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From "The Triads of Ireland"

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From "The Triads of Ireland."

IN the Triads of Ireland, edited by Kuno Meyer from our oldest Irish MSS., such as the Book of Lecan, Book of Ballymote, &c., the following local references occur. The learned editor dates them about the second half of the ninth century (850-900 A.D.). Triads, as a distinct literary feature, are almost peculiar to Irish and Welsh literature. Most of the Triads are of a proverbial or homiletic character, such as—

Three silences that are better than speech : silence during instruction, and silence during music, and silence during preaching.

Three things that constitute a physician : a painless examination, a complete cure, leaving no blemish behind.

But a good number deal with the topography of the country, and many of these are very interesting. In the selection given here the local place is shown in italics.

1. The three rivers of Ireland : the Shannon, the *Boyne*, the Bann.
2. The three plains of Ireland : the plain of *Meath*, Moylinne,¹ and Moyliffy.²
3. The three dark places of Ireland : the cave of *Knowth*, the cave of Fearná (Derc Fearná),³ and the cave of Slaney.
4. The three desert places of Ireland : the *Fidh Mor* (Great Wood) of Cooley,⁴ the Spy Wood of Ui Tuirtri,⁵ and the Wood of Moher in Connacht.
5. The three unlucky places in Ireland : the abbotship of Bangor,⁶ the abbotship of Lynamally, and the kingship of *Mugdorn Maighen*.⁷
6. The three evil ones of Ireland : the Crecraige, the *Glasraige*,⁸ the Benn-traige.
7. The three strands of Ireland : the strand of Ross Airgit, the strand of Ross Leit, and *Traig Baile* (or Baile's Strand).⁹
8. The three familiar places, or places of greatest resort in Ireland : Tralee, Luachair, and *Slieve Fuaid*.¹⁰
9. The three meadows of Ireland : Clonmacnoise, *Clones*, Clonard.
10. The three stone buildings of Ireland : *Armagh*, Clonmacnoise, Kildare.
11. The three rent-paying places of Ireland : Clonard, Glendalough, *Louth*.
12. The three highroads of Ireland : Slige Dala,¹¹ Slige Asail,¹² Slige *Luachra*.¹³

NOTES.

1. A plain near Antrim town. Another version gives the plain of Roscommon instead of Moylinne.
2. The great plain of Kildare.

3. A celebrated cave, near Kilkenny, now called the Cave of Dunmore.

4. This was the great wood of the Fews, lying between Dundalk, Newry and Newtownhamilton. Dunreavy Wood where the O Neills of Glasdrummond lived, was the last remnant of it. It must at one time have been very extensive. The Triad shows that Cooley at the period embraced this district. In the Book of Leinster it is called Fídh Mor in Crannaig of Cooley. Is there any townland in the district or place called "Cranny"?

5. This was a place near Toomebridge inhabited by a tribe from Oriel.

6. Because the abbey was destroyed so often by the Norsemen.

7. This is generally explained as "Cremourne" in Co. Monaghan, but the writer believes it is the parish of Donaghmoyne.

Keating speaks of the "countries" of the Mughdhorna, i.e., the descendants of Colla Meann who occupied parts of Co. Monaghan and Louth. They are distinguished in old writings as Mughdorn Breg, Mughdhorn Maighen, and Crioich Mughdorn.

Donaghmoyne is Domhnach Maighen in Irish, hence M Maighen is the Mughdhorn folk who lived in Donaghmoyne, just as the M. Breg are the Mughdhorn folk who lived in Breagh or Co. Louth and Meath. Why the kingship of the M. Maighen was unlucky is explained in 1912 number of this Journal (Vol. III) under the title "The Adventure of St. Columba's Clerics." According to this story from the Yellow Book of Lecan Domhnall MacAodha MacAinmire, High King of Ireland—but ruling from Co. Donegal—left Tir Conaill to his eldest son Donnchadh, and to his other son Fiacha he left "the land of the crown-princedom, to wit, Fir Rois and Mugdorn Maigen, for they had no proper Irish king: for this is what these clans used to do kill their own proper sovereign." After enduring great hardships under Fiacha for one year they killed him also. Hence we can understand the triad, that the kingship of Mugdorn Maighen was no bed of roses. Now the Fir Rois were undoubtedly located around Carrickmacross and in the parish of Killany extending into Co. Louth. With these are bracketted the Mugdorn Maighen as being united under one king. It is clear that this must be a territory lying beside or bordering on the Fir Rois. Cremourne does not answer this description, for it was anciently and is yet separated from the Fir Rois by Donaghmoyne or Farney. Hence, both Whitley Stokes in the *Revue Celtique* and Kuno Meyer in the *Triads* are wrong in identifying M. Maigen as Cremourne.

How the King of Ireland or rather the King of Tirconaill had the right to appoint a king over Donaghmoyne and Fir Rois is not clear. Later on we find Adamnan founding a church at Carrickmacross, and Adamnan's staff or crozier preserved in the church of Donaghmoyne.

8. Kuno Meyer in his *Fianaigecht* (Todd Lecture Series, Vol. XVI) quotes the following reference to the tribe (pp. XI, XII):—"The Dal Runtair, and Glasraige in Cooley, and the Dal nImda are of the race of Conall Costamail." The *Onomasticon* (p. 439) shows that there were at least five other Glasraige in Ireland, but they were all unfree or rent-paying tribes, and were no doubt all regarded by the aristocratic Milesians as evil folk, or as having "a double dose of original sin." Are there any traces or recollections of them yet remaining in Cooley?

9. This is the modern Traigh Bhaile, still preserved as the Irish name of "Seatown"—the oldest portion of Dundalk. The strand of course embraces Blackrock, or in other words, it is Blackrock strand that is meant, but in these days there existed no "Blackrock" by which it could be identified.

10. Sliabh Fuaid was a comprehensive name for the mountains near Newtownhamilton over which ran the great highway into Ulster. This is why it was so familiar, from the great number of travellers frequenting it.

11. The great road from Tara to Ossory, or the modern Kilkenny.

12. Ran due west from Tara.

13. Slige Míodh-luachra was the great northern road from Tara to Dundalk, thence by the Moyry Pass, and over Sliabh Fuaid to Emania (or Armagh).

HENRY MORRIS.