords) the far northwest of Ireland, the lands surrounding the Foyle and extending east to the Bann. There they set up the Kingdom of Ailech, named for its chief fortress, which is located on a hilltop between the Foyle and the Swilly. The fortress has battered stone walls, guard-chambers, and terracing on the inside of the walls, with steps to give access to this terracing and to the wall-top.

The sons and grandsons of Colla Uais apparently assisted the sons of Niall in this conquest and moved north with them. Colla's son Erc in one record is called "ri sliab a tuaid," king of the northern mountain.<sup>2</sup> His son Carthend was given land on the east side of the Foyle, the valley of the River Faughan, then called Dulo Ocheni but later named Tir-Keeran (Carthend's land) after him, and still today bearing that name as a barony. To the east, the Ciannachta (a Leinster tribe that also assisted the Uí Niall) settled in the valley of the River Roe, called Glen Given. The coast eastward from Ard-Eolairg (Magilligan) remained in possession of poor Cruithne or Picts; they had a fortress (Dun Cruithne) in Ard-Eolairg. Carthend's nephew Dochartach and his brothers were given lands southeast of Ailech at Ard-Sratha; their descendants were the Uí Fiacarh Ard-Sratha. Far to the east, on the west side of the Bann Valley were settled Carthend's cousins, grandsons of Fiachra Tort, whose descendants were the Fir Lí and Uí Tuirtri (from whom descended the ÓFlynnns of County Antrim, along with the ÓFlanagans). Each of these territories was a tuath with its own minor king.

Of Carthend himself we know only that, born into a pagan world, he subscribed to its marriage practices; he had six sons by one or more wives and another six by bondswomen.

### The Conversion of the Irish

According to the oldest traditions, it was in 432 that Patrick, the Christian former captive of an Irish chieftain, came to Ireland to bring the Faith to the people he had learned to love. The piety of Patrick no doubt impressed the Irish, for he always travelled on foot, slept on the bare ground, and recited the Psalter and a number of hymns and prayers each day. Patrick worked among the Irish

of Ulster. A biography written some three or four centuries after his death claims that he came into northwest Ulster about the year 441 and evangelized the sons of Niall Noighiallach, then crossed the Foyle into Tir-Keeran, then visited the rest of the northern Airghialla. This story reflects the Irish political geography of its own time, not Patrick's. What has become clear after decades of study and debate is that Patrick was the missionary especially of the Ulaid. He founded his episcopal see at Armagh, perhaps in the 440s, while the nearby site named Emain Macha was still the symbolic center of the Ulaid, where their annual assembly or óenach was held. It was after Armagh was founded and probably in the 460s that the Airghialla, under the leadership of the Uí Niall of Meath, defeated the Ulaid once again and drove them across Glen Righe. St. Patrick withdrew with the Ulaid to Saul in County Down and Armagh was placed under the control of Sechnall, the missionary bishop of Meath. Armagh was thirteen years in his hands before Patrick was able to reclaim it.

It is not clear when or by whom the northern Airghialla were evangelized, but that it was by St. Patrick as claimed by his early biographers is not impossible. The old chronology of his life is not accepted by some today, for if it be correct he must have been nearly 95 years old at the time of his death on March 17, 493. As Warren H. Carroll has pointed out, however, he would only have been "somewhat younger than St. John the Evangelist, Bishop St. Simeon of Jerusalem, St. Anthony of the desert, Bishop Ossius of Cordoba, and Bishop Acacius of Beroea when they died, to mention only some particularly well-known and well-attested instances of longevity in this period."<sup>3</sup>

St. Patrick supposedly founded seven churches in Tir-Keeran, seemingly corresponding to the seven parishes of the historical period. One of his lives names them: Domnach Dola, Domnach Senliss, Domnach Dari, Domnach Senchue, Domnach Min-cluane, Domnach Cati, and Both-Domnach. (The word Domnach indicates a stone church, and often one supposedly founded by the Apostle himself.) The first of these was near the Foyle. The last, Both-Domnach, may have been not in the valley, but across the Sperrin Mountains in County Tyrone, at the place now called Badoney in the territory of the Uí Fiachra Ard-Sratha.

There is some evidence that Ireland did not embrace Christianity as completely as Patrick's biographers claimed; paganism persisted in some areas during his life and for many decades, at least, after his death.

By any measure, however, the conversion of the Irish to Christianity was remarkable. "We cannot but admire the omnipotence of God, and the power of His grace, in the rapid conversion of this idolatrous nation. So sudden a change can only be attributed to Him Who has the power of softening the most callous hearts; for it can be said with truth, that no other nation in the Christian world received with so much joy the knowledge of the kingdom of God, and the faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing can be found to equal the zeal with which the new converts lent their aid to St. Patrick, in breaking down their idols, demolishing their temples, and building churches. We may likewise add, that no other nation has preserved its faith with more fortitude and courage, during a persecution of two centuries."<sup>4</sup>

Ireland "was not compelled to the Christian culture, as were the German barbarians of the Continent, by arms. No Charlemagne with his Gallic armies forced it tardily to accept baptism. It was not savage like the Germanies; it was therefore under no necessity to go to school. It was not a morass of shifting tribes; it was a nation. But in a most exceptional fashion, though already possessed, and perhaps because so possessed, of a high pagan culture of its own, it accepted within the lifetime of a man, and by spiritual influences alone, the whole spirit of the Creed. The

civilization of the Roman West was accepted by Ireland, not as a command nor as an influence, but as a discovery."5

#### NOTES

- 1) M'Kenna, Diocese of Clogher, I/237-238; O'Malley, 223; Healy, The Life and Writings of St. Patrick, pp 184-185
  - 2) Book of Leinster 333.c.15; see O'Brien, 415
  - 3) Carroll, Warren, The Building of Christendom; Front Royal: Christendom College Press, 1987; p. 124
  - 4) MacGeoghegan, 1844 transl., p. 147
  - 5) Hilaire Belloc, Europe and the Faith; New York: The Paulist Press, 1920
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### III

#### The Ui Mac Uais

#### The Structure of Irish Society

Irish society in the early Christian era, and continuing until its extinction in the 1600s, was highly organized; everyone had his precise place and functions to fulfill.

The smallest political unit was the tuath, of which Tir-Keeran was one, which had its own king but lived by the common laws of Ireland. The king's role was to defend the tuath when necessary; to submit on behalf of the tuath to the king of the over-kingdom to which it belonged; and to preside over the tuath's annual aonach or fair, which was a combination of sports meet, market, and general forum for the people. He was symbolically married to the tuath at his inauguration and upon his upright qualities were supposed to depend the good weather and prosperity of the tuath. The king was selected from the tuath's royal family, from the derb-fine or true-family of the previous king, descended in the male line from his great-grandfather.

The king enjoyed the tuath's mensal land, but he did not own it, for in ancient Ireland there was no such thing as absolute ownership of the land by any individual. The land of a tuath was divided among the leading families or tribes, and a portion was set aside as mensal land. The land of each tribe belonged to the tribe as a whole, but was held by the various members under varying conditions of tenure and (evidently) could be let out for periods of time to farmers not of the tribe.

Every tribesman legally qualified had a right to a share of the soil. However, to find the stock to graze and work the land, he usually became the client of a more wealthy man, and it was this relationship that defined the nobility of Irish society: a nobleman had clients, and the rank of his nobility was determined by the number of them.

There were two principal forms of stock tenure in ancient Ireland: saer-stock tenure and daer-stock tenure. The main difference between the two tenures is very clearly laid out in the ancient Irish law. In saer-stock tenure the tenant got stock from his king, or chieftain, and gave no security in return. In this case the tenant was generally a member of one of the ruling families, and as such was entitled to this honorable privilege. He he was bound to give to his chief in return a cattle-rent proportional to the stock received, but only for a certain number of years. The original debt of stock

was extinguished by the payment, every year for seven years, of one-third of the stock which the tenant received upon entering his tenancy. He was also bound to give manual labor, especially when the chief was building his dun or gathering his harvest, and to accompany his chief on military expeditions for a certain period each year, if called upon, and owed 'full homage,' that is, personal attendance and dutiful obeisance, which was rendered to the chief in person at certain stated times. Such tenure seems to have been compulsory on certain families in the tribe.

The daer-stock tenure was purely optional, and prevailed far more widely among the tribes of Celtic Ireland. Under this tenure the tenant was obliged to give security for the stock received, and he was, moreover, bound to pay yearly a certain food-rent fixed by law and proportionate to the stock received. The original stock, too, was to be returned to the lord at the termination of the tenancy. This was a tenancy-at-will and could be terminated by either party, but the laws provided penalties for eviction or desertion. If the landlord called back his stock and terminated the tenancy when there was no fault on the part of the tenant, the tenant was entitled to retain as a fine for disturbance one-third of the returnable stock, along with his own 'honor-price' if the landlord treated him with contempt; nor was he to pay any food rent that year. On the other hand, if the tenant chose to end the tenancy against the will of the stock-owner, he was bound to pay back to him double the amount of stock which he had originally received, and a double food-rent for the last year of the tenancy.<sup>1</sup>

Society below the level of noble was divided into several classes. The bó-aire, the independent farmer, was usually well off. He had land to the value of twenty-one cumals or female slaves; twenty cows, two bulls, six oxen, twenty pigs, twenty sheep, four boars, two sows, a riding horse, sixteen sacks of seed in the ground, and other nominal amounts of possessions. Beneath the bó-aire were bothach or crofters, tenants-at-will who paid for their holdings by supplying many days of manual labor each year. There also were sen-cléithe or serfs, who more or less belonged to the land, and, still in the early Christian era, there were slaves over whom their masters had the power of life and death.<sup>2</sup>

## Political

The Ui Mac Carthend, along with their kinsmen, the Ua Fiachra Fionn of Ard-Sratha, the Fir Lí, and the Ui Thuirtri, were subject to the Kings of Ailech, who were descendants of Eoghan and Conal Gulban, the sons of Niall Noighiallach. (Eoghan's family were the Cinel Eoghain and Conal's were the Cinel Conaill.) According to the Book of Rights, the Ui Mac Carthend paid each new King of Ailech at his accession 100 beef cattle, 100 hogs, 50 cows, and 50 cloaks with white borders. At the accession of each new King of the Ui Mac Uais, the King of Ailech gave him three tunics with golden borders, three beautiful, fair cloaks, and three befitting bondswomen.

The only change in these arrangements lasted about eighty years and involved not the Ui Mac Carthend, but some of their kinsmen. In 482 or 483 the Fir Lí and Cairloegh (the Cruithni or Picts of Ard-Eolairg, including the mountain above Magilligan) were given to the King of Dal Aradia by the descendants of Niall as a reward for his assistance in battle. In 563 at the battle of Moin-Doire-Lothair (in the present parish of Derryloran, Co. Derry) the northern Ui Niall defeated the Cruithni of Dal Aradia and took back the Fir Lí and Cairn-Eolairg. Interestingly, the account of this battle contains the last mention of the use of chariots in battle by the Irish.

In 598 the Ui Thuirtri are known to have accompanied Aed mac Ainmire, king of Ailech, on an expedition to Wicklow. Such service would have been standard for all of the northern Airghialla.

In 637 the security of the Ui Mac Uais in the lands they had helped conquer some 200 years before was threatened. Congal Claen, King of the Uladh, sought to regain the kingship of the northern lands from the Ui Niall and the Airghialla. He hired as auxiliaries Scots (under the King of Dal Riada), Picts, Britons, and Saxons to fight under his standard, a golden lion on a green field. The Ui Niall, lead by Donnell of the Kinel Conaill, no doubt accompanied by the Airghialla, came to battle with him on Magh Rath (Moira, the plain of Down) and defeated and killed him there. His ambitions to deprive the Airghialla of their lands died there with him.

### Church and Monastic Development

The church founded by St. Patrick originally fit the mold of Roman administration, but instead of having large dioceses, to avoid political jealousy and entanglements each tuath had its own bishop. Within a century this pattern began to change, as monasticism took hold. Gradually, monasteries were founded and sent out branches, daughter houses, which were subject to their mother houses rather than to the local bishops, and all endowed with wealth in land. Soon the bishops were relegated to their liturgical and sacramental functions, and often or even usually were themselves monks, leaving the administrative function to the abbots and other monastic officials, while the local churches were attended by priests sent from the monasteries.

The greatest number of monasteries in the vicinity of Tir Keeran were founded in the sixth century, though one, at Coleraine, was supposed to have been founded by Saint Patrick himself. In 544 Saint Colmkill, a descendant of Conal Gulban, founded his famous monastery at Derry-Calgach, on the west side of the River Foyle. Derry became the burial place of the kings of the northern Airghialla, including the kings of the Ui Mac Uais, and probably supplied the priests who ministered in the churches of Tir Keeran. About the 550s, Botchonais, a monastery of regular canons in the diocese of Derry, was founded by St. Congal.<sup>3</sup> At about the same time, the Abbey of Macbile in Inis-Eoghain was founded by Saint Frigidian. About the 580s, the Abbey of Fathern was founded by (Saint Murus or Muranus) near the border of Inis-Eoghain, in the diocese of Derry. It was not until the 680s that a descendant of Colla Uais made such a foundation. It was then that Saint Guaire (or Goar) of the race of Colla Uais founded the abbey of Achadh-Dubtuigh in the district of Lí on the banks of the River Bann.<sup>4</sup>

The Irish church was firmly in union with Rome, though communication sometimes lacked. This union was reinforced by crowds of foreign ecclesiastics (Egyptian, Roman, Italian, French, British, and Saxon) who flocked to Ireland as a place of refuge in the 5th and 6th centuries.<sup>5</sup> Services were in Latin, but of course preaching was in the common Gaelic of the people.

In the Irish churches, as on the continent, crowns were suspended over the shrines of saints; partition walls might divide nave from chancel or divide nave into monks' and nuns' portions. Linen cloths or veils usually screened the sanctuary from the nave. During the liturgy of the word, the veil across the sanctuary remained closed. When the missa fidelium or service of the altar began, the sacrifice was brought forth, Christ the Lamb of God was offered, the signal was given, the veil was withdrawn, and then one might think he saw Heaven opened, and angels descending from above (as said St. John Chrysostom). Generally the Irish church buildings were small, drystone buildings with thatched roofs, and in the 4th through 6th centuries the majority of the worshippers remained out-of-doors while the priest carried out the ceremonies inside.

### Dal Riada

The Irish race and society, including the church, at this time and indeed for many centuries thereafter extended to the western isles and glens of Scotland. The original movement of the Irish to Scotland or Alba is lost in the mists of pre-history, but it is generally accepted that the Irish who made these settlements were the Dal Riada, who came from the northern and eastern coasts of the present County Antrim. In the year 470, the kings of these people followed them and formally established their kingdom of Dal Riada in Alba. The traditional account names three royal brothers, Fergus, Loarn, and Angus, sons of Erc, who were the ancestors of the three historical tribes of the Dal Riada in Alba. The people of Fergus occupied the peninsula of Kintyre and the coasts of Cowal. Those of Angus inhabited the island of Islay. The house of Loarn inhabited the isles and lands to the north, including Mull, Coll, and Tiree and the lands of Lorne, Morvern, and Ardnamurchan. These Dal Riada, who brought with them to Alba the name of Scots, had several fortresses. The Cinel Gabhran, who were the foremost branch of the family of Fergus, permanently occupied Dunaverty at the mull of Kintyre and Tarbert at its narrowest point. Dun Ollie in Lorne was occupied by the Cinel Cathbath, one of the branches of the Cinel Loarn. Dun Add, in the middle of the kingdom, was the castle of the king, which means that during most of the kingdom's history it was in the hands of the Cinel Gabhran.

In religion, the Dal Riada were heirs to the conversion wrought by God through St. Patrick. The great apostle of Scotland was St. Colmille, he who had founded the monastery at Derry in 544, though his mission of conversion was to the pagan Picts who inhabited the rest of present Scotland, not to the Scots or Dal Riada. In 563 he obtained the little isle of Y, now called Iona, off the southwest of Mull, and there founded the monastery that became for three centuries the most famous seat of learning and piety in all the Celtic lands. In its physical features, the monastery was a typical Irish foundation: a collection of huts of timber and wattle; a small, unadorned oaken church with adjoining sacristy; a refectory with a fire-place and stone vessels of water in which the feet of weary pilgrims were washed, with a kitchen nearby; a guest house; mill, barn, and stable; all surrounded by an earthen embankment, just like the rath of an Irish chieftain. For over 200 years after Colmille's death in 597, most of the abbots were chosen from his kindred. Iona had daughter houses at Hinba (perhaps Colonsay), Tiree, near Loch Awe, and "Elena Insula" (perhaps Nave Island). Other monasteries were founded in the isles by Sts. Brendan, Findchan, Comgall of Bangor, and Molua, Bishop of Lismore.

The kingship of Dal Riada usually rested in the Kinel Gabhran, the main branch of the descendants of Fergus, who received a special blessing from Colmille. In the seventh century, the fighting strengths of the Dalriada were 300 men of the Cinel Gabran, 500 of the Cinel Angus, and 700 men of the Cinel Loarn, but of the latter, "the seventh hundred is from the Airghialla."<sup>6</sup> The special relationship that existed in the early 700s between the Cinel Loarn and the Airghialla will be traced below, but first it must be mentioned that it may have existed as early as the year 603. That year, some Irish under the leadership of Mael-Umai, a prince of the Cinel-Eoghan, fought for the King of Dal Riada at the battle of Degsa-Stane. Aethelfrith, the pagan king of the Angles, had ravaged the Britons, neighbors of the Dal Riada to the southeast, and had overrun a great area, exterminating or enslaving the people. The Dal Riada, alarmed at their presence, took a great army against them, including Mael-Umai mac Baetan, who was called a rig-Feinnid, a leader of a Fian or a king's paid military band. Was he, perhaps, as representative of their overlord, accompanied by the 100 men of the Airghialla who fought for the Cinel Loarn? The Angles surprised the Dal Riada at Degsa-stane, while most of the Dal Riada were dispersed through the country, foraging, pillaging, and burning against the Angles. Mael-Umai killed Aethelfrith's brother, but the Dal Riada had to flee from the field and a large part of the army was lost. Mael-Umai survived the battle and died in 610.<sup>7</sup>

In the early 700s, the Cinel Gabhran, seemingly as a result of the support they had given to Congal Claen against the Ui Niall, had lost the leadership of the Dal Riada, and the Cinel Loarn had taken their place. In the light that this situation threw on the Cinel Loarn, their relationship with the Airghialla becomes more apparent. Aincellach of the Cinel Loarn became king in 697, but after a year he was expelled by the Cinel Gabhran, and the fortress of Dun Ollie was burned. Two years later, in 700, his brother Selbach obtained the kingship and was strong enough to hold it for many years. In 704 the abbot of Iona died and, probably because of the special relationships, on the one hand between Colmkille's kindred and the Cinel Gabhran, and on the other between the Airghialla and the Cinel Loarn, his successor was Conamail mac Failbe, of the race of Colla Uais. Conamail was abbot until his death in 710.

Pedigree of Eoin Cathanach MacDonald, from Various Sources (1)

<i>Book of Ballymote</i> (ca 1400)	<i>Book of Lecan</i> (Early 1400s)	O'Henna (ca 1450s)	Nat. Lib. Scot. Adv. MS. 72.1.1 (1467)	Monro (1549)	Harleian MS 1425/190-191 (ca 1620)
Colla Uais Each Eirc	Colla Uais Eathach Eircc Carthard Eircc	Colla  6 5	Collad uais Eathach feighlioch  Cartain Eirc	Thola Craisme Ethoy  Carlayne Ericke	Colla u uais Eache  Caraghan Eare
Fergus	Fergag	4	Fergus	Fergus	
Goffrid Maini Niallgusa	Gofrag Maine Niallgusa	3 2 1	Gofrig Maine Niallgusa	Gothofreid Racime Malghwssa	Mayne Nihallghus Gafrough
Suibni Indirgi	Suibne Miargalgi	Suibhne 4	Suibne Meargad	Swyffine Mearghaighe	Meargaen Suyvune Solamh
Solamh Gilliadamnain Gillebrigid	Solamh Gillaadamnain Gillabridi	3 2 1	Solaim Gille-eagamain Gillebrigde	Sella Gille Adam Gillebryde	Giolla Aghanam Giolla Bruade
Somharli Radnall Domnall	Somairli Ragnall Domnall	Somhairle Ragnall Domhnall	Somairle Ragnall Domnall	Somerle Ragnald Donald	Somhairle Ragnall Domhnall
Aengus óg Eoin	Aengus Mor Aengus óg Eoin	Angus Angus Eoin	Aengus mor Aengus og Eoin	Angus Angus Ihone Ean Donald Ballay Ean Anald Ihone	Enens More Enens oge Eoin or Shane  Donnell Ballagh Eoinn or Shane  Eoin Cahanaghe

Pedigree of Eoin Cathanach MacDonald, from Various Sources (2)

<i>Annals of Clonmacnoise (1627)</i>	<i>Geoffrey Keating (ca 1634)</i>	<i>O'Clery (mid 1600s)</i>	<i>Book of Clanranald (ca 1715)</i>	
			<i>Text</i>	<i>Genealogy</i>
Colla wais	Colla Uais	Colla Uais	Colla Uais	Colla Uais
Eahagh	Eochaidh		Eochaidh	Eochach
Eirck		Eirc		
Carhayne	Crimthann	Carthenn	Carran	Carran
Eirck	Erc		Earc	Earc
			Maine	Maine
Fergussa	Fergus	Fergus	Ferghus	Ferghus
Cathwaye				
Godfrey	Goffradh	Goffradha	Gothfruigh	Gofraigh
Mariye	Mani	Maine		Maine
Nealgusa	Niallgus	Nialghusa	Nialghus	Nialghusa
Swyne	Suibhni	Suibhne	Suibhne	Suibhne
Meargaye	Medraide	Merguidhe	Mearghach	Meargalgh
Salamon	Solamh	Solamh	Solamh	Solalmh
Gille adawnayne	Gilla Adamnain	Giolla Adamnan	Gille Oghamhnan	Giolla Adhamhnain
Gillebride	Gilla Brighdi na mbo	Giolla brighde	Giolla Bride	Giolla Bhrighde
Sawarle	Samharli	Somhairle	Somairli	Somhairle
Randolph	Ragnall	Ragnall	Ragnall	Ragnall
Donell	Domnall Domhall óg	Domhnall	Domhnall	Domhnall
Enos the Great	Aengus	Aenghusa Mor	Aonghus Mor	Aongus Mor
Enos the Younger	Aengus óg	Aengusa óg	Aonghus og	Aongus óg
Eoyn	Eoin	Eoin	Eoin	Eoin a hIle
Eoyn More	Eoin Mor		Eoin Mor	
Donell Ballagh	Domnall Ballach		Domnall Balloch	
Eoyn	Ean		Eoin	
Eoyn Kahanay	Eoin Cathanach		Eoin Cathanach	

In 712, Selbach waged war on the Cinel Gabhran and burned their fortresses at Dun Averty and Tarbert and in 719 the first naval battle of record in the British Isles was fought between the two tribes. Selbach resigned the kingship in 723 and entered holy orders in Ireland, leaving his son Dungal as king. Dungal was quickly expelled by the Cinel Gabhran, in 726. The next year, Selbach came out of his retirement and, accompanied by some of the Airghialla, gave battle to the

Cinel Gabhran at Irros-foichne (a site now unknown), where some of the Airghialla fell. Selbach died in 730 and, apparently, left Dungal as king for a second time. In 731 Dungal burned Tarbert against the Cinel Gabhran. In 733 Flaherty, king of the Cinel Conaill, who also was ard-rí, sent to Dal Riada for a fleet, which Dungal brought to Ireland, and with it fought a battle in Inis-Eoghain in which they defeated the Cinel Eoghain. In 734 Flaherty retired to enter monastic life. Dungal's reign ended in the wasting of Dal Riada by the Picts of Alba and his own capture by their king in 736. Shortly thereafter, the kingship was taken back by the Cinel Gabhran, in whose descendants it remained, and from whom descend today's royal family of Great Britain.

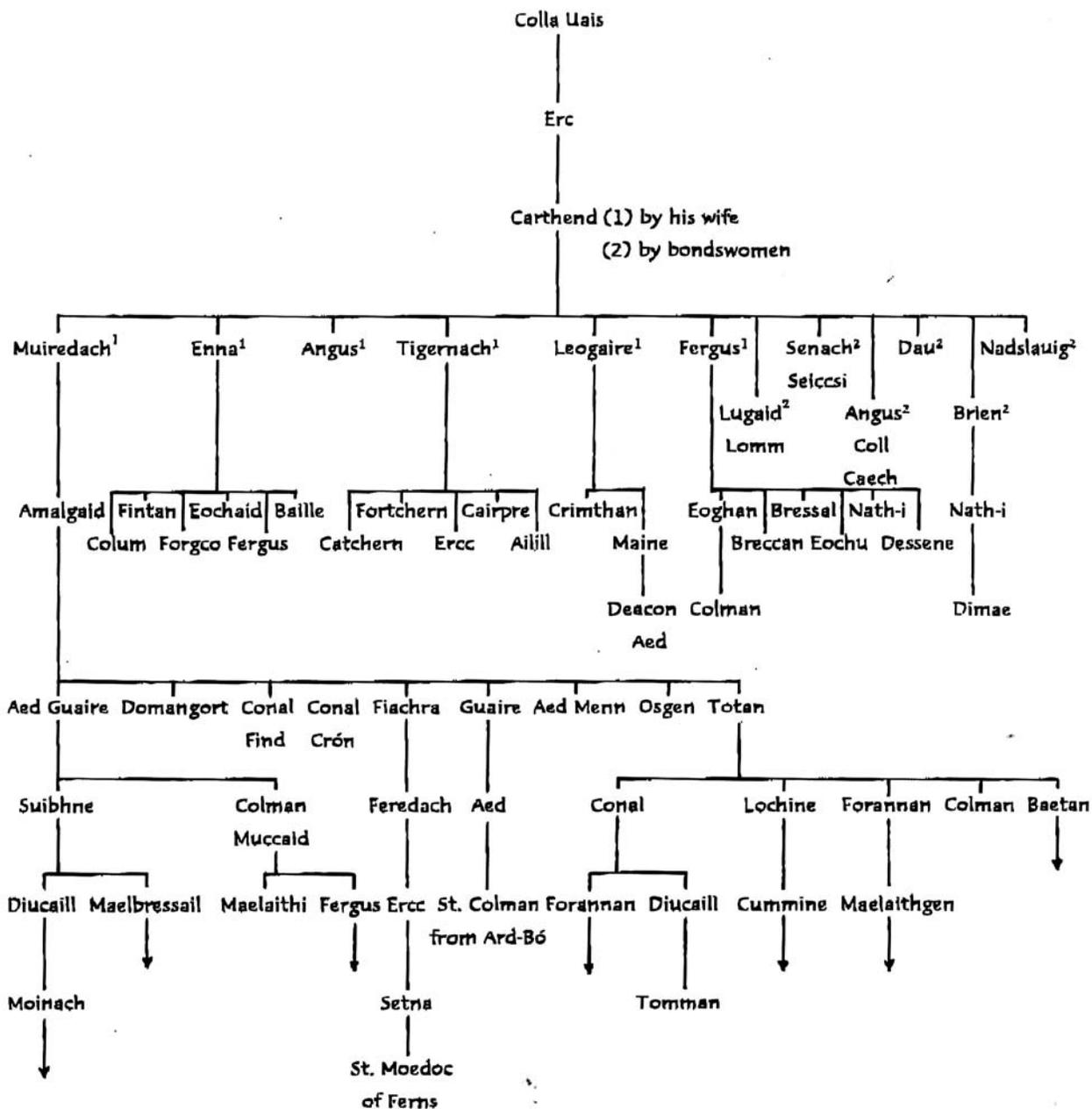
### The Ancestry of Goffradh mac Fergus

The pedigree of the MacDonalds is laid out in about fifteen Irish and Scottish sources, some of which are reproduced in the accompanying table. Though lacking some eight or nine generations before Fergus, these all agree that the MacDonalds' ancestors were descendants of Colla Uais. The presence of Carthend in the genealogies makes it perfectly clear that they originated among the Ui Mac Carthend of Loch Foyle, that is, of Tir Keeran.

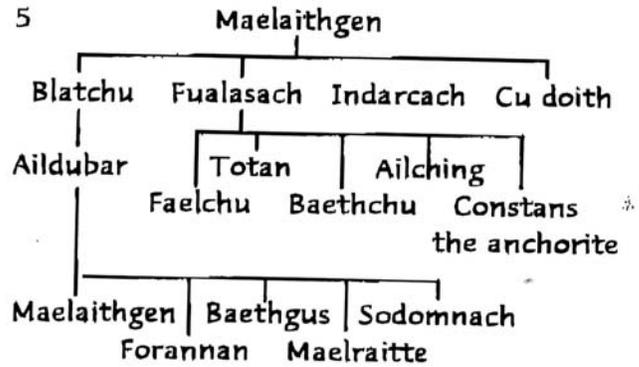
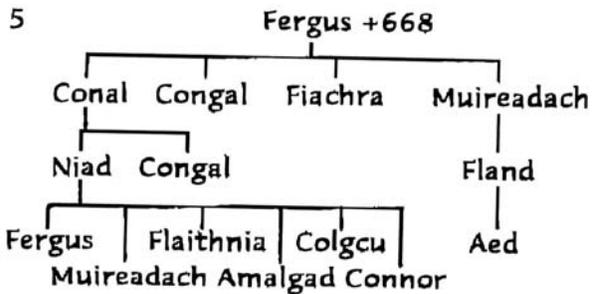
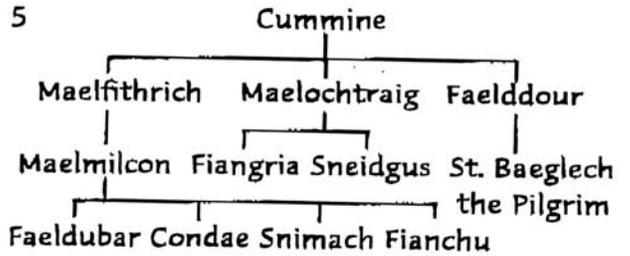
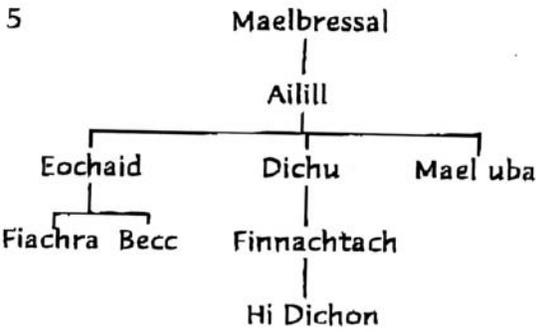
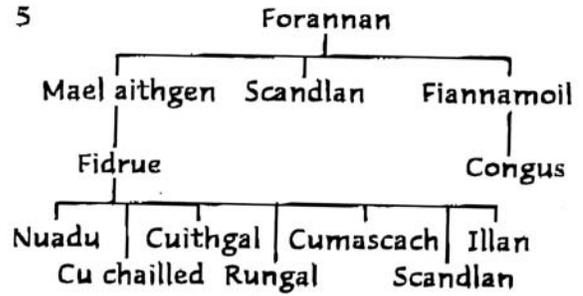
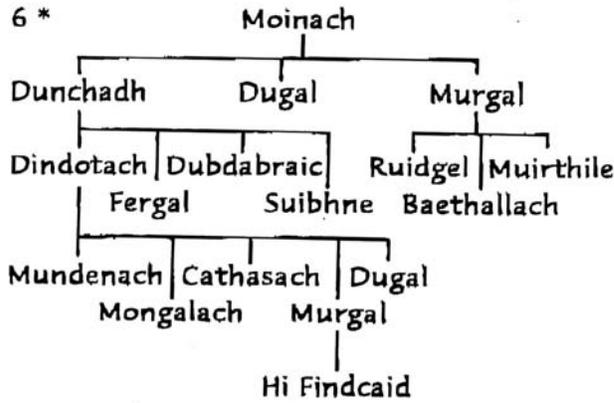
Only one source, a poem written probably in the third quarter of the 1400s, offers any different opinion. This poem was written in honor of John MacDonald, Earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles, who succeeded his father in 1449 and resigned his earldom in 1476 and lordship in 1493. The poem was copied into and preserved in the Book of Clanranald about the year 1700. The poem contains the lines, "Six [generations] from Suibhne before mentioned to King Colla, Wine they had on the banks of the Banna in angular cups." This would imply descent from the Fir Lí rather than the Ui Mac Carthend, but it is such a late and isolated reference that it cannot be given much weight. (The poem is reproduced in Skene, Appendix I, page 407)

The presence of Erc son of Carthend in the genealogies requires some comment. W. D. H. Sellar in 1966 examined "The Origins and Ancestry of Somerled" in the Scottish Historical Review. Along with the valuable service of validating the traditional MacDonald pedigree, he had this to say about Erc, "I would suggest therefore that... Godfrey son of Fergus belongs to a tribe now forgotten, a junior branch of the Uí Maic Chárthind, descending from Erc son of Cárthend." The oldest and most consistent genealogies<sup>8</sup>, however, list twelve sons of Carthend, none of them being named Erc; they do say that Carthend was son of Erc. Most of the MacDonald pedigrees give Carthend either a son or a father named Erc; while only the Book of Lecan gives him both a father and a son of that name. All of the MacDonald pedigrees are corrupt at one place or another, and, since the oldest of the Ui Mac Uais genealogies consistently call Carthend son of Erc, but do not name Erc as his son, it seems reasonable that the Erc son of Carthend must be dismissed as a corruption picked up by several genealogists from a common source, in which the names in the two generations were reversed.

## Immediate Descendants of Carthend



The Seven *deirbh finte* of the Ui Mac Carthend, ca 800 A.D.



\* Number of generations from Carthend.

O'Clery's version of the pedigree stands alone in omitting Colla's son Eochaid, but in this he is in agreement with the older genealogies of the Ui Mac Carthend. Only the Book of Leinster includes him, and that only as a variation from the standard account.

The Ui Mac Uais genealogies extend from the time of Carthend down to about the year 800, to the point at which the tribe was being pressured by both the onslaught of the Vikings and the expansion of its Ui Niall overlords, the Cinel Eoghain. The genealogies represent seven *derb-finte*, namely the descendants of Moinach, MaelBressail, Fergus, Forannan, Cummine, Mael-aithgen, and Baetan, all descendants of Carthend's grandson Amalgaid. The youngest generations of these *derb-finte* represent the nobility of the tuath at that time, amounting to perhaps 45 men. The genealogies do not extend far enough to name Goffradh, ancestor of the MacDonalds, but they do name a Fergus, a great-grandson of Fergus, grandson of Aedh Guaire. This could have been Goffradh's father. The great-grandfather, Fergus mac Colman Muccaid, died in the year 668. It is not stated how he died, but many other nobles of Ireland died that year of the plague called the Buidhe (yellow) Chonail. The annal entry gives no clue to Fergus's age; if his great-grandson was Goffradh's father, then he must have been a fairly young man in 668.

The genealogies make it obvious that of the two sons of Aedh Guaire, Suibhne was older than Colman Muccaid, first because in the spot where both are named, Suibhne is named first; secondly, when the genealogies were compiled Suibhne's lines descended one generation further than the others. Yet, the genealogies also show that, at that time, Colman Muccaid's descendants were the more important, because, first, at the head of the genealogies of the Cinel MacCarthend, Colman Muccaid is listed, not Suibhne and, secondly, Muccaid's descendants are listed in detail before the *olamh* turns to those of Suibhne.

Thus it would seem that Goffradh mac Fergus was indeed the leading man of the tuath in his time, even though he did not represent the very eldest line of Carthend's descendants. The pedigree as presented here may seem a little short, for it averages about 43 years per generation from Carthend to Goffradh. This average is actually only slightly high in comparison with authentic Irish genealogies of later periods.

#### Notes

- 1) Adapted from Healy, *The Life and Writings of St. Patrick* pp 455-462.
- 2) Adapted from Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story*, p. 32, and other sources.
- 3) Or founded in the 680s -- see Healy p. 183
- 4) MacGeoghegan, 176; from Act. Sanct. Hib., Vit. S. Maidoc ad 30 Jan. Append. c.2., p. 223
- 5) Petrie, *Eccles. Arch.* p. 137, who gives good reasons
- 6) *Senchus Fer nAlban*, transl in John Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dal Riada*
- 7) O'Brien; Bede; An. Tigernach
- 8) Rawlinson MS B.502; Book of Leinster; Book of Lecan; Book of Ballymote, portions of which were copied from works of the eighth and ninth centuries. See O'Brien, 140-145, 415- 417, etc.

#### IV

#### Goffradh mac Fergus and the Dark Ages

#### The Viking Onslaught

When dragon ships first appeared in the waters of DalRiada in the year 795, the kingdoms of the Picts and the DalRiadic Scots were at peace with each other, for King Eochaid of DalRiada was

uncle of King Constantine of the Picts. Even the combined strength of the two kingdoms, however, was not enough to successfully defend the land and people against the lightning-quick raids of the Vikings. Propelled by sail and oar from their strongholds in Scandinavia, the Orkneys, and the Innsi-Gall (the isles of the Foreigners, as the formerly Pictish isles north of Ardnamurchan became known), the pagan Northmen beached their dragon-headed ships on the shores of DalRiada, plundered the nearby areas of precious metals and livestock, slew or enslaved all who opposed them, and were gone again before the forces of the kings could gather. In 798 they raided "between Ireland and Alba."<sup>1</sup>

Iona's monastery, rich in precious reliquaries and church ornaments, was a favorite target of the Vikings, which they struck hard in the years 795 and 802, burning the monastery on the latter occasion.<sup>2</sup> In 806 the worst raid ever to occur there took place, during which 68 persons, both lay and clerical, were slain. As a result of these raids, in 807 Cellach, the abbot, hoping to find safety in an area not so accessible to the dragon ships, moved his headquarters and most of ColmCille's relics to a new monastery at Kells in Meath (Ireland). Iona's community carried on as best it could, now in a subordinate position, and in 814 Cellach retired from the chief abbacy and returned to the little DalRiadic isle, where he died peacefully a year later. Apparently the Northmen left DalRiada in relative peace during these years, for it was a poor country in comparison with Ireland once ColmCille's reliquary had been removed. However, they did return when they learned that something of value was there: in 825 the acting superior of Iona, Blathmac mac Fland, was martyred, when the Vikings broke into the chapel during Mass on a cold winter morning and he refused to tell them of the hiding place of the remaining relics. Ireland itself soon came under attack and in 830 the abbot of Kells reversed Cellach's actions by flying from that ravaged land back to Iona for safety. He remained there for two years until Kells was again safe.

During these years the war-like men of DalRiada must have actively supported the monks of Iona and fought many battles against the Northmen, but no record remains to tell of their efforts. The main repository of their records had been Iona, which was among the most devastated sites. According to an uncertain tradition, King Alpin of Dal Riada led his army against the Northmen who were settling in Galloway, south of the neighboring British kingdom of Strathclyde, and was returning victoriously from this expedition when he was ambushed and slain in the 830s. His son and successor, Kenneth, in trying to recover from the losses suffered in this ambush, turned to the old relationship between the Kinel Loarn and the Airghialla. He called to his assistance warriors from the land between Lough Foyle and the Bann, who came to him under the leadership of a noble of the Ui-Mac-Uais, namely Goffradh mac Fergus.<sup>3</sup> The migration took place in the year 836.

### Goffradh

The Airghialla at this time were coming under two types of pressure in Ireland. First, the Northmen were invading Ireland in force and the lands of the Airghialla suffered with the rest. In 831, Armagh had been plundered three times within a month. In 831 and 832, the churches of the Airghialla (the southern Airghialla, in modern County Monaghan and vicinity) were plundered, and the shrine of St. Adamnan, late abbot of Iona, containing relics of the saints of Iona, was taken. Nearer to the Ui-Mac-Carthend, the Ciannachta of Glen Given were plundered, as was the bishop's church of Rath Luirgh. In 833, however, the Northern Ui Niall gave the invading Northmen a great defeat at Doire-Calgach. No doubt this victory gave the king of Ailech confidence in the strength of his people, so that he allowed the force of Airghialla to leave at the request of the King of Scots.

The second point of pressure was the expansion of the Ui Niall. The pattern of their expansion over the centuries is clear: as the ruling family multiplied, they expanded the amount of land they occupied by pushing the original occupiers of neighboring lands into lower social strata and taking the top positions for themselves. The Kinel Eoghain were already expanding beyond Inis-Eoghain as early as the year 600, by which time they had taken over lands around Tullach Óg in the present eastern County Tyrone. The Ui-Mac-Carthend were the first people in the path of the expansion of the Kinel Eoghain and seem not to have survived as kings of their tuath long after the departure of Goffradh mac Fergus. The departure of him and his followers may have been seen by the King of Ailech as a way to weaken the Ui-Mac-Uais; Goffradh may have seen the migration as a way to avoid being pressed down under the over-layer of Ui Niall lords that soon would be imposed on Tir-Keeran.

One might question how many of the nobles of the Ui-Mac-Carthend even remained in Tir-Keeran after the migration if, during Goffradh's childhood, before the wars against the Northmen, the noblemen had numbered only around forty-five, and if the full compliment of 100 warriors or perhaps more accompanied Goffradh. There is some question as to what remained of the tuath a few years later. In 854 the Ui Niall won a victory over the "Gall-Gael", a mixed race of the Northmen and the Irish, in Glenelly, the parish of Badoney, across the mountain from Tir Keeran. Had these foreigners settled there, so close to Tir-Keeran? They certainly had fortresses in the vicinity, for in 865 the Ui Niall plundered all of the fortresses of the Foreigners "between Kinel Eoghain and Dal-Aradia," carrying off their goods and flocks. Not long after, they defeated the Northmen at Loch Foyle and carried off 240 of the heads of the Northmen as trophies.<sup>4</sup> These events certainly point to a great weakness on the part of the Irish in Tir Keeran. Yet, additions to the old genealogies name a Hi Findcaid and a Hi Dichon descended from Suibhne mac Aed Guaire and a Clann Fidruí from Conal mac Totan.

The Airghialla migrants no doubt came to the isles in the typical celtic "ships" of the times. These were large currachs or coracles, i.e. wicker-work covered by hides and made black by a covering of pitch. They had at least seven benches (a currach of ten benches existed in 737), each occupied by two oarsmen; a keel of sorts; and a single mast stepped amidships, with a sail.<sup>5</sup> If a hundred warriors sailed from the Foyle, with their families and stock, and accompanied by the sailors who brought the fleet from Alba, the sight of the fleet of little ships must have been impressive indeed.

King Kenneth mac Alpin seems to have directed them to settle on the isles of the Kinel Loarn. It was on Coll that the head of the family was living a century and a half later, in the 980s. The isle of Coll measures some twelve miles from northeast to southwest and 3 1/2 miles in the transverse direction. It was a fertile island and good for fish and fowling (in the 16th century there was a fine nest of falcons there). Its Gaelic name appears to have been Colos, Latinized as Colossum, but in modern Gaelic Cola (a fine name for the new home of the descendants of Colla Uais!).

On Coll's southeast coast, several bays make fine harbors for small boats. Into one of these empties one of the largest streams on the island. A few hundred yards up this stream stands Dun an Achaidh, the best-preserved ancient fortress on Coll. This dun occupies a rocky ridge which rises about 70 feet above the surrounding valley. Its stone wall was eight feet thick and enclosed an oval area of about 100 by 30 feet. Its gate exited down a steep path to a walled terrace some 15 feet below; from here one passed out through a narrow gate to descend to the valley floor. Numerous buildings surrounded the dun. According to local tradition, its name was Dun Bhorlum mhic Anlaimh righ Lochlinn, the Fort of Borlum son of Olaf, King of Norway. According to the story, the dun was occupied by a tyrannous Northman, who was routed by the islanders by setting fire to

the dun one night. Nearby is a circular drystone dyke, 134 feet in diameter, called Kilbride, perhaps the site of a wooden church that served the fortress and nearby community at one time.<sup>6</sup>

Up the stream from Dun an Achaidh is Loch Cinneachan, on which is a crannog (a man-made island fortress) called Dun Anlaimh, which tradition also connects with the end of the Viking era.<sup>7</sup>

Dun an Achaidh was strategically located and made an excellent command center for the defense of the isles of the Kinel Loarn, and could contribute to the defense of their mainland territories as well. From its height of some 130 feet above sea level, the horizon was about 14 miles away. Signals set there (smoke on a clear day, fires at night) could be seen easily on Coll's sister island of Tiree, where a daughter house of Iona was located; at Dun I, the fortress on Iona, some 16 miles to the south but at 332 feet easily above the horizon; at the rocky island fortress of Cairn a Burgh Mor, from which signals could be relayed to Iona as well as to Dun na Muirghaidh on Loch Scridain and other points on the western coast of Mull; and at Dun Ara near the northernmost point of Mull and on the entrance to the sound of Mull. Dun Ara was on the summit of a prominent rock outcrop, 45 feet high, and commanded a wide seaward prospect. Small boats could shelter in a harbor on the west side. A wall surrounded the summit in the late Middle Ages, but parts of the curtain wall indicate that a fortress had been there much earlier than that. From Dun Ara, signals could be relayed from station to station up the Sound to the population center at Loch Aline in Morvern and on to Dun Ollie. Such a signal system would give warning of any water-borne attack from the north.

With a good wind the little black Celtic ships could cover the distance from Coll to Cairn a Burgh Mor in about 90 minutes, or to Iona in about three hours.

The Northmen continued to attack the Picts and Scots. In 839 they nearly destroyed the Picts at a single blow, for in a battle in the Picts' land they slew the king and his brothers and numberless others. The succeeding Pictish kings were so weak that a total of five reigned in the years from 839 to 842. The land of the Picts was richer and more naturally secure than DalRiada, but now the DalRiadic Scots were the stronger race. King Kenneth mac Alpin of DalRiada took advantage of the weakness of the Picts and moved his seat of government and many of his people into their territories, combining the two kingdoms under one government, effectively establishing Scotland as a country.

Goffradh mac Fergus was left in the west to try to hold the isles against the Northmen. He was styled toiseach, a prince. Both King Kenneth and the Columban monks must have doubted Goffradh's ability to succeed in this monumental task, for in 849 Iona was all but abandoned. ColmCille's relics were divided into two parts, one of which King Kenneth transported across Drum Alban to the new church he had built at Dunkeld, and the other the abbot of Iona took with him to Ireland. Abbots were still appointed for Iona in the following years, but the next one on record was also abbot of Kildare and died not in Iona but in eastern Alba. The death of Goffradh mac Fergus, "toiseach Insi-Gall," in 8538 was followed by the bleakest years of western Scottish history. The Annals of Prudentius of Troyes record that the Scots "were rendered tributary; and the Northmen took possession, without resistance, of the islands that lie all around, and dwelt there." (Insi-Gall, as used by the 17th century annalists who preserved the earlier records, meant all of the Hebrides.)

Conversion of the Northmen

Large portions of Alba and Strathclyde were over-run by the Northmen at least six different times between 850 and 878. During these years the isles and probably parts of the mainland of DalRiada came under the control of independent Viking chieftains. The isles of DalRiada and the outer isles and Skye together the Northmen called the Sudreys, the Southern Isles, in contrast with the more northerly isles of Orkney and Shetland. DalRiada's mainland they called "Dalar", commonly translated "the Dales". The Vikings who now ruled these areas but had formerly lived in Norway had been subjects of the king of that country. That king, Harald Fairhair, in about the year 870 sought to regain control of his rebellious subjects in the Scottish isles by sending west one of his nobles, Ketil Flatneb (Flatnose), with a royal army. Ketil subdued all the Sudreys and made himself lord over them, but, in a pattern repeated again and again, the natives soon won him over to their own ways.<sup>9</sup> He refused to pay the taxes demanded by King Harald. For this he lost his possessions in Norway, but he continued in his chosen course, sent the royal army back to Norway, made alliances with the greatest men of the neighboring areas, and ruled independently until his death around 875.

Ketil's daughter, Auda Diupaugda (of the deep wealth), then ruled the Sudreys from a stronghold on the little isle of Colonsay. Her husband was King Olaf the White who was killed in Ireland. Their son was Thorstein Ruadr (Red). In 877 and 878 the Northmen of Dublin and the Sudreys spent an entire year (not just the summer) in Scotland, which caused the Columban monks to take ColmCille's shrine and relics with them from Dunkeld to Ireland for safety.<sup>10</sup> Thorstein Ruadr probably was one of the leaders of those Northmen.

At about this time the Celts of DalRiada, those who had not gone east with King Kenneth, found peace by means of a combined political and religious compromise. The Celtic people were ruled directly by their own chieftains, but these in turn accepted a subjection to the taxes and commands of the Norse kings in Dublin; on the other side, Auda and her family accepted Christianity and thus made their rule more acceptable to the Celts.<sup>11</sup> Auda, who through her descendant Ragnhilda, wife of Somhairle, was ancestress of the MacDonalds, eventually moved to Iceland. There she erected a cross at "the place of her devotions, a bold and precipitous rock, in front of the mountain," known as Kross-holm.<sup>12</sup> After an absence of thirty years, the monks returned to Iona, where their abbot died peacefully in 880. For the next century the king of Dublin was paramount over a vast sweep of co- and sub-rulers in Ireland and Scotland, which included the Celtic chieftains of the isles and DalRiada, some of whom were descendants of Goffradh mac Fergus, and the Pictish survivors in the province of Moray in eastern Scotland. Records survive these times which indicate the peaceful and orderly lives which the monks and undoubtedly the other Celts of the isles were allowed to lead:

Angus mac Moriarty, a scholar, anchorite, and tanist-abbot of Iona, died in 937.

Cainchromac, abbot of Iona, died in 947.

Fothad mac Bran, a scribe and bishop of the islands of Scotland, died in 963.

Fingin, bishop of the community of Iona, died in 966.

Fiachra, prior of Iona, died in 978.

Mugron, abbot of Iona, scribe and bishop, ColmCille's successor in Ireland and Scotland, died in 980.

The accomodation of Celt and Northman allowed a merging of their two cultures to begin. Perhaps its most important facet, after the religious conversion of the Northmen, was the adoption of the Northman's weapons and wooden longship by the Celts of the Isles.

During these decades the kings of the Scots made no effort to regain control of DalRiada from the Northmen, for all their energies were directed to civil strife among branches of their own family along with alliances and wars with the English, Moray, and Orkney. Indeed, there is little reason to think that the Celts remaining in DalRiada would have had any desire to be "rescued" from the Northmen, once they had come to terms with their new rulers and were allowed to live in relative peace.

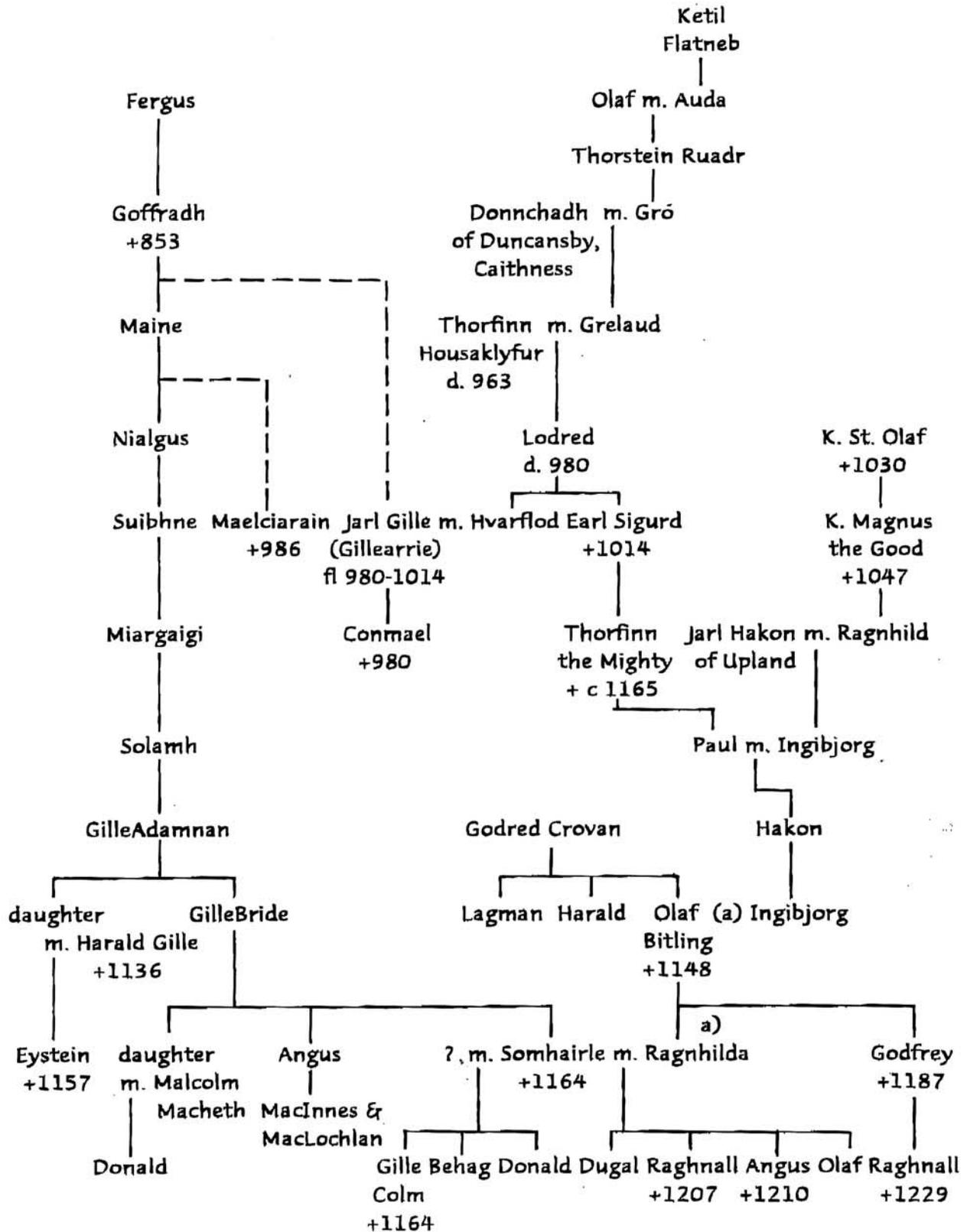
### Earl Gilli

The release of the Celts of DalRiada from the rule of the Northmen of Dublin was caused not by Scotland but by Ireland. In the year 980, Maelseachlainn of Meath, king of the Ui Niall, won a great victory at Tara over the Northmen of Dublin and the isles, forcing them to give him hostages and to free all those of the southern Ui Niall whom they had enslaved. Olaf, the defeated king of Dublin, "went to Iona in penitence and pilgrimage after the battle," and there died.

The Celtic ruler of the isles at this time, who was known to the Northmen as Jarl Gilli, according to the sagas lived on the isle of Coll. He may be connected with traditions of a "noble family" that in ancient times occupied the northwest coast of Coll in the area of Gallanach. On a rocky hill there, called Cnoc Ghillibreidhe, traces of ancient walls could still be found in the 1890s.<sup>13</sup> Gilli or Gillearrie had lost his son Conmael fighting for King Olaf of Dublin in the battle at Tara.<sup>14</sup>

Now, seeing Olaf's complete defeat and discouragement, Gilli turned his allegiance from Dublin to Orkney. The Icelandic saga of Njal tells of Kari, son of Solmund, dressed in a silk tunic and a gilded helmet, carrying a spear inlaid with gold, who was in charge of ten war-galleys carrying the tribute of Earl Gilli of the Sudreys to Earl Sigurd of Orkney early in the 980s. Kari was a retainer of the Earl of Orkney, but his father's name could indicate that he was partly Celtic. Kari helped the sons of Njal against the Scots and later went on a viking expedition with them through the Irish Sea, during which they landed in the Isle of Man, fought a battle against Godred its king, (a kinsman of the late Olaf of Dublin), and slew Godred's son Dugal. On their return northward, Earl Gilli received them kindly on Coll and then accompanied them to Orkney. In the next spring Earl Sigurd of Orkney gave his sister Nereida (sea-nymph) in marriage to Gille, who took her home to Coll with him.<sup>15</sup> Nereida is also called Svanlaug or Hvarflod in Icelandic or Gormflaith in Gaelic.

Goffradh mac Fergus and the Dark Ages



Apparently in reprisal for this change of allegiance from the Danes of Dublin to the Norseman of Orkney, in 986 "the Danes came to the shore of Dalriata" in three ships; they were defeated, seven score of them being hanged and others sold as slaves.<sup>16</sup> On Christmas night, however, the Danes of Dublin attacked Iona, plundered the island, and slew the abbot (or coarb), Maelciarain Ua Maigne, and fifteen others of the elders of the monastic community.<sup>17</sup> This deed did not go unanswered: in 987 was fought "the battle of Man" against Godfrey Harald's son, and the Danes; and a thousand were slain there.<sup>18</sup> "Great slaughter of the Danes who had plundered Iona; and three hundred sixty of them were killed."<sup>19</sup> Two years later Godfrey son of Harald, King of Man, was killed "by the king of Dalriata."<sup>20</sup> By the latter title Gilli was probably meant, for there was then no other king in Dalriada.

Gilli may have been avenging not only the head of the local Church, but also his kinsman. Ua Maigne (or O'Mayne), the abbot's surname, means "grandson of" Maigne; it may be that his grandfather was Maine mac Goffraidh mac Fergus. The MacDonalds' coat of arms includes ColmCille's cross, indicating some relationship with the family that filled the coarbship of Iona. (Dr. Reeves<sup>21</sup> wrote, that this name was O'Mooney, of the family of Conal Gulban, of Inishkeel in County Donegal, but there seems to be no basis for such a claim.)

In the winter of 1013/1014, Earl Sigurd of Orkney, who was the first of the Earls to become nominally Christian, held a great Yule feast, at which Earl Gilli was present. At this time a great expedition was being planned by Sigurd to extend his rule south by seizing the lands lost by the Dubliners at the battle of Tara. A viking named Flosi offered Sigurd fifteen of his men for this enterprise, whom Sigurd accepted. Flosi himself did not go to Ireland, but "went with Jarl Gilli to the Sudreys." When news of the defeat of the expedition and the death of Sigurd at Clontarf reached them, Gilli "gave him a ship, and all that he needed, and much silver," to continue on the pilgrimage he was making to Rome.<sup>22</sup>

This is the last time that Gilli is mentioned, but the status of Coll as a place of some importance a few years later is implied by Heimskringla, the saga of the kings of Norway. For three winters, 1014 through 1016, Olaf Haraldson, the later King Saint Olaf of Norway, had been living in England, assisting the Anglo-Saxons in their war against the Danes. In the spring of 1016 he sailed to Brittany where he captured a castle, a resort of vikings. He then took his force to "Grislo polla" and fought there with vikings before "Vilhialmsbae" or William's town; and thence to either Pentland Firth (between Caithness and Orkney) or to Fetlar narrows in the Shetlands. "Grislo polla" may well have been Grishipol Bay and Point on the northwest coast of Coll, where stood the fortress of Dun Dubh. This is just a little under two miles from Gallanach and Cnoc Ghillibreidhe. The battle there was fought "before" the fortress. Olaf had, perhaps, stumbled upon his old enemies, the viking Danes, while they were attacking Earl Gilli, and joined battle against them. (Olaf later fought battles at Seliopolla and at a large, old castle called Gunnvalldsborg which was ruled by an earl named Geirsid. In these names some have seen Heylipol in Tiree and the isle of Gunna, lying between Coll and Tiree, but these identifications are much more doubtful than that of Grishipol.)<sup>23</sup>

#### The Eleventh Century

While Earl Sigurd lived, Earl Gilli and his family were a semi-independent Celtic people. The abbacy of Iona continued to be a respected position, the deaths of abbots being recorded in 989 (Duncan O'Robocain), 998 (Dubdaleithe), and 1005 (Maelbrigte mac 'ic Rimid). A few other records of the Celts survive from that period: according to tradition it was in 1016 that Anselan O'Cahan came from Tir-Eoghain in Ireland to settle on the lands of Buchanon to aid the king; some time in the 1020s, King Cnute, Danish conqueror of England, went to Scotland, "and the Scots' king

Malcolm submitted to him, and two other kings, Maelbaethe and Iehmarc." Maelbeth must have ruled the north and "Iehmarc" the west of Alba. Maelbaethe is obviously a corruption of Malcolm (Maelcolum) or Maelbrigte Macbheathad, of the house of Moray. The root of Iehmarc, also undoubtedly corrupted by the chronicler, bears great resemblance to that of Miargaigi, the name of a descendant of Goffradh mac Fergus and ancestor of Somhairle who would have lived in this period. It could be that Meargach was a nephew and successor of Gilli.

In 1025 Flandabra, the successor of ColmCille on Iona, died. After this, records concerning the Celts in the isles cannot be found. The reason for this absence of records appears to be the power of Thorfinn the Mighty, Earl of Orkney, which encompassed the isles and cut them off from Ireland. Thorfinn was only five years of age and had several older half-brothers when his father Sigurd died at Clontarf in 1014. At that time Thorfinn's grandfather, King Malcolm of Scotland (or possibly Malcolm Macbheathad of Moray, who was called king at the time of his death in 1029), bestowed on him the earldoms of Caithness and Sutherland. From this beginning, Thorfinn's power grew until he was the mightiest ruler Orkney ever saw. He held nine earldoms, including a large realm in Scotland, and every summer led viking expeditions into Ireland. Dalar, DalRiada, one of his earldoms, came under his complete control not long after 1025.

It was while the Celts of DalRiada and the isles were thus tyrannized by Thorfinn that one strong claim to the right to rule them was lost by the kings of Scotland. When King Malcolm died in the year 1034 he left no son, and none of his cousins or kinsmen could gather enough support to be acclaimed king. The line of Kenneth mac Alpin and Fergus mac Erc of DalRiada came to an end with him, and the Scottish kingdom in effect ceased to exist, insofar as the Celtic peoples recognized the right of succession only in the male line. Malcolm's son-in-law, Crinan, lay abbot of Dunkeld, had his own son Duncan proclaimed king, but the lands he ruled were far from co-extensive with those his successors claimed. The men of Moray became completely independent, setting up their own kings, while most of the far north and west were under the control of Thorfinn the Mighty. The universal opposition met by Duncan's heirs in the following centuries as they gradually extended their rule over all the land indicated how little right they had to the kingship of the entire land, in the minds of the other leading families of Scotland.

After Thorfinn of Orkney's death around 1065, his saga records, "the earl was much lamented in his inherited lands; but in those lands that he had laid under himself with warfare, many men thought it great servitude to live under his dominion. Then many of the dominions that the earl had laid under himself were lost; and men sought for themselves the protection of the chiefs that were there native-born to the dominions."<sup>24</sup> Well indeed might the Celts of DalRiada have thought it great servitude to live under Thorfinn, for from the death of Flandabra in 1025 until after the death of Thorfinn there is no record of the monks of Iona. Not until 1070 do we hear of the death of "the abbot of Iona, the son of MacBaethan." During all this time Thorfinn's power must have cut off much of the intercourse between the isles and Ireland.

The islesmen had barely left the grasp of this foreign lord when they found themselves again subjected to the kings of Man. Around 1075 Godred or Godfrey Crovan, son of a Norseman of Islay (or perhaps of Iceland), defeated the king of Man and made himself king in his place. He also subdued Dublin and a great part of Leinster. With reference to DalRiada it is recorded that "he so tamed the Scots" that none who built a ship or boat dared to use in it more than three of the iron bolts which were used to strengthen the timbers of war-galleys.<sup>25</sup> Godfrey died of a plague which spread through Ireland in 1095<sup>26</sup> and was succeeded as King of Man by his son Lagman.

In 1098, King Magnus of Norway descended upon the Sudreys with a fleet of 160 ships. He plundered, burned, and killed the Northmen in Lewis, then went to Skye, where he took much treasure. He ravaged Uist and killed many people in Tiree and then came to Mull and Iona. "But the people of the land fled far and wide; some into Scotland's firths, some south to Kintyre, or out to Ireland. Some received quarter and did homage." Lagman, King of Man, fled from the Insi-Gall toward Dublin, but Magnus captured him and his crew in their longship. From Iona Magnus proceeded to Islay, which he plundered, burned, and conquered, and then to Kintyre, to Man, and as far south as Wales. When Magnus returned northward, the king of Scotland agreed to give him the rights he claimed over the islands of the west of Scotland, all those between which and the mainland he could go in a ship with the rudder in place, as long as Magnus would not land in Scotland to plunder.

"But when King Magnus came north to Kintyre, he caused his men to draw a skiff across the isthmus of Kintyre, and to set a rudder in place; the king himself sat in the after-deck, and held the helm. And thus he took possession of the land that lay to larboard. Kintyre is a great land, and better than the best island in the Sudreys, excepting Man."<sup>27</sup> He remained in the Sudreys in the winter of 1098-1099, returning to Norway in the following summer. His only losses on this expedition were three ships captured by the Uladh, whose crews, about 120 men, were slain.<sup>28</sup>

King Lagman now went on the Crusade.<sup>29</sup> He may have joined forces from England which on June 17, 1099 brought four English ships and two Genoese galleys into Jaffa with food and materials for making siege engines and scaling ladders for the assault on Jerusalem.

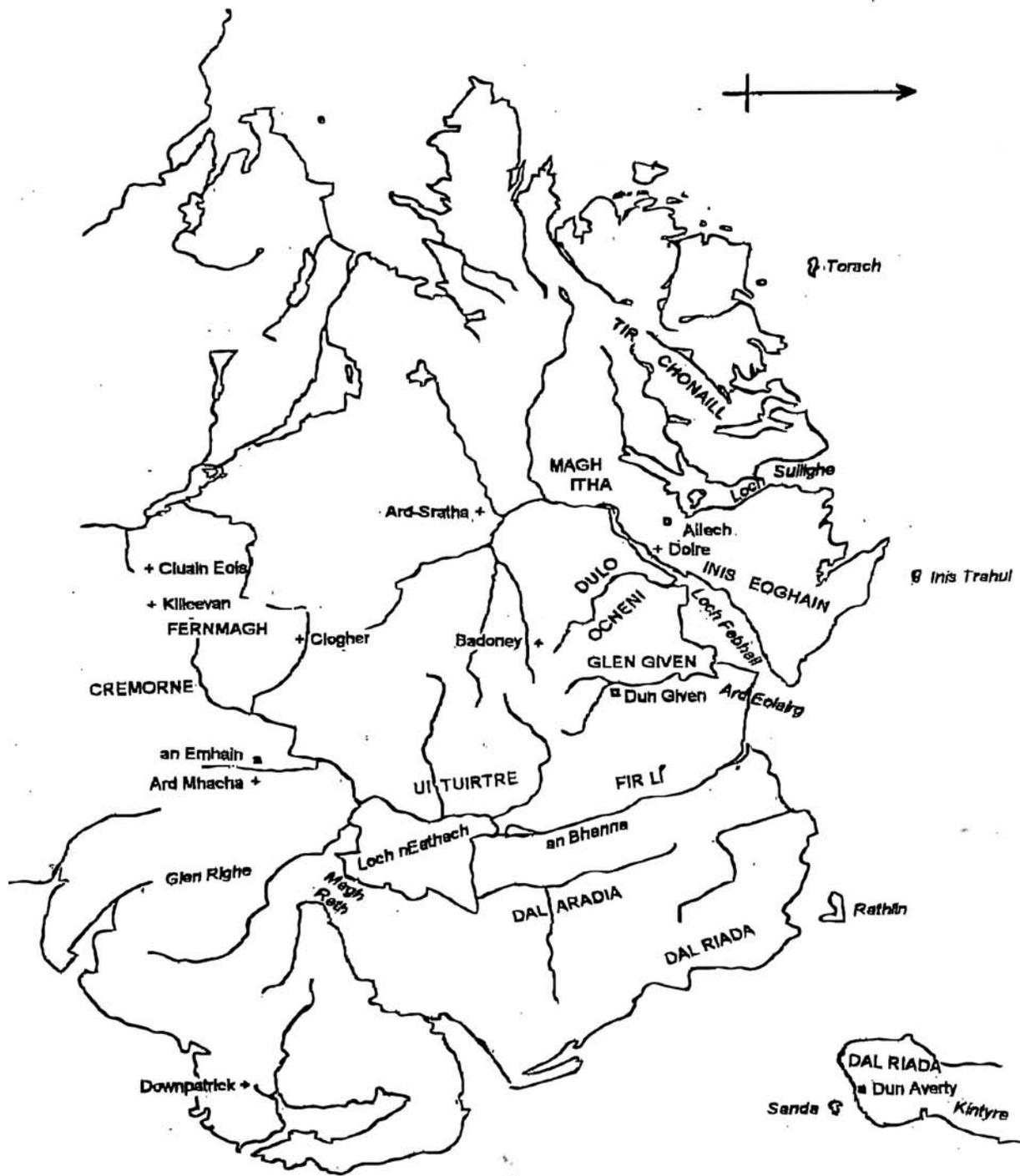
King Magnus of Norway, now called Barelegs from his adoption of Irish attire, returned to the isles in 1102 with the intention of raiding in Ireland, probably to re-establish the coastal Norse kingdoms under himself. Instead he met with King Moriarty O'Brien at Dublin and with him made a year's peace. As he was about to go back to Norway in the following year, he landed in Ulster with a small body of men to receive provisions sent by King Moriarty. The Uladh, who had slain 120 of his men on his previous expedition, this time surrounded King Magnus and slew him along with many of his men. Magnus had no more success in claiming to rule the islesmen than any of his predecessors had had.

## NOTES

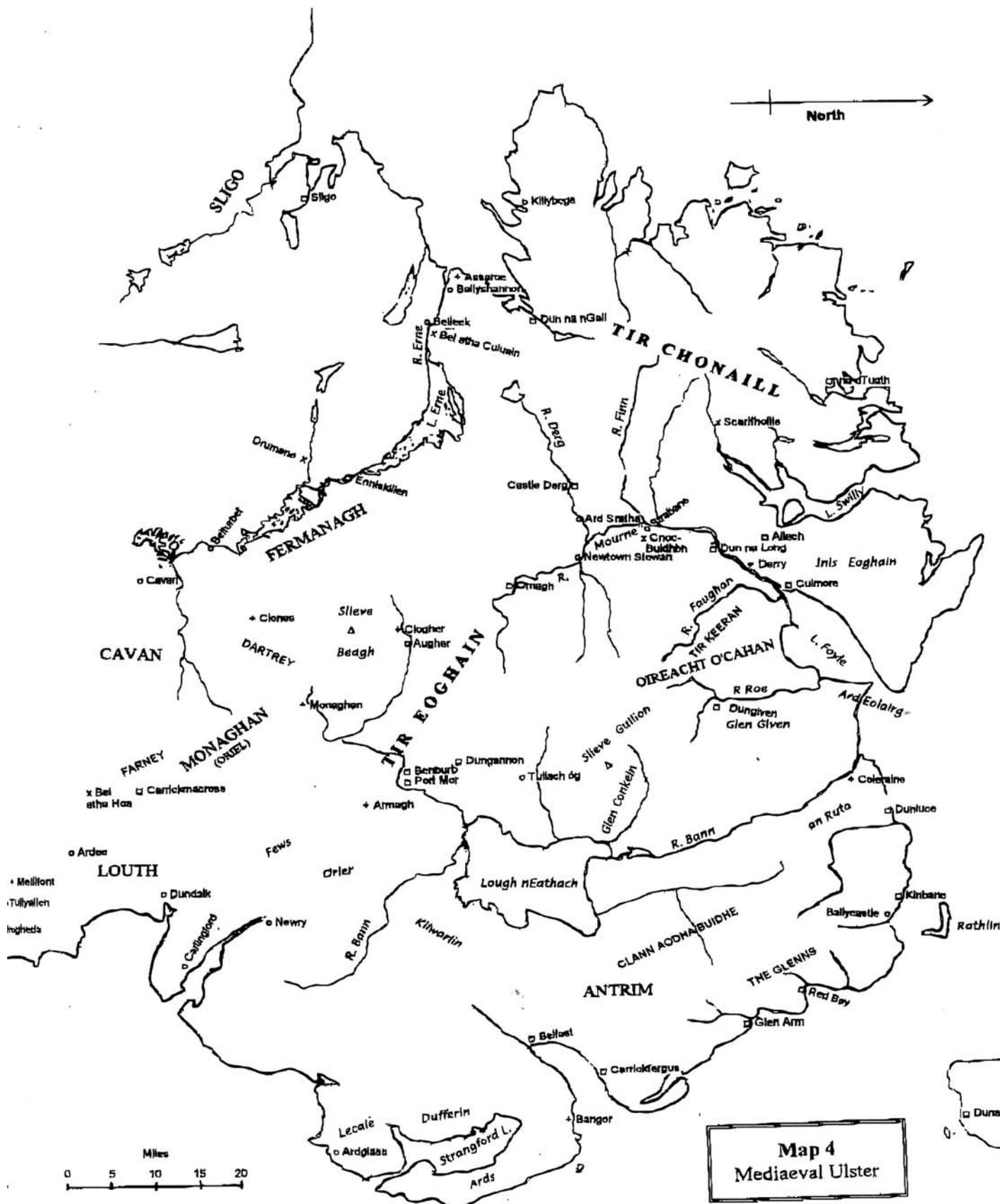
- 1) AFM
- 2) AFM
- 3) AFM, sub anno 835.
- 4) AU
- 5) Bannerman, 151-154
- 6) Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Argyll Vol. 3, p. 102. Beveridge, pp 7-8
- 7) Beveridge, 26-27
- 8) AFM, s.a. 851
- 9) Landnamabok
- 10) Annals of Ulster
- 11) Eyrbyggja's Saga
- 12) Beveridge, 184-185, from Henderson's Iceland, II/80-81
- 13) Beveridge, 13

- 14) Annals of Ulster. The Annals of Clonmacnoise, s.a. 974, call the deceased "Conawill m'Gillearrie."
- 15) Njal's Saga
- 16) AFM, s.a. 985
- 17) *ibid.* *Chronicum Scotorum* (at 984) and *An. Clonmacnoise* (at 980) call Maolciarain not abbot but coarb.
- 18) *Ann. Clanmacnoise*; in AFM note s.a. 988
- 19) AFM s.a. 986
- 20) *ibid.* also *Chronicon Scotorum*; also *Annals of Tigernach*.
- 21) Reeves, p. clxxvi
- 22) *Thorstein Side-Hall's Son's Saga*
- 23) Beveridge, 191-192, working from the sagas
- 24) *Flatey-book*
- 25) *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1056
- 26) AFM; *An. Innisfallen*
- 27) *Heimskringla*
- 28) AFM, s.a. 998
- 29) *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1056





**Map 3**  
 Ancient Ulster



**Map 4**  
Mediaeval Ulster