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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. 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 twovellum documents in Irish, which bear the catalogue numbers LEST/NL 9 and LEST/NL 10. Both documents are copies – dating possibly from the mid-sixteenth century – of two Irish legal texts of the period. 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. 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. 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,\(^6\) 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 (\textit{an tseanchairt}) itself, that of the witness (Tomáis 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.\(^7\) 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 Castlereogh & of the 30 quarters of land in the territory of Clankerno in the county of Roscommon’.\(^8\) 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 Cheithearmaigh (Clankerno) in that year.\(^9\) LEST/NL 10, in addition to casting light on the Clann Cheithearmaigh themselves,\(^10\) 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 \textit{n}- and vowel-initial words in lower case.

\textbf{LEST/NL 9}\(^{11}\)

\begin{verbatim}
IS é so cunnrudh Úi Chonchubhair Duinn .i. Conchubhar mac Eóghain Chaoich meic Fhélímidh Gencaigh re híarlú Chillí / Daro .i. Re Geróid mac Tomáis meic Sheóin Chaim .i. .h. Conchubhair do chenthal et an tíarlú re / chéli go sforudhe foch Dia et fo shlánaíbh na naomh γ na coróine γ fo shlánaíbh mathe / cundae Chille Daro .i. h. Conchubhair do anmhoin ina óglach díles ag an Iarlu γ dá fhicheat déagg / bó tuc Ó Conchubhair don Iarlu ar tús llics γing in gach énchetramhúin dá tigernús ar teadh
\end{verbatim}

\(^{6}\)Perhaps the Tadhg Buidhe son of Ó Conchubhair Donn whose children were killed in 1548 (\textit{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.

\(^{9}\)\textit{The O’Conors of Connaught} (Dublin, 1891), 220 n. 3. Cf. \textit{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 \textit{hbiagáhf od γ dfhiachaibh}. Drawing of a hand accompanies colophon, beneath word \textit{MESE}. 
This is the contract of Ó Conchubhair Donn, namely Conchubhar son of Eóghan 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 Conchubhchair 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 Uí Ainlídhe and Clann Cheatharnaigh and Sliabh Uí Fhloinn, and the Earl promised on account of that to Conchubhar son of Eóghan 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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12 Cinel-Dobhtha, now locally called Doohy-Hanly ... it comprises the parishes of Kilglass, Termonbarry, Cloontuskert, and the eastern half of the parish of Lossonuffly [Co. Roscommmon]’ (John O'Donovan, The topographical poems of John O'Dubhagain and Giolla na Naomh O'Huidhrin (Dublin, 1862), xli).

13 District 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 Ceternaigh’.

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

15 Probably 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 Mhaol Chonaire wrote an agreement between Gearóid Óg mac Gearóid and Feidhlim Mág Raghnaill 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).

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

17 Above 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 scrí[bhadh] mífle bliadhain c cíúc γ'ead lbm × γ'iadhna nísa mhó bígh a chion ar Thadhc m'Buidhe /

IS iad so fiaochá h. Conchabhor Dhuind. i. Conchabhor mac Éoghain Chaoich mhic Fhélimidh Ghean/coinidh mic Thordhelbhaisigh meic Aodha meic Thordhelbhaisigh meic Aodha meic Éoghain meic Ruaidrí meic Aodha meic Chathoil Chroibh/dherg. h. Conchubharc ar Chaisléán Ráibhuch Mhíc Cethearnóigh et ar in getreamhain fheарoinn ar a vfhúil an baile. i. Sliocht Connd/mhaigh meic Mhuireadhaigh Mhuilleathóin. i. Clann Cethearnaigh do ghabhotor fein ag comach et ag cnáimhgherradadh ud ga γumharbhodh / a chéile gan ched dì tigerna soinigta. i. h. Conchubhair Donn. i. Conchubhair mac Éoghain Caoich gur fhásóigeadóir Clann Cethearnaigh etarro gur scriosotar / a cellu et a tuath γ a aos ealad gan dhfiláitrighthear fein go nach raibhe lión a dtire do hshuidichadh beó dá n/dhaoiníbh go tuisigeadadh iad fein leth ar leth go ndeachotar dá dtioll γ dá n-aontó fein a ceand a tigerna. i. Ó Conchubhair Donn. i. Conchubharc mac / Éoghain Caoich ni od γniseador dó go rabhotar toirsech γ gur mhithidh leó síth do dhéanomh gnec od γail Ó Conchubhair síth etarra fo shlánaíbh Dia / γ na naomh nálsh of γabhair Uí Conchubhair liC γainní Suibhne γ chell et tuath γ a aos ealad Conadh of γ shlánaíbh Fir Ionaíd an Righ i nÉitn. i. Geróid mac / Tomáis buda γaír Ó Conchubhair gur dhaoine scaiti Clann Cethernaigh g ebhior hcan γraighthiuch nó áirgheachach acu ón a n-olc fein htú/dn a aibhiar go γaigh ina fásuch γ nach roibhe a fhios aífein féin dá marbhhoideis Clann Cethernaigh a chéile mar do rimed riorimhe gá vfhugheadh sé geall orra / γ dá curdaois Clann Cethernaigh gell do ghoirteochadh iad féin roimh go rachadh sé a slánaíbh orra γ do chuataarsomh a gcomhairle etarra / féin moc i si γhairlí aror chindeator a mhaibheair puirt féin. i. Caisléán Ráibhuch Mhíc Cethernaigh γ seachd mbailte Chloinde Cethernaigh do cur remhe / a ngheal re dá fhichead dgu loilgech do thoil γ daonto Chloinde Cethernaigh uile γ is é do badh Mac Cethernaigh ann. i. Seóinín Mac / Cethearnaigh γ tar é is a sláno γ a gcengal c a γairdes Créost do mharbh Seóinín fo ceann aimsire gerra ina

18 190–200 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 (Aois 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 Thadhc mBuidhe: 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’.
dhiaigh sin / dís mac Tomaltaigh Meic Ceternaigh ar slánaibh Úi Conchubhair F ãir lonaid an Righ ã ní fado ina dhiaidh sin arís gur mharbh an Seóin/ín céadna clann Éoghaín Meic Ceternaigh ar na [slánaibh] céadna ã da agair [... Ó Con]chubhair na sláno ar an méd do mhair do Chloind Ceternaigh he od ãóidh sé / a selbh an chaisléin htuíd an ãche ã do ghlac iad a nghhill rena slánaibh ehterb cur ãmain chilí ã tuaithi in tíre sin / dó do bhreath gur maith fuair sé sin t ãuc Clann Ceternaigh dá toil fén n ād ã-aonto in Caisl éan Riabhach he na ãetramho feruinn do bhí faoi maille / buidhechus mór do Chonchubhair m ād ãuc ã dá hoigridhibh [sic] ina dhiaigh a nghhall re dá fhicheat dég loighteach ã in cuid ele don tür do tabairt doib / fén daif dais i ãhain an connorta sin i an tEspag Gréacach21 raiD caM ãmado i. Cormac mac Ruaidrí meic Ruaidrí Caoich22 M ãuc Cerbhuiull ón Ternonn23 í. Rochluinn / ã an Gilla Glasruadh Õ Flandogáin dá oírchindech chilli do Chloin Ceternoigh fén doA ãh Õ Flannagáin24 ó Chill Chaoinghamhin25 í. preláiét mór / eglise ã taoisigh Úi Conchubhair mar atá Õ Birt í. Ah Õ ãnldhí ã Muiner Fhloínd ã Clann tŚhuibhne ã clann saoidaecht na tírthadh uile go himshlán / ã tuilleadh ele tuc .h. Conchubhair x. mba ã da xx. tuc sé do chuid Cethernaigh do gerradh dFer Ínáidh in Righ ar dúthaigh Úi Chonchubhair as [don dis]26 céadna

MESE [M]urgehas / mac Mhaоileachlainn meic Céin Úi Uiccinn qui scrivhsid a mainisdaír Rosa Comán do thoil in dá ra[nn] Tadg Buidhe is fíor sin fón ionad27

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 Domn (namely Conchubhar son of Eóghan Caohch son of Félimidh Geancach son of Toirdhealbhach son of Aodh son of Toirdhealbhach son of Aodh son of Eóghan son of Ruaidhrí son of Aodh son of Cathal Croibhdearg Ó Conchubhair) on Caisléan Riabhch Meic Cethernaigh and on the carton of land occupied by the town.

Thus: the line of Connmhach son of Muireadhach Muilleathan, namely Clann Cethernaigh, they themselves began hewing and mutilating and murdering each other heedless of their Lord (i.e. Ó Conchubhair Domn i.e. Conchubhar son of Eóghan Caohch), so that they laid waste Clann Cethernaigh 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 Domn (i.e.

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21Georgius 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.


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

25Kilkeevin parish, bar. Castlereagh.

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

27Tadg 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 herdsman, 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 Cheithearnaigh, 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 Cearbhaill 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 chieftains 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.)