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TWO DOCUMENTS RELATING TO Ó CONCHUBHAIR DONN

PÁDRAIG Ó MACHÁIN

The texts presented here are found in two documents that form part of a large collection of material relating to the Lestrange family of Hunstanton, Norfolk.¹ The collection, formerly held in the evidence room at Hunstanton, was transferred to the Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, in 1952–5.

Thomas Lestrange held lands in Roscommon and Westmeath from the mid-sixteenth century. A small selection of the items held in the Norfolk Record Office relates to these holdings, and among these are two vellum documents in Irish, which bear the catalogue numbers LEST/NL 9 and LEST/NL 10.² Both documents are copies – dating possibly from the mid-sixteenth century – of two Irish legal texts of the period.³ The originals were written in Maynooth 1516 (LEST/NL 9), and in the monastery of Roscommon in 1510 (LEST/NL 10), by Maoilín Ó Maoil Chonaire and by Muirgheas Ó hUiginn respectively, two members of the most prominent learned families of Connacht of the time. In addition to casting light on the affairs of Ó Conchubhair Donn in the early sixteenth century, the chronicle in LEST/NL 10 of the decline of Clann Cheithearnaigh is of particular interest.

The documents have in common the fact that they refer to the dealings of Ó Conchubhair Donn, Conchubhar mac Eóghain Chaoich, of Ballintober and Castlereagh, Co. Roscommon. Both documents also share a reference to the Earl of Kildare (Gearóid mac Tomáis mheic Sheóin Chaim, 1478–1513). LEST/NL 9 establishes the Earl's ‘black rent’ (cion dubh) on the territory of Ó Conchubhair Donn and the latter's vassalage to the Earl. LEST/NL 10 chronicles the title of Ó Conchubhair Donn to the land of his neighbours, the Clann Cheithearnaigh (McCarneys, Carneys) of Castlereagh (Caisléan Riabhach Meic Ceithearnoigh); one of the guarantors of the agreement referred to in this chronicle is the King's Deputy (Fear Ionaid an Ríogh i nÉirinn), Gearóid mac Tomáis.

The 1516 date for LEST/NL 9 is at variance, however, with the reference to Gearóid mac Tomáis mheic Sheóin Chaim in that document, as this Gearóid died in 1513.⁴ If the date is correct, then perhaps the solution is to be found in the allusions to the Earl's son towards the end of the deed. The son in question was, presumably, Gearóid Óg, who was Earl of Kildare 1513–34. It may be that this was a copy of the original deed, repeating his claims to the territories in Roscommon.⁵ Another solution suggests itself, however.

¹This family is the subject of a detailed study by Cord Oestmann, Lordship and community: the Lestrange family and the village of Hunstanton, Norfolk, in the first half of the sixteenth century (Woodbridge 1994).
²I am grateful to Anthony Breen, historian, for drawing my attention to these. For permission to publish them here I am grateful to Dr John Alban, County Archivist, Norfolk Record Office.
⁵The fact that only one witness is mentioned in the document may be another pointer to its secondary status.
It should be noted that both documents also share a reference to one Tadhg Buidhe, not as a witness for the legality or authenticity of the arrangements and events that they chronicle, but rather, it would seem, as a later, anecdotal source for some details of time and place. In LEST/NL 9 the authority of the exemplar (an tseanchairt) itself, that of the witness (Tomás Cam Ó Maoil Chonaire), and that of Tadhg Buidhe are cited at the conclusion in a later addition. Later additions at the beginning and end of LEST/NL 10 place the authority for the date of that document (1510) and for the place of its writing solely on Tadhg Buidhe. The 1516 date for LEST/NL 9, then, may be an error attributable to Tadhg Buidhe.

These documents may have come into the possession of the Lestrange family during the course of a dispute that occurred in the 1630s between Aodh Ó Conchubhair Donn and Sir Ha(r)mon Lestrange, concerning the ownership of the lands in question in LEST/NL 10. An inquisition of 6 July 1590, held at Roscommon following the death of Thomas Lestrange, found that he had been in legal possession of ‘a castle called Castlereog & of the 30 quarters of land in the territory of Clankerno in the county of Roscommon’. Charles Owen O’Conor Don, quoting a deed of 1585, states that Aodh Ó Conchubhair purchased ‘all the rights of the M’Kearneys’ to the territory of Clann Cheithearnaigh (Clankerno) in that year. LEST/NL 10, in addition to casting light on the Clann Cheithearnaigh themselves, shows that the proprietorial interest of Ó Conchubhair Donn in this territory originates earlier in the sixteenth century.

In the following transcriptions, manuscript contractions have been expanded in italics. Word division, and capitalisation of proper names are editorial, as are, with very few exceptions, marks of length. Line-breaks are indicated with a forward slash. Textual matter presented between square brackets is a reconstruction of rubbed or faded text. A hyphen is inserted between eclipsing n- and vowel-initial words in lower case.

LEST/NL 9

IS é so cunnrudh Úi Chonchubhair Duinn i. Conchubhair mac Eóghain Chaoich meic Fhélimidh Gencaigh re híarlú Chilli / Daro i. Re Geróid mac Tomáis meic Sheóin Chaim i. h. Conchubhair do chengal et an tíarlú re / chéilí go síoruidhe fo chor Dia et fo shlánaibh na naomh γ na coróine γ fo shlánaibh maithre / cundae Chille Daro i. h. Conchubhair do anmhoin ina óglach díles ag an iarlu γ dá fhícheat déagg / bó tug Ó Conchubhair don iarlu ar tús llics òing in gach énchtramhuin dá tigernnus ar feadh

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6 Perhaps the Tadhg Buidhe son of Ó Conchubhair Donn whose children were killed in 1548 (ALC II, 352).
7 Norfolk Record Office, LEST/NL 25, LEST/NL 23A. Though not immediately pertinent to the dispute, LEST/NL 9 may have come in through association.
8 Cited in Norfolk Record Office, LEST/NL 25.
9 The O’Conors of Connaught (Dublin, 1891), 220 n. 3. Cf. The Irish fiants of the Tudor sovereigns (Dublin 1994) § 4656.
11 288–9 x 195 mm, folded four times to make a package measuring 80–95 x 112 mm. 17 lines. Written in a single hand, identical to that of LEST/NL 10, but with a change of pen after dhíachaibh. Drawing of a hand accompanies colophon, beneath word MESE.
This is the contract of Ó Conchubhair Donn, namely Conchubhar son of Ógghan Caoch son of Féilimidh Geancach, with the Earl of Kildare, namely with Gearóid son of Tomás son of Seón Cam.

Thus: Ó Conchubhair and the Earl bind together in perpetuity, under the guarantee of God and under the sureties of the saints and of the crown and under the sureties of the nobles of County Kildare, that Ó Conchubhhair is to remain a faithful vassal of the Earl.

And Ó Conchubhair gave, firstly, twelve score cows to the Earl, and a shilling in every carton of his lordship throughout Machaire Connacht and Tuath Úí Ainlidhe and Clann Cheatharnaigh and Sliabh Úí Fhloinn, and the Earl promised on account of that to Conchubhar son of Ógghan Caoch to be as a father to Conchubhar’s son should Conchubhar die; and he charged everyone who should succeed him to do good to everyone who should succeed Conchubhar forever under the oaths of Brighid of Kildare and under the sureties of God and of the crown on account of what he gave to...

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12Cinel-Dobhtha, now locally called Doohy-Hanly ... it comprises the parishes of Kilglass, Termonbarry, Cloontuskert, and the eastern half of the parish of Lossonuffy [Co. Roscommon]’ (John O'Donovan, The topographical poems of John O'Dubhagain and Giolla na Naomh O'Huidhrin (Dublin, 1862), xli).

13District centred on the parish of Kilkeevin, Co. Roscommon, in which is located the town of Castlereagh: see M. J. Connellan, ‘Clann Ceithearnaigh its whereabouts and extent’, Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society 23 (1948–9), 70–74. Note the reference in LEST/NL 10 to ‘seachd mbaile Chloinde Ceternnagh’.

14According to O'Donovan (FM III, 92 n.), Sliabh Úí Fhloinn comprised twenty townlands shared between the parishes of Kiltullagh and Kilkeevin, Co. Roscommon.

15Probably Maoilín mac Torna who died in 1519 and who was noted as the chosen ollamh of the Gearaltaigh (FM V, 1344). Maoilín Óg mac Maoilín Í Mhaoil Chonaire wrote an agreement between Gearóid Óg mac Gearóid and Féidhlim Mág Raghnail in Maynooth in 1530 (Charles W. Russell, ‘On an agreement, in Irish, between Gerald, ninth Earl of Kildare, and the Mac Rannalls ...’, PRIA 10 (1869), 480–96).

16From this word to the end is a later addition in the same hand.

17Above the line.
the Earl and to his son after him, namely perpetual black rent to be ratified for him in Ó Conchubhair's country and for his son after him forever.

And the age of Christ when this was written was 1516 and Tomás Cam Ó Maoil Chonaire was a witness to that contract and it was he who received the cows.

I am Maoilín Ó Maoil Chonaire who wrote in Maynooth (this old document etc. from which this was written, if it itself and Tomás Cam and Tadhg Buidhe are correct).

LEST/NL.10

AOIS in tigerna an uair do scrif[bhadh] m'fle bliadhain c ciúc γέαδ lbm x γιαδhna nísa mhó bígh a chion ar 'Thadhuc m'Buidhe'.

IS iad so fiacho .h. Conchaphair Dhuind .i. Conchabhair mac Eóghain Cheoich mhic Fhélimidh Ghean/coídth mic Thordhealbaigh meic Aodha meic Eóghain meic Ruaidrí meic Aodha meic Chathoilt Chroibb/dherg .h. Conchubhair ar Chaisléan Riabhuch Mhic Cethearnaigh et ar in getramhain fhearróin ar a vfhul an baile .i. Sliocht Connd/mhaigh meic Mhuireadhach Mhullathoín .i. Clann Cethearnaigh do ghabhotor fén ag comach et ag cnámhgherradh ud ga γιμβaρbhodh / a chéile gan ched dá dtigerna soinigta .i. h. Conchubhair Donn .i. Conchubhar mac Eóghain Caoich gur fhásoigheador Clann Cethearnaigh etarro gur scriosotar / a cellu et a tuath γ γ aos ealudan gor dhílátirgheatar fén go nach raibhe lión a d'tire do hshuídechadh beó dá n/dhaoiníbh gor tuirsigeadh iad fén leth ar leth go nđeachotar dá dtóil γ dá n-aonta fén a ceand a tigerna .i. Ó Conchubhair Donn .i. Conchubhar mac / Eóghain Caoich ni od γniseator dó go rabhotar toiriseach γ γur mhithđidh leò síth do dhénonmh gnec od γail Ó Conchubhair síth etarro fo shlánáibh Día / γ na naomh nálhs of γaibh Uí Conchubhair luC γainní Suibhne γ chell et tuath γ aos ealudan Condacht of γ shlánáibh Fir Ionaíd an Righ in nÉtinn .i. Geróid mac / Tomáis buda γaírt Ó Conchubhair gor dhaoine scaiti Clann Cethernaigh g ehbh hca'n γáighthinuch nó áirgheacho acu on a n-oíl fén hú/dn a eabhair og γaígh ina fáisch γ nach roibhe a fhiós aige fén dá marbhdois Clann Cethernaigh a chéile mar do rineded roimhe gá vfhngheadh sé geall orra / γ dá curdaois Clann Cethernaigh gell do ghoirteóchadh iad fén roimhe go rachadh sé a slánáibh orra γ do chuatarorsomh a gcomhairle etarro / fén moc i sí γháirli aror chindeator a mbaile puirt fén i. Caisléen Riabhuch Míc Cethernraigh γ seachd mbaile Chloinde Cethernaigh do cur remhe / a nghell re dá fiachad d'ég loilege do thoil γ daonto Chloinde Cethernaigh uile γ is é do badh Mac Cethernaigh ann .i. Seóinín Mac / Cethernaigh γ tár és a sláno γ a gcengan c a γairdis Crístos do mharbh Seóinín fo ceann aimsire gerra ina

19-200 x 287–95 mm, folded four times to make a package 75–83 x 108 mm. 26 lines. Written in a single hand, identical to that of LEST/NL 9. Heading (Aoís in tigerna etc.) in ornamental box, extended to accommodate marginal addition; similar ornamental border extends along left and right margins.

19. bígh a chion ar Thadhuc m'Buidhe: a marginal addition in the same hand.

20. I have no other example of this word. On the assumption that it derives from graigh ‘horses’, I translate it as ‘groom’.
The age of the Lord when [this] was written was 1510 (let Tadhg Buidhe be blamed for it).

These are the dues of Ó Conchubhair Donn (namely Conchubhair son of Eóghan Coach son of Félimidh Geancach son of Toirdhealbhach son of Aodh son of Toirdhealbhach son of Aodh son of Eóghan son of Ruaidrí son of Aodh son of Cathal Croibhdearg Ó Conchubhair) on Caisléan Riabhuch Meic Ceithernaigh and on the cart of land occupied by the town.

Thus: the line of Connmhac son of Muireadhch Maileathan, namely Clann Cheithernaigh, they themselves began hewing and mutilating and murdering each other needless of their lord (i.e. Ó Conchubhair Donn i.e. Conchubhair son of Eóghan Coach), so that they laid waste Clann Cheithernaigh between them, so that they destroyed its religious, lay and learned people, so that they exterminated themselves, so that there did not survive of their people enough to occupy their territory, so that they themselves were wearied one by one, so that willingly and by their own agreement they approached their lord, namely Ó Conchubhair Donn (i.e.

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21 Georgius de Brana, Bishop of Elphin 1499–c.1508 (NHI IX, 283, 328), whose death in 1529 the annalists (s.a. 1530) considered no setback to charity: see Ann. Conn., 674 n. 4. His obit makes it clear that he was still accorded his nickname and title when no longer Bishop of Elphin.


24 Eugenius Ó Flannagáin, Bishop of Achonry 1508–c.1516; died c. 1522 (NHI IX, 322).

25 Kilkeevin parish, bar. Castlereagh.

26 Text very rubbed at this point. If construed correctly, this may be a reference to the two sons of Tomaltach Mac Ceithernaigh mentioned earlier in the text.

27 Tadhg Buidhe is fíor sin fón ionad: a later addition in the same hand.
Conchubhar son of Eóghan Caoch), and they told him that they were weary and that they thought it time to make peace.

And Ó Conchubhair made peace between them under the sureties of God and the saints and under the sureties of Ó Conchubhair and Clann Suibhne and of the religious, lay and learned people of Connacht, and under the sureties of the King’s Deputy in Ireland, namely Gearóid son of Tomás. And Ó Conchubhair said that Clann Cheithearnaigh were a shorn people, and that due to their own badness they had not groom nor herders, and that their territory was a wasteland, and that he himself did not know, if Clann Cheithearnaigh were to kill each other as they had done previously, where he would get a pledge for them. And if Clann Cheithearnaigh were to present him with a pledge that would be detrimental to themselves, he would go surety for them.

And they took counsel among themselves, and the decision they came to was to present him with their own stronghold, namely Caisléan Riabhach Meic Ceithearnaigh, and the seven homesteads of Clann Cheithearnaigh, as a pledge for twelve score milch cows by the consent and agreement of all Clann Cheithearnaigh.

And the Mac Ceithearnaigh then was namely Seóinín Mac Ceithearnaigh. And after [making] their sureties and pacts and covenants, a short time after that Seóinín killed the two sons of Tomaltach Mac Ceithearnaigh against the sureties of Ó Conchubhair and the King’s Deputy. And it was not long after that again that the same Seóinín killed the children of Eóghan Mac Ceithearnaigh against the same sureties.

And [then] Ó Conchubhair made claim for the sureties on what remained of Clann Cheithearnaigh. And he took possession of the castle and the territory and he took them in compensation for his sureties. And the lay and religious lawyers of that country adjudged for him that he had taken just possession of them. And willingly and by their own agreement Clann Cheithearnaigh gave An Caisléan Riabhach and the carton of land under it, with great thanks, to Conchubhar, and to his son and heirs after him, in return for giving them twelve score milch cows and the rest of the country.

And the witnesses to that contract are namely An tEaspag Gréagach and Mac Diarmada (i.e. Cormac son of Ruaidhrí son of Ruaidhrí Caoch), and Mac Cearbhail from the Tearmann (i.e. Lochlainn) and the Giolla Glasruadh Ó Flannagáin (two church airchinneachs of Clann Cheithearnaigh itself), and Aodh Ó Flannagáin from Cill Chaomhghin (i.e. a great Church prelate), and the chiefains of Ó Conchubhair, namely Ó Beirn and Ó hAinlidhe, and Muintear Fhloind, and Clann Suibhne, and all the learned community of all the territories.

And moreover, of the amount he had given as the portion of Clann Cheithearnaigh, Ó Conchubhair gave fifty cows to the King’s Deputy as a tax on the country of Ó Conchubhair and [in compensation for those same two?]

I am Muirgheas son of Maoileachlainn son of Cian Ó hUiginn who wrote [this] in the monastery of Roscommon by the will of the two parties. (Tadhg Buidhe that is correct concerning the location.)