

Brian Boru Lecture Series

Brian Boru's family and their
background in Co. Clare

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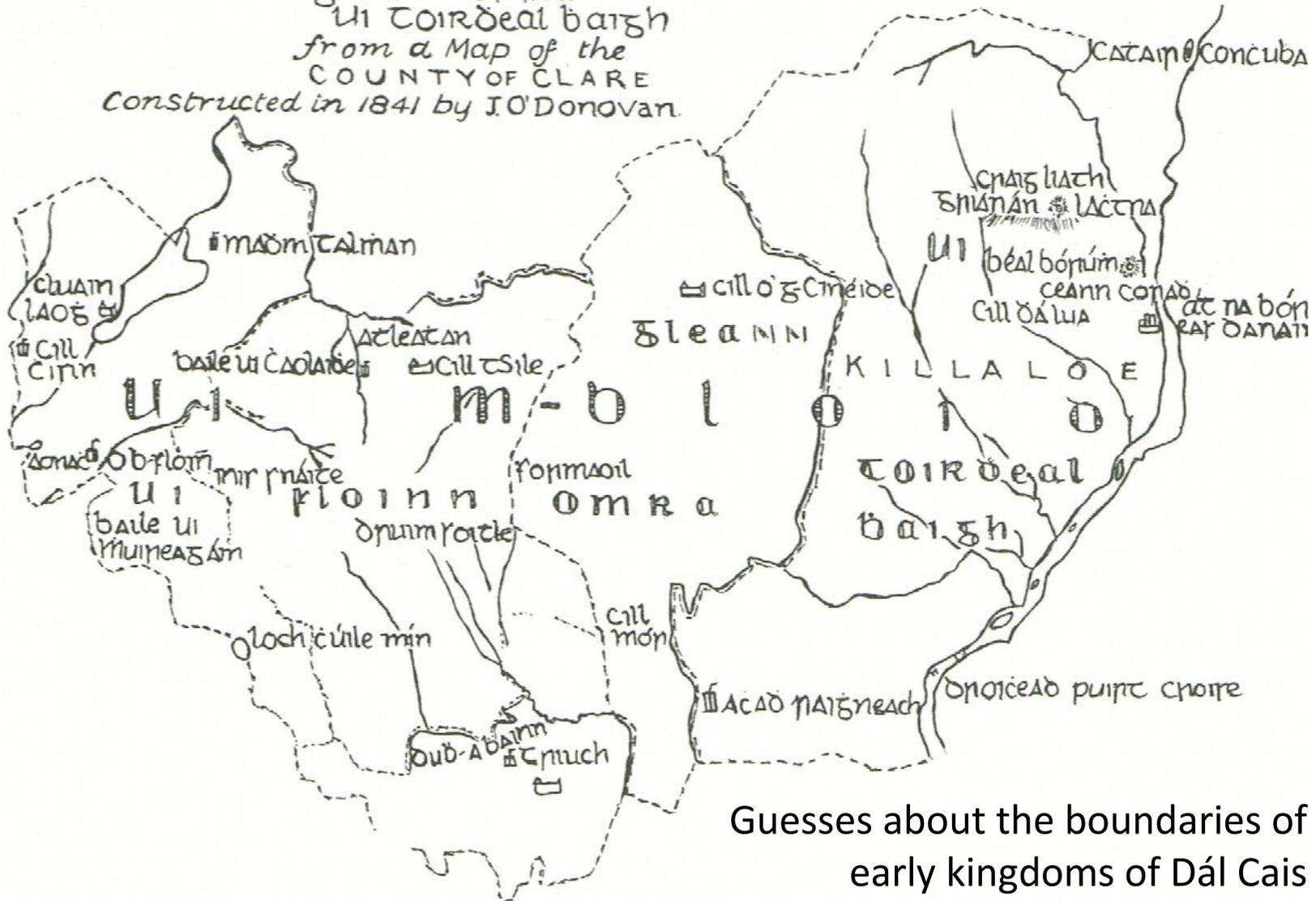
Early kingdoms of Co. Clare

Scholars use later administrative units (diocesan boundaries, deaneries, baronies or civil parishes) to put forward guesses as to the location of early kingdom borders.

This map is a guess by D. Blair Gibson (1995) about early kingdoms in County Clare before rise of Dál Cais



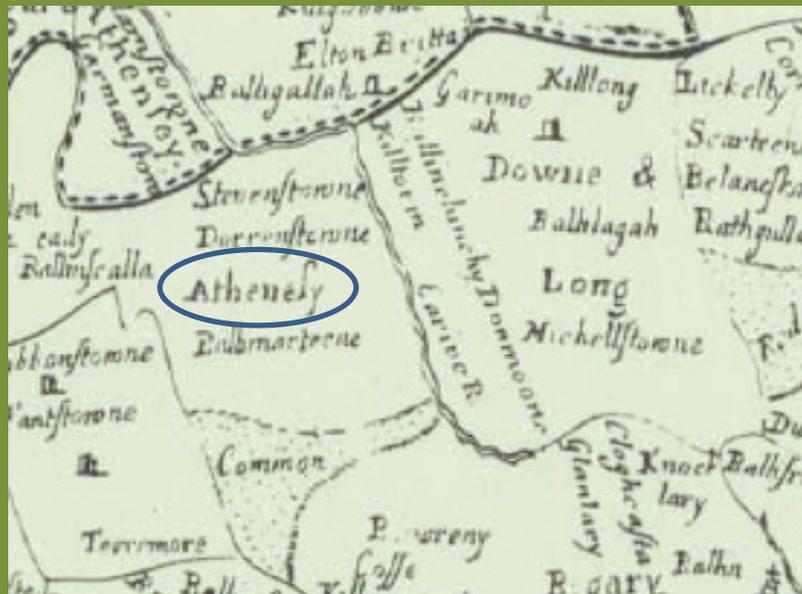
Uí m-blóid
 Uí Flóinn
 Gleann Omra
 Uí Toirdeal baigh
 from a Map of the
 COUNTY OF CLARE
 Constructed in 1841 by J.O'Donovan.



Guesses about the boundaries of
 early kingdoms of Dál Cais
 by John O'Donovan & Eugene O'Curry in 1841

County boundaries are late and may not reflect earlier units

- Athneasy parish, barony of Small County, Limerick = *áth na nDéise* – ford of the Déise

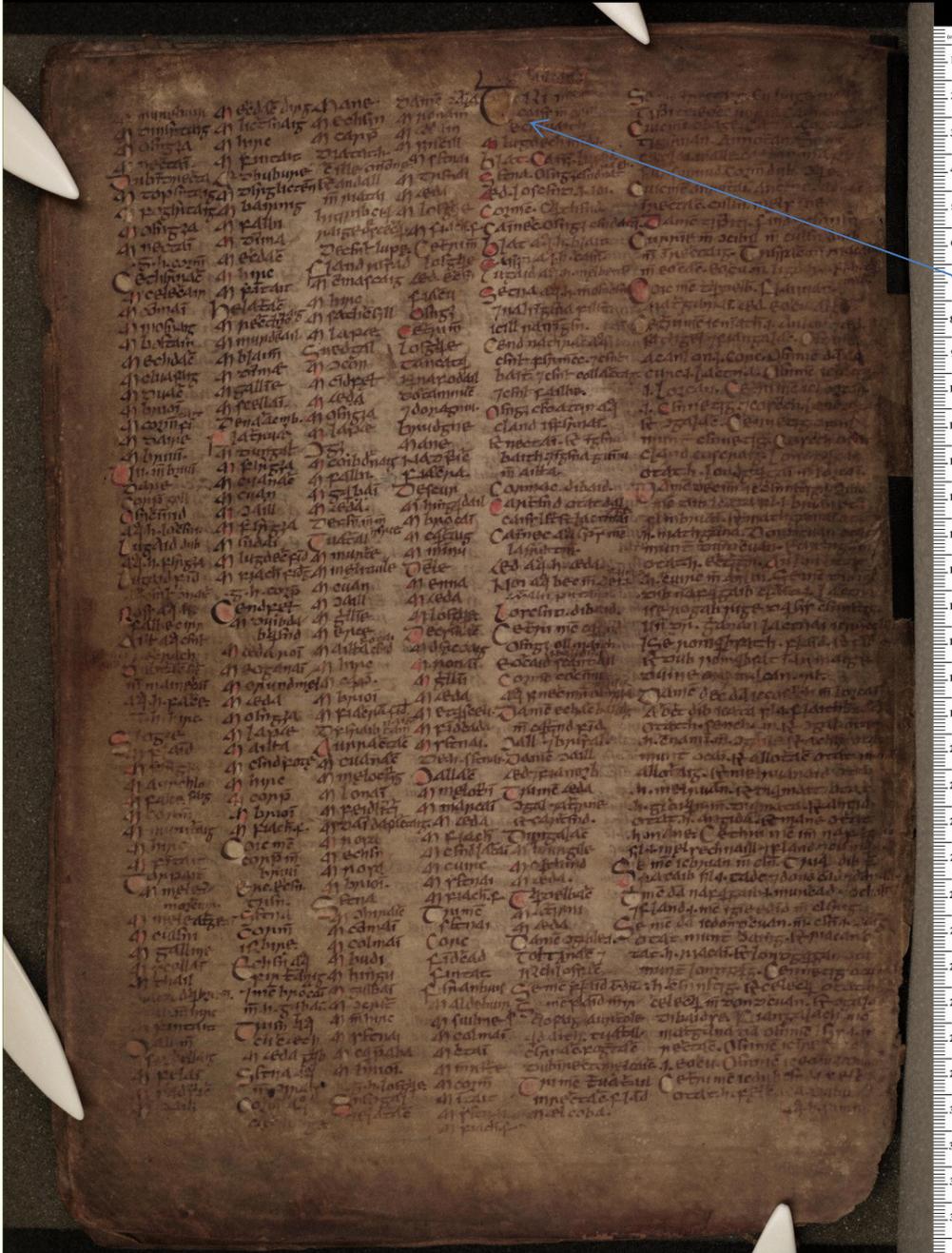


Athneasy is not a modern placename but it is recorded in 17th C as being down near Knocklong in mid east Limerick

Conclusion: Blair Gibson's map locating Déis Tuaiscirt or northern Déise is wrong in limiting the kingdom to within borders of modern Clare

Family history: the study of early genealogies

- If you're trying to trace your family tree, you start WITH YOURSELF and move back; usually there's a problem about 1850 when births only begin to be registered systematically.
- However early Irish kings were very interested in genealogies – mainly because a royal ancestry was part of the *febus* (leadership qualities) which put them in line for the throne. Irish kings were like prime-ministers – they had to be elected from a pool of potential candidates and the eldest son did not necessarily inherit the throne.
- NB ! Sometimes people cheated! And paid their poets to rewrite genealogies so they looked as if they had more kings in their ancestry than they did in reality....



BOOK OF LEINSTER – 12th C
 compilation of Irish tradition
 put together for Diarmait mac
 Murrough, king of Leinster.

Trí meicc déc Caiss meic
 Conaill Echluath....

13 sons of Cas, son of Conall Swift-horse
 son of Lugdech (*Mind*) the Treasure.

They are Blat, Casséne, Lugaid, Sétna,
 Oengus Cenn Nathrach (Snake-head),
 Oengus Cenn Aittin (Furze head),
 Cormac, Cáirthennn, Cainnech, Áed,
 Loiscenn, Nóe

Together Cas's sons make up the **Dál Cais** (assembly or community of Cas)

Each son was remembered as ancestor of a particular kindred

- Blat from whom are the Uí Blait (descendants of Blat)
- Cassín from whom are the Uí Cassín
- Sétna from whom are Maínchine and the daughters who are in *Cell na nIngen* (Church of the daughters/virgins)

NB! Surnames only start coming into use in Ireland after Brian's day so names like Uí Blait or Uí Cassín when used of Brian's ancestors can't be linked to modern surnames.

Maínchine – St Munchin – is a Clare man!

At least according to historians paid by the Dál Cais....





If one was feeling suspicious though, Munchin is said to be very remote ancestor in history of Dál Cais; - he is said to be the grandson of the original founder of the dynasty – Cas himself.

This may be a case where a little devil is prompting the historians to add him into the genealogy to make the Dál Cais look very important at a very early period.

NB! By the time this genealogy is written, Brian Boru and his brother have conquered Limerick from the Vikings and his great grandson, Muirchertach, is ruling Thomond from a base in the city. So their historians may be trying to pretend they've controlled Limerick since their ancestors were boys....

Blat's grandson – Eochu *Ballderg* [Red Spot]

- In *Bethu Phátraig* – a text of c. 900 AD; Eochu Ballderg and his son are said to have sailed down Shannon to Limerick:

“Cairthenn son of Blat, of the old family of Toirdelbach, he believed in the Lord and Patrick baptised him at Singland... No children used to be born to Cairthenn; there were only miscarriages. Then Eochu *ballderg* was born to Cairthenn. Patrick shaped him out of drop of blood and that spot was on his body as a sign of the miracle.”

Again, this is evidence that Dál Cais historians were making sure that everybody believed their kings had jurisdiction in Limerick area.

Son of Eochu Ballderg

According to somewhat later genealogies collated by Dubhaltach mac Fhirbisigh in the 17th C, Eochu Ballderg had a son, Mo-Lua Labhar (Mo-Lua the Talkative?) and he was the *dalta* or fosterling of Mo-Chuda and the founder of *Cell da Lua* - Killaloe



Cairthenn's "other" son in the genealogies

*Five sons of Óengus (son of Cáirthenn the Bright): **Rónán**
Rathmar, Feradach, Fáilbe, Móenach, Dímma Dub (the holy).*

*Five sons of **Rónán** : **Dímma the proud**, Diucaill, Suibne, Rochnu,
Conamal and two daughters – that is Rónnait and Feidelm.*

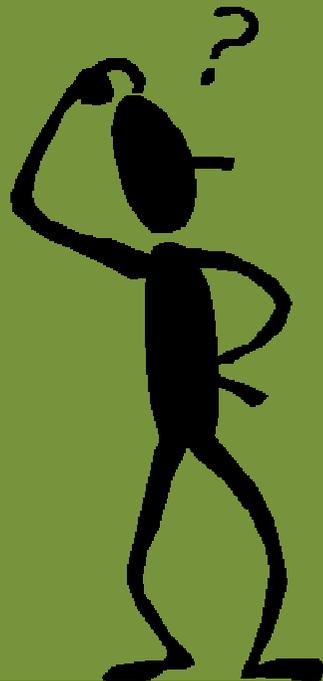
*Three sons of **Dímma** – Dub-dúin, Andlid, **Ferdomnach**.*

It is this Ferdomnach who gave **Inis Sibtonn** to Mainchine of Luimnech, and to Crónán and Mainchine gave the blessing of position over Ferdomnach.



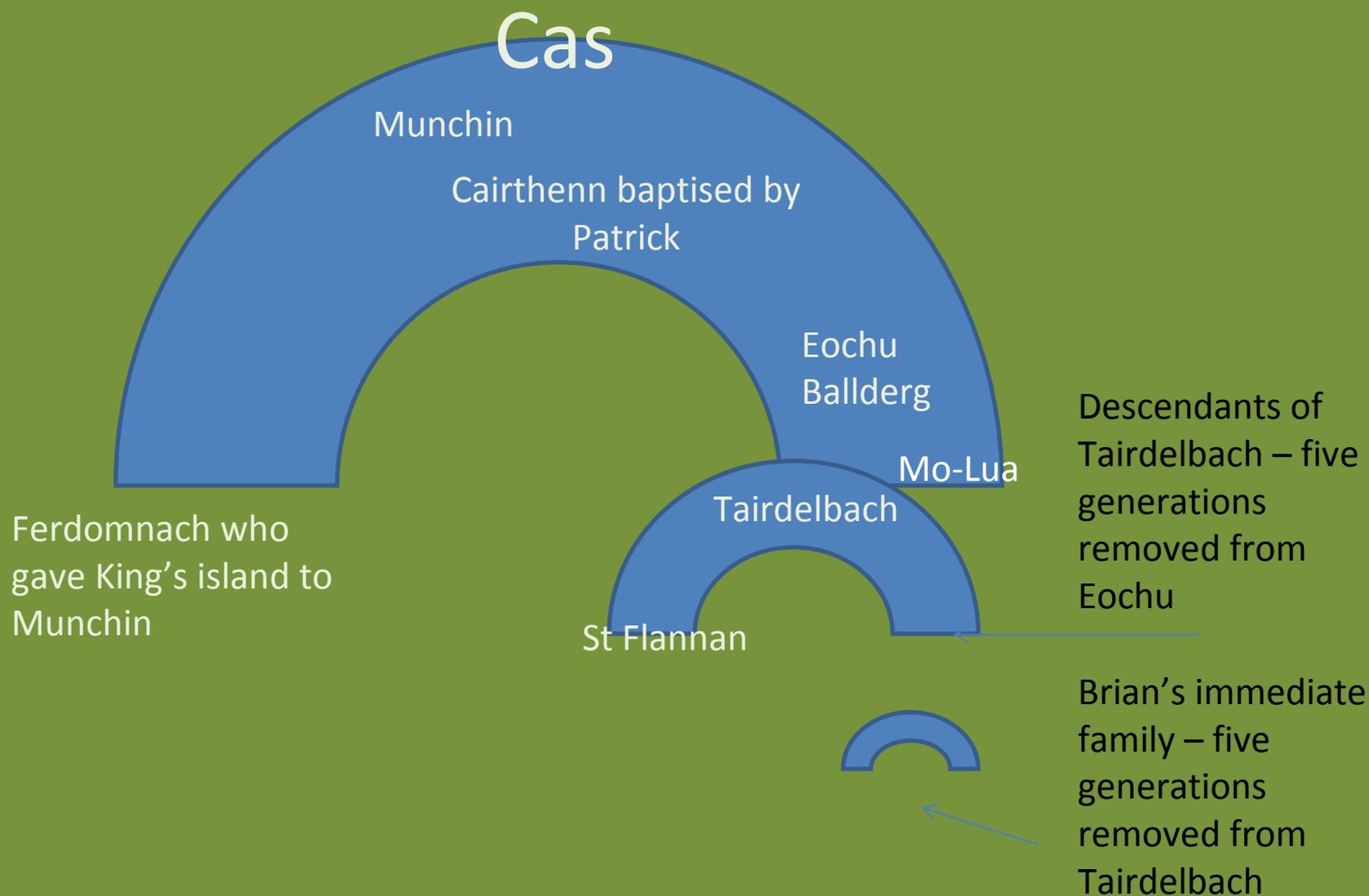
Something wrong here.....???

- Cas's grandson = Mainchíne = St Munchin
- Cas's great, great, great, great grandson = Ferdomnach who gave King's Island to St Munchin

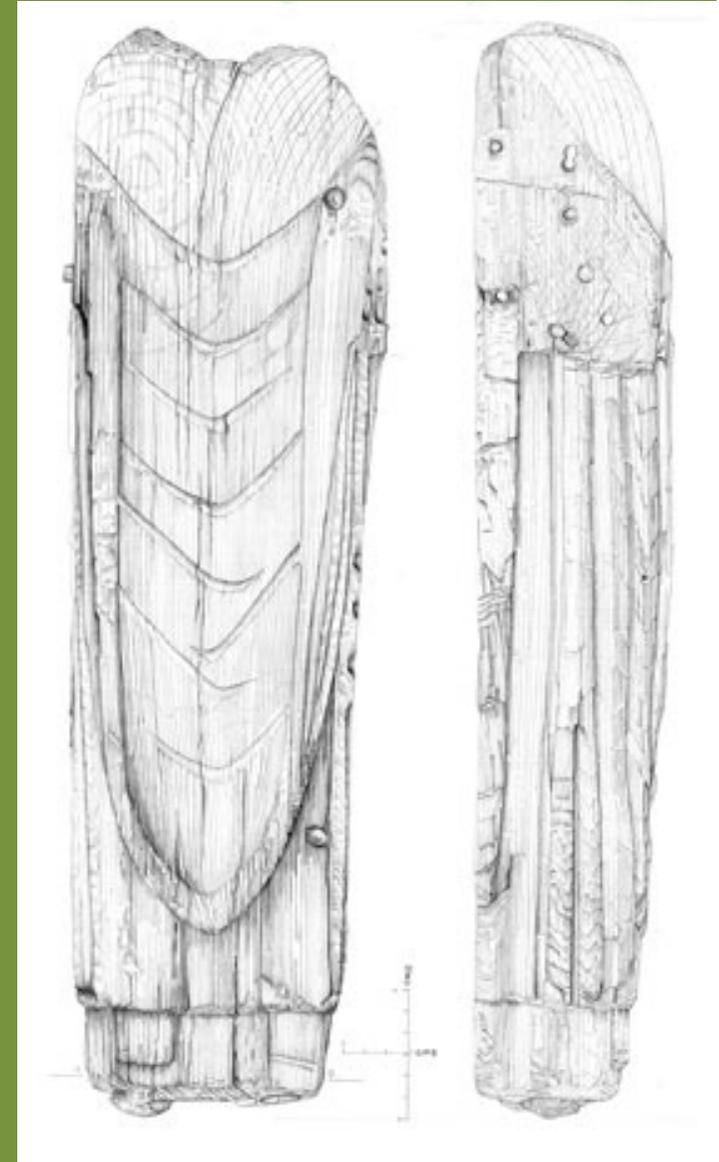


Moral... historians who work for pay sometimes get the details wrong !!!

Descendants of Cas



Tairdelbach is father of St Flannan



*Genealogy of the descendants of
Tairdelbach
in **Book of Leinster***

Five sons of **Tairdelbach**: holy Flannán, **Mathgamain**, Áed, Eochu, Ailgile.

Four sons with Mathgamain - that is **Ánluain**, Áed, Sathgel & Fiangalach

One son with **Ánluain** - that is **Corcc**

One son with **Corcc** - that is **Lachtna**

One son with **Lachtna** - that is **Lorccán**

Four sons with **Lorccán** - that is **Cennétig** & Coscrach, Londgargán & Congalach

Cennétig from whom are the Family of Cennétig

Cosgrach from whom are the offspring (Clan) of Coscrach

Longargán from whom are the descendants of Lonngargáin son of Lorccan

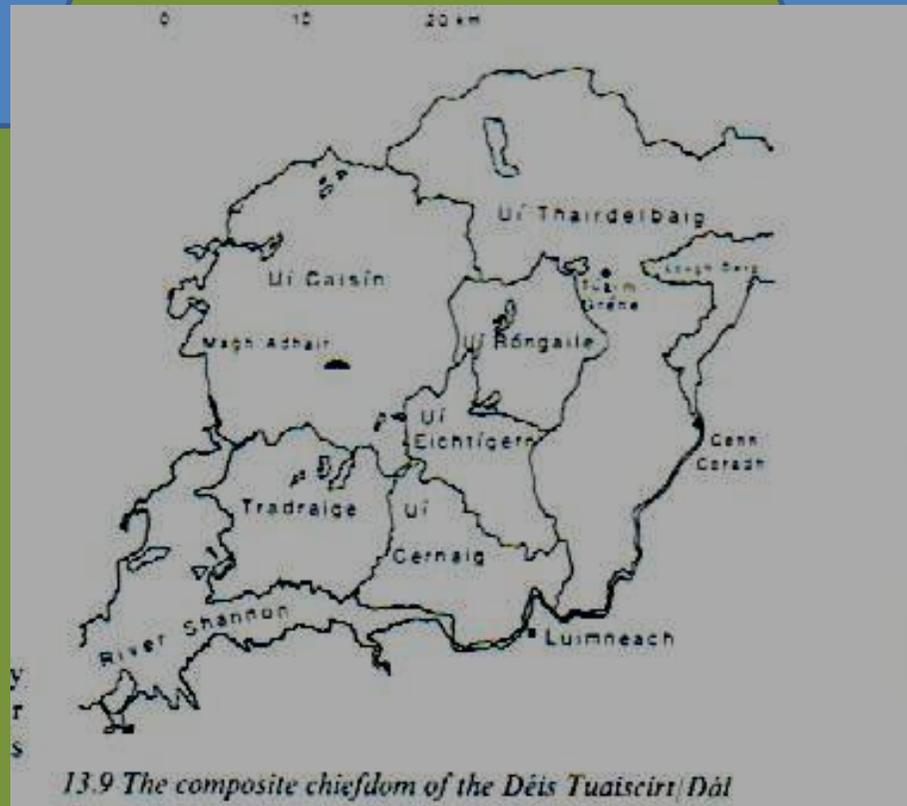
Cennétig is the father of **Brian Boru**...

- 12 sons of Cennétig and of them, five had descendants – i.e.
 - **Brian** (from whom are the seed of Brian (Síl mBríain),
 - **Mathgaman** from whom are the Uí Mathgamain [O'Mahony]
 - **Donn-cuan** from whom are the Family (Muintir) of Dond-cuan,
 - **Echthigern** from whom are the Uí Echthigern,
 - **Ánluan** from whom are the descendants of Corc son of Ánluan
- Seven of them, however did not produce offspring .i.e. **Lachtna** (it is he who took the kingship after Cennétich and thence is called the Grianán (sunny place) of Lachtna in Crech Léith; the Uí Flaind killed him
- Bright and Dark (**Find** 7 **Dub**) were killed in the slaughter of Mag Dún and Marcán

CAS

Caissín

Cairthenn



13.9 The composite chiefdom of the Déis Tuaiscirt/Dál

Tairdelbach



Brian Boru

Brian Boru's family – what the textbooks say

“The Dál Cais were originally Déisi who conquered and settled eastern Clare in the early eighth century. The annalists do not refer to them as Dál Cais until 934 when Rebachán mac Mothlai, abbot of Tomgraney and king of Dál Cais died. He was clearly a compromise candidate between two rival segments of Dál Cais – Uí Oengusso who had monopolised the kingship for several generations and Uí Thairdelbaig who had been their rivals for some time... Cennétig mac Lorcáin of Uí Thairdelbaig may have made himself king of Dál Cais as early as 934 and by the middle years of the tenth century, Dál Cais had become a power in Munster politics.”

D. Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans* (Dublin 1972), 114

Conclusions

- Brian Boru's family emerges as a political force in the 10th C – when Brian's dad, Cennétig takes over as king of the Dál Cais
- Our sources of the family relationships and genealogies of the Dál Cais was written after Brian became king of Ireland and thus it could well be written “backwards” to justify the family's political importance.
- The historians of the Dál Cais were eager to tie their family into a kindred involving important local saints and their churches.
- They also wanted to make sure that people appreciated that, as rulers in Clare, they controlled the Shannon and key areas around Limerick city.
- They also give us picture of small kingdoms linked together by memories of common ancestry though sometimes that ancestry is extremely remote.

Bibliography

- Donnchadh Ó Corráin (1972), *Ireland before the Normans* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan) – old-fashioned but probably still most accessible over-view of national Irish background to emergence of Dál Cais
- Máire Ní Mhaonaigh (2007), *Brian Boru: Ireland's greatest king?* (Stroud: Tempus publishing), chapter 2
- The genealogical information used here is available (without translation) in M.A. O'Brien (1962), *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies), 235-245