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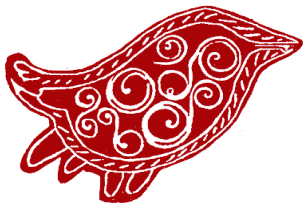

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The Uí Meic Thire of Imokilly

By DIARMUID Ó MURCHADHA

The name 'Mactíre' attained its place in Irish history in connection with the slaying of Miles or Milo de Cogan in 1182 A.D. Giraldus Cambrensis, the historian of the Norman invasion, described the killing of Milo and of his newly-acquired son-in-law (Radulfus, son of Robert Fitz Stephen) as having been carried out unexpectedly, from behind, with blows of axes 'by the traitor, Mactíre, (*a proditore Machtiro*) who owed them hospitality that night.'[1]

One must bear in mind that Giraldus did not arrive in Ireland until after Milo's death, and if, as seems likely, Milo's whole party was wiped out, the account given can hardly be regarded as a first-hand one. That given in Dowling's Annals[2] appears to derive from Giraldus—*'per proditorem nomine Machthyri qui duxit eos ad convivium.'* Dowling, however, says that Milo was killed between Waterford and Lismore; according to Giraldus, the slaying took place while Milo was encamped at Lismore, awaiting a conference with the men of Waterford.[3]

The Irish annalists make no mention of treachery in their account of the incident, and while 'treacherous killings' were by no means unknown, they were usually recorded as such in the Annals. Giraldus's assertion that Milo was owed hospitality by 'Mactíre' appears rather naive when we recall that Milo and Ralph FitzStephen's father were the very pair to whom King Henry had generously donated the whole "Kingdom of Cork' from Lismore to Dingle—including the lands of the Uí Meic Thíre—five years previously.

The Annals of Loch Cé display no regret for the killing of 'Milid Gocan, who took for himself the kingship of Cork and Desmond, the plunderer of Dublin, Waterford and Cork, and the destroyer of all Ireland.' They ascribe the killing to 'Mac Tíre, of the Uí Mic Caille.' Regrettably annals for the year 1182-1188 are missing from the Annals of Inisfallen, which leaves Mac Carthaigh's Book[4] as the sole Munster annalistic source. According to this, 'Miles de Cogan, Mac Sleimne, Ceann Cuilinn, Robert FitzStephen's son and five knights were killed, and slaughter was inflicted by the family of Ó Mic Thíre (*lo cloinn Hi Mic Tire*) King of Uí Ghlaisín, on the English at Lismore as they were going to attack Waterford.'

Here we have what is probably the correct form of the chieftain's name, i.e., Ó Mic Thíre—rather than 'Mac Tíre' the name of his eponymous ancestor. It is noticeable too that these Annals style him King of Uí Ghlaisín rather than of Uí Mic Caille. The names were not entirely synonymous.

According to the genealogies,[5] the various septs and sub-septs of East Cork all

[1] Giraldus Cambrensis, *Opera* v 350 (Rolls Series).

[2] *Annals of Ireland* by Friar John Clyn and Thady Dowling (Irish Arch. Soc., 1849).

[3] Rev. Edmond Barry ('Barrymore', *J.C.H.A.S.* v (1899) 15) mentions a local tradition that the killing took place at Curraglass, west of Tallow, within the borders of the present Co. Cork, and while this would appear a more likely spot seeing that the Uí Meic Thíre were of that area, it conflicts with the evidence of both Giraldus and Mac Carthaigh's Book.

[4] Miscellaneous Irish Annals (ed. Seán Mac Airt) s.a. 1183 A.D.

[5] I have followed the genealogies published in *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae I* (M. A. O'Brien) mainly from the early 12th century MS. Rawl. B. 502. That of Mactíre is from the Book of Leinster (c. 1150).

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derived from Eochu Liathán, son of Dáre Cerbba, the main branch being known simply as Uí Liatháin. Mac Brocc, son of Eochu, had a son, Mac Caille, from whose sons are derived both the Uí Liatháin and the Uí Meic Caille. Another son of Eochu's, Ailill Tassach, had a son Mac Cárthind, ancestor of a sub-sept unnamed in the genealogy, but as the last-named (seventh in descent from Mac Cárthind) is Mac-tíre, we may take it to be the genealogy of the Uí Meic Thíre.

Last-named in the Uí Liatháin genealogy are Anmchaid and Tuathal, sons of Dunchad. The first of these is probably the 'Anmchaidh, toisech Ua Liathain' whose death is recorded in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, 745 A.D. The death of Ceallach, daughter of Dunchad of the Uí Liatháin, is noticed in the *Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 731, while Cinaedh, son of Anmchaid, Lord of Uí Liatháin, died in 785 A.D. according to *A.F.M.* From Anmchaid, it is stated, are the Uí Anmchada, and that the Uí Anmchadha were the ruling family of the Uí Liatháin after the introduction of surnames is borne out by several references to them as such in the Annals of Inisfallen between 1042 A.D. and 1160 A.D. From Anmchaid's brother, Tuathal, the genealogy derives the Uí Ghlaisín, who probably took their name from Glaissini Mac Uisseni, described as Lord of Uí Meic Caille, whose death the Four Masters recorded in 901 A.D.[6]

The Uí Meic Caille, who had a separate descent from the Uí Liatháin for six generations, ending with Ailchú or Allchú son of Suibne, obviously held the southern portion of the Uí Liatháin territory, still known as Imokilly. But the Annals make no mention of kings of their own stock over the Uí Meic Caille, and as Uí Ghlaisín is frequently used to denote part or all of their territory, it seems that the Uí Ghlaisín took over the kingship of that area from the ruling family of the Uí Meic Caille, perhaps in the tenth century.[7]

The two names were frequently interchanged. 'Totam terram de Oglassin' is mentioned in a grant by King John to Gerald FitzMaurice in 1185-1187.[8] What seems to be the same territory is named Makelwy (Makeylly, Makelly) in a charter of 1251 A.D.[9] Philip de Capella was Seneschal of Oglassin in the early thirteenth century,[10] (a title which may correspond to the later 'Seneschal of Imokilly') while in 1293,[11] Oglassyn seems to have been a manor, similar to that of Inchiquin, both in Imokilly. An agreement in 1248 A.D. between Maurice Fitzgerald and the Bishop of Cloyne, quoted in the Pipe Roll of Cloyne,[12] mentions certain lands in Oglassyn; these included Clonpriest, Inchiquin, Killeagh and Kilcredan. It may be of significance that there is a townland named Lisglasheen in the parish of Killeagh.[13]

This ambiguity explains why Ua Meic Thíre was described in different Annals as King of Uí Meic Caille and as King of Uí Ghlaisín. Furthermore, it seems that the Uí Ghlaisín, in their turn, were superseded by the Uí Meic Thíre. It is interesting that Ó Huidhrín's Topographical Poem,[14] which names Ó hAnmchadha as King of Uí

[6] 906 A.D. according to Mac Firbis (*Three Fragments of Irish Annals*).
[7] There is reference to this change of kingship in Liam Ó Buachalla's article 'The Ui Mac Caille in pre-Norman times' *J.C.H.A.S.*l. (1945) 24-27.
[8] *Red Book of the Earls of Kildare* (ed. G. Mac Niocaill) p. 14.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[12] *J.C.H.A.S.*, xxi (1915) 143.
[13] The name Philip Oglassyn occurs in the Justiciary Rolls (Co. Cork) for 1307 (*C.J.R.*, i, 397).
[14] Ed. by James Carney (1943) ll. 1241—1248.

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Liatháin, refers to two ruling families over the Uí Meic Caille—Uí Bhreaghaigh and Uí Ghlaisín. There is no trace elsewhere of the Uí Bhreaghaigh, whose name appears to be a poetical form of Uí Meic Thíre, *bréch* or *bréach* being (like faelchú) an old Irish word for a wolf.[15]

As early as 1099 A.D. the Four Masters record the death of Uamhnachán Ua Mactíre, *comharba* of Colmán MacLeníne (i.e., Bishop/Abbot of Cloyne). The other noted ecclesiastical centre in east Cork was Cúil Collainge (Coole near Castlelyons). In 1151 A.D. (also according to *A.F.M.*) An Giolla Gott Ua Carráin, Lord of the Uí Meic Caille, was slain at Cúil Collainge by the Uí Mic Tíre. (The death of Ua Carráin, erenagh of Cloyne is noticed in the Annals of Innisfallen in 1092 A.D.). In 1160 A.D. *A.I.* record the slaying of Conchobar, son of Domnall Ua hAnmchada, by his brother's sons.[16]

This last slaying may have weakened the former ruling family to the extent that the Uí Meic Thíre became the dominant power not alone among the Uí Meic Caille but over the whole of the Uí Liatháin territory. This would explain why it was they who were responsible for the wiping out of Milo de Cogan's party at Lismore and would also explain the disappearance of the Uí Anmchadha from the Annals after 1160 A.D. A list of Irish chieftains at the time of King Henry's coming to Ireland as given in MacCarthaigh's book[17] names Lochlainn Ó Mic Thíre as ruling over Uí Meic Caille. The Uí Liatháin are not mentioned.

Incidentally, an account is given in the Annals of Inisfallen and in Mac Carthaigh's Book of a great conflict between the O'Briens and the MacCarthys in 1177 A.D., resulting in the mass movement of septs from one area to another. *A.I.* say that the Uí Meic Caille and the Uí Liatháin came into the west of Ireland; MacC.'s Book says that the Uí Meic Caille fled southwards across the Lee into Uí Eachach. The displacement appears to have been only temporary, yet some may have remained. The place-name Ballymakeera, west of Macroom, though usually written in Irish *Baile Mhic Íre*, could well be *Baile Mhic Thíre* or *Baile Uí Mhic Thíre*.

Under the date 1189 A.D. the Annals of Inisfallen give a rather obscure account of a battle fought by Domnall Mac Carthaigh aided by Cuilén Ua Cuiléin, but against whom is not made clear. Among the slain were Fíngen and Muirchertach Ua Caím and Diarmaid Ua Meic Thíre. A 14th century interpolation in the annal says that 'that battle was fought under the conduct of the Uí Meic Thíre and of Lochlainn's son on both sides,' and makes a further reference (partly effaced) to Mael Sechlainn son of Lochlainn. In 1202 A.D.; the same annals tells us that Ragnall Ua Meic Thíre was treacherously slain by his kinsman, Lochlainn Ua Meic Thíre. Lochlainn was the son of Diarmaid Ua Meic Thíre and he himself met the same fate when he was treacherously killed by Diarmaid Mac Carthaigh in Cloyne four years later.[18]

In view of the Norman infeudation of East Cork, this internecine strife had its inevitable result. In 1211 A.D. Diarmaid Mac Carthaigh was taken prisoner by the

[15] *Bréch* (wolf) is a rare word which, when it occurs, is usually glossed either as 'cú allaid' or 'mac tíre.' See *R.I.A. Contribb.* 'bréch.' It is sometimes found in place-names (see Joyce, *Irish names of Places* i, 482); Britway near Castlelyons is derived from *Bréachmhagh*.

[16] According to *A.F.M.* the chieftain slain in 1160 was Aedh Ua hAnmchada, and he was slain by the sons of Gillacaech Ua hAnmchada. He is described as 'Lord of Ui Mac Caille' but this may be in error for 'Lord of Ui Liatháin.'

[17] *Misc. Irish Annals* 1172 A.D. (recte 1171). This list, which does not occurin *A.I.*, may have been compiled in the fifteenth century.

[18] *A.I.* 1206 A.D.

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Sheriff in Cork and Donnchadh Ua Meic Thíre was slain 'by the same foreigners.'[19] This effectively ended the era of the Gaelic chieftains in East Cork, which soon became, and remained, a thoroughly Norman-dominated area. One of the chief castles to be erected there was named Caisleán Ua Liatháin (Castlelyons) while Castlemartyr was sometimes referred to as Imokilly Castle.

The only reference to the name Ó Meic Thíre in official documents of the Norman era is in the Justiciary Rolls of 1297 A.D.[20] which record a complaint by John le Poer that Thomas son of John son of Ralph came with his following, namely, Doncoch og Omettyre and Matthew Derby with their following, to John's tenement at the Sangarthe (Shanagarry) where they killed some of his *hibernici* and took away some of their property. Donnchadh óg Ó Meic Thíre could well have been a grandson or great-grandson of the Donnchadh who was slain in 1211—an apt illustration of the Irish saying: *'Trí ghlúin ó rí go rámhainn.'*

After this the name appears no more.[21] Perhaps those so named decided to change the name to Wolfe, so as to assimilate better with their Norman neighbours. Among the jurors at inquisitions held at Cloyne in 1348 and 1353[22]—several of whom bore Irish names—was one William Wolfe. As it happens, one of the cases concerned John, who was called Lowys, but whom the jury found to be a mere Irishman of the family of Okarny and therefore all his lands, etc., were the property of the Bishop of Cloyne, 'because all of the Okarny family are Irishmen of the church of St. Colman and villeins by birth.'

Some traces of the name were to be found in the place-names of the area. The Pipe Roll of Cloyne has a reference to a place in or near Mogeely called Tutmictyrhusthyn (also spelt Tothmumtrisshyn) the first part of which is almost certainly *Tuath Mhic Tíre*. Also, the townland of Knockane between Castlemartyr and Killeagh appears in a Patent of James I as 'Knockanmackterrie' (Cnocán Mhic Tíre), a name mentioned in an interesting tradition recorded by Edward Fitzgerald of Youghal, who published it in a pamphlet in 1858.[23] Referring to two large tumuli which had been levelled near Castlemartyr (opposite the entrance to Ballindinas) he tells us that they were situated on the lands of Knock-ane-Vic-thiera. In 1805, in one tumulus (known as Carraig na Huagha) workmen found a human skeleton partly shrouded in a winding-sheet of corrugated or embossed plates of pure gold (which was sold).

The local tradition regarding the site, as given by Fitzgerald, was as follows: 'A famous chieftain named Vic Thierna, having scoured all this quarter of Imokilly round by the coast, with his *Keriarks*, and made a great gathering of cattle, was proceeding on towards Cork when he was attacked in the grey of the morning, by the Imokilly men, headed by a valiant leader named 'Cogga-na-ponee.' Cogga killed the *creach* leader with his own hand at Ballindinas gate, and put all his followers to the rout . . . . The peasantry say that the sepulchral mounds just described were the graves of the slain, and also that Vic Thierna's cairn was on the lands of Knockane—hence its name.'

[19] *A.I.* and Mac Carthaigh's Book.
[20] *Calendar of Justiciary Rolls*, i, 97.
[21] 'Where a family lost at an early period their political power, their name is now either rare or even quite extinct'—M. A. O'Brien, 'Old Irish Personal Names', *Celtica* x, 216.
[22] 'Pipe Roll of Cloyne,' *J.C.H.A.S.* xxi (1915) 95, 97.
[23] *Vestiges and Relics of Remarkable Irishmen in the Vicinity of Youghal, of the Primeval or (Pagan period* quoted by James Coleman, 'Prehistoric Remains in East Cork,' *J.C.H.A.S.* iiiA (1894) 165.

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