advances made possible by Smith’s work have overtaken and outdated it, so that a thorough re-appraisal of all headword entries is necessary for the new edition. Another factor to be taken into consideration is the compilation of a computerised database of place-name material at the Centre for English Name Studies, University of Nottingham. This is taking place alongside work on the new edition of PNElements, and as part of the same research project. Time permitting, the database will aim to provide comprehensive coverage of English place-names, giving alternative derivations for each name in cases of uncertainty. Doubtful headwords will be included here rather than in the new edition of PNElements, and the latter will thus constitute a less comprehensive but more reliable dictionary of words whose occurrence is securely evidenced in place-names. Some of Smith’s entries can no longer be considered appropriate, but none will lightly be set aside. A list of deleted headwords, with a brief explanation of the reasons for rejection, will be essential as an appendix to the new edition of English Place-Name Elements.60

The Mountain Names of County Down

Micheál B. Ó Mainnín
Queen’s University, Belfast

Of all the place-names which have been subjected to the attention of scholars in the last 100 years it seems to me that those of physical features have been the most neglected. This is certainly true of Ireland and had, up to the 1960s at least, also been true of Scotland.1 In this paper I am concerned, in particular, with the names of hills, mountains and other upland features in that part of County Down popularly known as ‘the Mourne Mountains’.2 We might expect this area to be fruitful for two reasons. Firstly the preliminary groundwork has recently been completed.3 Furthermore, of all the mountainous areas in Ireland the Mourne area deserves special attention, particularly as de hÓir has stated that more names of this sort were collected here than in any other part of Ireland.4 The mountain names fall into two classes: (i) the great majority of names which are not administrative units and are rarely documented in the early sources; (ii) those administrative names, i.e. townlands, which derive from physical features. This latter group forms about a quarter of the total. It may also be worth

60 I am grateful to Professor Barrie Cox for reading this article through and advising me on various matters.

1 ‘The reason for this apparent lack of interest in mountain-nomenclature ... must surely lie in the comparative lateness and derivativeness of that nomenclature, which in turn is to be explained by the fairly recent interest taken in mountains as such by climbers, scientists, cartographers, etc.’, W. F. H. Nicolaisen, ‘Scottish Place-Names 32: Gaelic tulach and barr’, Scottish Studies, 13 (1969), 159–66 (at p. 159).
2 This range does not fall wholly within the boundaries of the barony of Mourne, which is coterminous with the parish of Kilkeel (47,887 statute acres); in fact it straddles those boundaries and extends into the neighbouring parishes of Kilcoo (18,206 acres), Kilbroney (13,208), Clonallan (11,560) and Glounduff (21,227 acres).
3 Gregory Toner and Micheál B. Ó Mainnín, Place-Names of Northern Ireland, 1, County Down, 1, Newry and South-West Down (Belfast, 1992); Micheál B. Ó Mainnín, Place-Names of Northern Ireland, 3, County Down, III, The Mournes (Belfast, 1993).
mentioning at this point that of the other townland names which are not the subject of this discussion the overwhelming number are Irish in origin. Only the townlands of Grange and Greencastle seem to have been named by the Anglo-Normans, which is in marked contrast to the Ards peninsula of Co. Down in particular where their influence on the toponymy was substantial.² Norse influence is also minimal and seems to be confined to the name Carlingford Lough and to the island named Haulbowline in that lough. There are, however, some names of English origin, largely minor names or names of physical features which sprang up in an increasingly English-speaking environment between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

It would be well to begin our examination of the mountain nomenclature of this area with a brief description of the name Mourne itself and its historical background. The original Irish form Mughbóirna is a tribal name and it seems likely that the people so named migrated to Down from Co. Monaghan sometime in the second half of the twelfth century. Prior to this the district as a whole was known simply as Baire or Bóirche, which Arthurs believes to be a neuter noun in origin, cognate with Irish bar(‘) ‘top, pinnacle’ and meaning ‘the peak district’.³ It was later that the mountains came to be known as Beanna Bóirche, ‘the peaks of the peak district’, which is obviously a tautological name. Beanna Bóirche continued to be applied to the mountain range in Irish-language documentation up to the last century, but the tribal name Mughbóirna replaced Bóirche as the name most commonly applied to the district as early as 1204.⁴

Having dealt with the name of the barony we can now consider those townland names which derive from the names of hills and mountains. Of the 173 townlands in the Mourne area, 56 are derived from the names of hills and mountains, almost exactly one third. When one excludes the considerable area of low ground along the coast where the names are densest, we can see that the names in upland areas are almost wholly derived from their physical environments as opposed to settlements in the lowland areas. The most striking feature of the townland names (Appendix D) is the preponderance of elements such as drom or drum, dromainn, lorgain and tulaigh and the scarcity of sliabh, mullach and croc. Both drom ‘ridge’ and lorgain ‘shin’ are examples of words which have undergone the same semantic shift as English ‘ridge’, i.e. from a part of the body to a physical feature. Drum is found all over those parts of Scotland where Gaelic has at some time been spoken,⁵ and is also extremely common in Ireland where it is found initially in c. 2,400 settlement-names.⁶ The similar word dromainn (< drom) is said to mean ‘ridge, hillock or humpback hill’. Lorgain (< lorga) has come to mean ‘a long low ridge, stripe [sic] of land’ in place-names,⁷ and is most common in the provinces of Ulster and Connaught.⁸ Tulaigh (< tulach) ‘hillock, knoll, mount, etc.’ is another common element in Irish place-names and is also common in central and particularly north-eastern Scotland.⁹

Taken together a sizeable number of these names are descriptive and are of the form noun plus adjective: Drom Mór ‘large ridge’, Dromainn Leathan ‘broad or level ridge’, Lorgain Riabhach ‘dun or grey low ridge’. Many are qualified by other nouns which may refer to some attribute of the primary feature, e.g. Lorgain Chonaire ‘long low ridge of the pass’, or to its natural resources, organic or inorganic, e.g. Tulaigh Frathach ‘hill of the heather’. A few are qualified by surnames: Lorgain Uí Cháinse ‘Ó Cáinte’s long low ridge’, Tulaigh Uí Bhranagan ‘Branagan’s hill’. Some appear to be reasonably old,¹⁰ particularly those which are compounds, e.g. Easbhoirn ‘horse-ridge’, Liatroim ‘grey ridge’, An Ghabsladromainn ‘the green ridge’. Names such as Tulaigh na Sí ‘hill of the berries’, where the article is present, are

---

⁵ Ó Mainnín, The Mournes, p. 124.

---

³ Joyce, Irish Names, I, 527.
probably the latest stratum and it is worth noting that examples without the article seem to be more common: *Tulaigh Phréamh* 'hill of the roots', *Dromainn Domhnaigh* 'ridge of the church'. The latter is particularly noteworthy as it has been claimed that *domhnaigh*, in the sense 'church', had largely ceased to be productive in the forming of names as early as the seventh century. Other names which may form the earliest stratum are *Caillmann* 'a steep, unbroken slope', a word which has long been obsolete, and *Teambraigh* 'conspicuous or elevated place'. *Guthard* 'resounding height' might seem an unlikely name formation were it not that a similar name occurs in an early Irish law text and in the Tripartite Life of St Patrick. The townland of Guhard in Co. Kerry is of similar origin. Another formation also containing the element *ard* is *Ard Eachadh* 'Eachadaigh's height'.

Other common elements in these townland names deserve a mention. *Carraig* 'a rock' is found in composition with surnames in *Carraig Úi Chroisán* 'O'Croisán's rock' and *Carraig Úi Mhaoilsté* 'MacStay's rock'. It also appears in the name *Carraganach* 'place of rocks' where it is compounded with the suffix -*anach*. *Boirinn* (< *boireann*) 'a rocky place' is the primary element in three townland names: *An Bhoirinn* in Clonallan, and *An Bhoirinn Bháin* and *An Bhoirinn Riabhach* 'the white rocky district' and 'the dun or grey rocky district' in Kilcoo. Townlands indicative of a similar geographical environment are *Carr an Chualaim* 'rugged place of the holly' and possibly *Crúán* 'hard ground' and *Muine Scalp* 'scrub or thicket of the furse'. There are also a couple of instances of the element *tambnaigh* or *tambnaigh* 'clearing or grassy upland': *Tambnaigh an Choibhe* 'clearing or grassy upland of the (memorial) stone' and *Tambnaigh Bheithbe* 'clearing or grassy upland of the birch'.

*Maol* 'bare or round summit or hill' may be established in two names: *Maol Dortáin* 'Dortán's bare or round summit' and possibly *Baile Mhaoile* 'townland of the bare or round summit'. It is also found in Scotland where it is confined largely to the West Highlands and

---

15 T. S. Ó Máille, 'Caillmann in *éistimneacha*, *Béaloidheas*, 28 (1960), 50-64 (at pp. 58 and 61).

---

*Ô MAINNÍN*

Inner Hebrides. Nicolaisen has suggested that it may have ceased to be productive there 'at a comparatively early stage, i.e. before Gaelic speakers settled in the Pictish north-east from the ninth century onwards'; alternatively, it may be 'a dialect word in its topographical usage'. However, our latter example, *Baile Mhaoile*, is quite likely to be post-twelfth century as it contains the element *baile* 'farmstead, homestead, townland'. *Maol Dortáin*, on the other hand, may be much older as it contains the early personal name *Dortáin* or *Dartán* which also appears to be found in the ecclesiastical name *Kildarton* in Co. Armagh. It remains to mention the solitary examples of *sliabh*, *mullach* and *cnoc* in these townland names: *Sliabh na Leargadh* 'mountain of the sloping expanse', *An Mullach Mór* 'the great summit' and *Cnoc Beartach* 'hill of heifers'.

When we examine those hill or mountain names which are not townland names, however, the picture is quite different. Here the *sliabh* element abounds and forms by far the greater proportion of all mountain names, townland names included. A number of distinctive groups can be identified. Most likely first in chronological order are those which contain personal names (Appendix E1), particularly *Sliabh Dónairt* 'Dónart's mountain', but possibly also *Sliabh Diarmada* 'Dermot's mountain', *Sliabh Mártain* 'Martin's mountain' and *Sliabh Mhic Rúsainge* 'Mac Rúsainge's mountain'. In the case of both *Sliabh Diarmada* and *Sliabh Mártain* the absence of mention of the personal name indicates that they do not belong to the latest stratum of names, although this may not mean that they are particularly old either. *Sliabh Diarmada* is probably named after *Diarmait na Dhuibhne* of the warrior band known as the *Fianna*. *Fionn mac Cumhaill* (an Anglicized Finn MacCool) was the leader of this legendary group of soldiers who were said to have lived in the early centuries of the first millennium. The latter is commemorated in another mountain name in the locality, *Suí Fhíanna* 'Fionn's seat'. It is also convenient to consider *Sliabh na mBan* 'mountain of the women' at this point. This appears to be rather an unlikely name for a mountain. However, there is another *Sliévenamon* in Co. Tipperary which was ancienly known as *Sliabh na mBan Fhiomhinn* 'mountain of the women of Feimhinn', *Feimhinn* being an
old territorial name. It derives its name from a famous σι or fairy palace on the eastern shoulder of the mountain where the women of the Tuatha Dé Danann or fairy folk are said to have enchanted none other than Fiann mac Cennailt and his Fianna. It is possible, therefore, that our Slievefanans does derive from Slieba na mBan in Irish and that the name originated in some similar local folklore. Whatever the correct interpretation of Slieba na mBan it seems possible that Slieba Darmda and Sui Finn are old names which were coined some time after the twelfth century when stories of the Fiannaic cycle came to prominence both in Ireland and Scotland. Finally there is Slieba Ming Eithach ‘Mageogh’s mountain’, which differs from others in the group in that Mage Eithach is a surname.

Now to return to Slieba Dónarit. Slieve Donard is the highest and most prominent mountain in Mourne. For this reason it is sometimes referred to as Bern mBoirche ‘the peak of Boirche’ in the earliest sources, as opposed to Beanna Boirche ‘the peaks of Boirche’ which applies to the range as a whole. In the Triads of Ireland it is described as one of ‘the three heights of Ireland’, the other two being Cruachán Aigle, now Croagh Patrick in Mayo, and Ae Chuidarn, either the Great Sugarloaf or Lugnaquilla in the Wicklow mountains. Unlike Boirche, Dónart (< Domongort), who features in the modern name, seems to have been an historical character who belonged to the late fifth and early sixth centuries. His father Echaidh, King of the Ulaidh (from whom Ulster takes its name), died in 503. The Tripartite Life of St Patrick tells us that Echaidh was a pagan chief who, in trying to prevent two maidens from devoting their lives to Christianity, incurred the wrath of St Patrick. For this the saint cursed him by saying that his own life would be short and that the kingship of Ulster would pass to his brother Cairell and his descendants. Echaidh’s wife, however, submitted to Patrick who blessed both her and the child in her womb, Domongort, on that account. Domongort was later to distinguish himself as a saint and is honoured in the text as the man who ‘will upraise Patrick’s relics shortly before Doom’. He was still remembered in the locality in 1834 when Mrs Con Magennis related a number of legends concerning the saint’s alleged conflict with St Patrick to John O’Donovan while the latter was on field work in Annaclo and Drumballyroney.

The mountain we have just been dealing with is exceptional in that it occurs frequently in the sources from as early as the ninth century. There are other names in the area which, if not quite as ancient, also have their origins in early times. These are the mountain names in which Slieba is the second element in a compound (Appendix E1c). Crotbliabh ‘humped mountain’, Fiomhbliaabh ‘white mountain’ and Maolbliabh ‘bare or round mountain’. With the latter may be compared Formaol ‘round or bare summit’. Possibly the most interesting formation of this type is Seanbhliabh ‘old mountain’, which appears twice in the nomenclature of the Mourne. This might seem to be an extremely odd name, as how can one mountain be older than another? It is probably to be explained as indicating that these mountains had been grazed or possibly even inhabited before others in the area.

Later formations are also common in the Mourne in which the noun is followed by the adjective in keeping with the conventional word-order in Modern Irish, Scottish and Manx (Appendix E1b). Most of these names are unexceptional from the linguistic and indeed topological point of view: Slieba Bán ‘white mountain’, Slieba Beag ‘little mountain’, Slieba Bearnaich ‘gapped mountain’, Slieba Bog ‘soft mountain’, Slieba Corraich ‘rugged or pointed mountain’, Slieba Fada ‘long mountain’, Slieba Min ‘smooth mountain’, and Slieba Rua ‘red mountain’ (2 examples). Slieba Spalita ‘scorched mountain’ is an unusual name, however, and Slieba Coimbéideach ‘watching or guarding mountain’ is also an interesting example. Another evocative name is Slieba Lámhagát ‘creeping mountain’, so called, according to Harris, ‘because it must be climbed in a creeping Posture’. This name differs from Slieba Coimbéideach in that slieba is here qualified by a noun rather than an adjective (Appendix E1c). Other names of this type resemble Slieba Lámhagát in that the article is not employed. Slieba Binnéad ‘mountain of the little peak’ is an interesting example, as is Slieba Meascán ‘mountain of the meascán’, where meascán

19 Joyce, Irish Names, I, 185.

21 Seanbhliabh is an exception in that sean is one of a small number of adjectives which continue to be prefixed to nouns in the modern Gaelic dialects.

probably refers to 'a pat or small dish of butter'. It seems likely that the mountain got its name from the custom of burying butter there in order to preserve it. This was common practice in areas where cattle were grazed on high ground during the summer months, and Wagner has noted the custom in the Sliabh Liag area of south-west Donegal.  

Sliabh an Íme ‘mountain of the butter’ is probably of similar origin and here, like in most other names in this group, the article is in evidence. Other examples are Sliabh an Chaimh ‘mountain of the cairn’, Sliabh an Charnán ‘mountain of the little cairn’, and Sliabh na gCloch, ‘mountain of the rocks’, of which there are four examples in the Mournes, two anglicized as Slievenagloigh and two translated as Rocky Mountain.

There is a considerable number of mountain names in Mourne which are qualified by the names of animals (Appendix E1d). A couple of the more interesting examples will suffice. Sliabh na Circe ‘mountain of the hen’ is one such name. We have seen that the old Irish name for the Mournes was Bean na Boirech which, in the medieval Dindsenchas or lore of famous places, has been explained as 'Boireche's peaks'. It is particularly interesting, therefore, that there are also three references to 'Boireche's hen' elsewhere in the Dindsenchas, which suggests that there might be a connection with Hen Mountain. There is nothing, however, to connect this body of legend with the Mournes other than the name Boireche itself. Sliabh an Choilligh ‘mountain of the cock’ is a similar type of name and both are often coupled in the locality as 'the Cock and Hen'. Other names worth noting are the pair Sliabh Muc ‘mountain of [the] pigs’ and Sliabh na Muc ‘mountain of the pigs’ which illustrate the contrast between late names which introduce the article and earlier strata.

In marked contrast to slieb is beann, dative h(é)aran, 'peak, pinnacle, etc.’. This element is particularly common in Scotland—there are over 1000 examples of it as an initial element on Scottish One-Inch maps—so much so that Nicolson has considered it to be a

23 Cf. the Scottish triad a’ Chaor Leòdhaisach, an Coilteach Arannach, agus an Eòisgh Achnamadh, ‘the Hen of Lewis (Chicken Head), the Cock of Arran, and the Pullet of Man (the Call)’: W. J. Watson, The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1926), p. 96.
24 Nicolaisen, 'Gaelic Mountain-Names', pp. 115-16.
25 de hOir, 'Roinnt nótaí', pp. 4 and 5.
26 Nicolaisen, 'Gaelic tulach and barr', p. 164.
27 Ó Mainnín, The Mournes., p. 143.
29 Nicolaisen, 'Gaelic Mountain-Names', p. 119.
30 J. J. Kneen, The Place-Names of the Isle of Man (Douglas, 1925), p. 29 and passim.
Móna ‘hill of the bog’, Droim (Appendix E5) is another word which appears in many townland names, but again there are only a few non-townland examples: Droim Lao ‘ridge of the call’ and Droim na Trasait ‘ridge of the river Trassey’. Other parts of the body not met with earlier are ceann, ‘head’, dative coinn, as in Coinn na hAla ‘head or peak of the rock’, and two words for ‘breast’, ucht and broimn (< brown): Ucht ‘mountain-breast’, Broimín ‘breast of Binnán (little peak)’. A word reminiscent of droim is dromn (< dromn) ‘ridge, hump’ (Appendix E6). Droim an Ccathlaígh ‘ridge of the rock’ recalls Slabha an Ccathlaígh, above, but there is also Droim an Lomháir ‘Lomhair’s ridge’, and a plural form Na Dronn ‘the ridges’. Grugán is similar in meaning and seems to appear in Grugán Dubh ‘black hump or ridge’ and Grugán Scéach ‘ridge of thornbrushes’.

A number of elements are attested in these mountain names with reference to the brow, shelf, bank, or side of a hill or mountain (Appendix E3). We have Leacain Bheag and Leacain Mhór, ‘little’ and ‘great brow’, Buach na Madadh ‘shell of the dogs’ (cf. Slabha na Madadh), Taobh Drobach ‘difficult side’, Taobh Dubh ‘black side’ and, finally, Port Mór ‘great bank or raised ridge’. We have seen that carraig ‘rock’ features in the townland names. It is also found among the non-townland names (Appendix E8): Carraig Bheag and Mhór ‘big’ and ‘little rock’ and Carraig na gColm ‘rock of the pigeons’. Similar terms are creag, as in Creag Dhubb ‘black crag or rock’, Creag na Loiste ‘crag of the shallow depression’, Creag na Móna ‘crag of the bog’, and cloch: An Chloch Fhada ‘the long stone’, An Chloch Mhóir ‘the big stone’, Cloch Beirrân ‘stone of the horse’ and probably Cloghachurcha which is of uncertain origin. Tor( ) ‘hill, mountain of an abrupt or conical form, tower, etc.’ which in Scotland is most common in Argyll, Mull and Arran, seems to be in evidence in Tor na mBórc ‘tall rock of the badgers’ (cf. Slabha na mBórc). A couple of unusual names are Spealag ‘pointed rock’, which is also found in a collective sense in Spealach ‘place abounding in pointed rocks’, and Spinc Bhui ‘yellow crag or pinnacle’ which survives in hybrid form as the Spinkew or Cascade River. Other interesting names are those which seem to owe their names to a fancied resemblance to some sort of fortification: Caisleán Airt Mhíc Phiaisás ‘Art Pierce’s castle’, Càrnnaig ‘prominent rock reminiscent of a càrnnaig (lake-dwelling)’ and Dùn Mòel Chobha


‘Mael Chobba’s fort’. With these may be compared the similar English-language names (Appendix A4): The Back Castles, The Castles and Hares Castle.

A few more names remain to be considered. Firstly there are the elements lag(án) ‘hollow’, poll ‘hole’, allt ‘glen’ (Appendix E9), which appear in Lag an Cheoir ‘hollow of the corrie’, Lagán an Bhruachain ‘little hollow of the little shelf’, Poll an Pícua ‘hole of the goblin’, Poll Garbh ‘rough hole’, Allt an Sgairt ‘mountain or glen of the priest’ and Abbainn Allt an Chaorubhain ‘river of the glen of the rowan tree’. The element allt has a variety of meanings in both Irish and Scottich, ranging from ‘mountain’ to ‘glen’ to ‘river’, and it is not always easy to decide between them. On the other hand, corraich ‘a marsh’ is immediately transparent (Appendix E10): Corraich Ard ‘high marsh’ and Corraich Cnoc Dubh ‘the marsh of Cnoc Dubh (black hill)’. Finally there are a couple of less common names (Appendix E11): Na Créachta ‘strips of land used for boothyng (summer grazing)’ and Na Ruaid ‘the red patches’.

Finally we need to consider those names which appear to be of English language origin. Some of these are actually translations of the original Irish names (Appendix C), e.g. Slabha an Ccathlaígh (Cock Mountain) and Carraig na gColm (Pigeon Rock); others are hybrid forms (Appendix B), e.g. Crock Horn Stream (< Cnoc Úi Chorráin) and Drumlea Stream (< Droim Lao). Of the remainder some may well be translations also, but lack of evidence one way or another is the problem here. There are only a few names, therefore, which can be said to be definitely of English origin and these are usually names which commemorate some of the post-seventeenth-century settler families in the area (Appendix A1). The Spences, Carrs, Batts and Thunders are all recorded in the Mourne area between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Of the personal names Luke and Thomas, however, we have no record. Although not actually a hill or mountain name, Miners Hole deserves a mention. It is said to owe its name to the activities of Cornish miners who searched for ores in the area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and it is possibly from similar mining or quarrying activity that Diamond Rocks and Millstone Mountain derive their names. The Cornish miners are said to have given the Silent Valley, which is the source of much of Belfast and Co. Down’s water supply, its earlier name the Happy Valley.
CONCLUSION

In coming to any conclusion on the mountain names covered in this survey we need to be aware of a number of difficulties. Firstly there is the scant amount of historical evidence available. Our administrative names first appear in documents of the mid-sixteenth century, while the rest of our names, the great majority, can be traced back no further than the name-books and letters associated with the first Ordnance Survey of 1834. It is interesting that John O'Donovan, the Irish language scholar employed to standardize the anglicized forms of names which appeared on the maps, had difficulty with many of these names and that he regarded some of them as ‘very curious’. There are, indeed, some unusual names in the area and we have commented on Spelga, Spaltha, Guhard and others in the course of our discussion. Most of our names, however, are ultimately decipherable and, while the origin of some may be far from certain, there are only five names for which we are unable to suggest any origin at all, viz. Cloghachorcha, Crenville, Crossone, Sliaveanowen and Sliemoughanmore. The second problem arises from the first, in that the lack of comprehensive written evidence makes the dating and stratification of elements, compounds etc. extremely difficult.

One of the most striking differences between the mountain names of Ireland and Scotland in general is in a sense a superficial one, in that in Scotland many, if not most, of the important Gaelic mountain elements seem to appear on maps both in Gaelic and English dress: *beinn* and *ben*, *croc* and *knock*, *siabha* and *slew*, *drum* and *druim* (or *dríom*), *torr* and *tor*. This is to some extent a reflection of the extent of the Gaelic-speaking area in Scotland when surveyed by the Ordnance Survey in the mid-nineteenth century, but then Irish was equally prominent at the time of the Irish Ordnance Survey in the 1830s. It may be fair to say, therefore, that the difference between the two countries is due in no small measure to the approach of the Ordnance Survey to names in Ireland and to the standardization process to which those names were subjected by John O'Donovan.

---

34 Ó Mainnín, *The Mournes*, p. 11.
35 Where there is some doubt about the original Irish form, the name is preceded by a question mark in the appendix. As a rule it is the specific rather than the generic element in the name which poses the difficulty, whereas it is usually the generic element that concerns us here.

---

One example of how the standardization process may distort the evidence somewhat is the element *siabha*, which is normally anglicized *sieve* in Ireland. In Ulster and North Connaught Irish, however, this word is pronounced [ʃeˈiː], which ties in well with the form *sleau* in the Isle of Man and the anglicized form *slew* in Galloway. Nicolaïsen has noted in relation to Galloway that ‘the dialect association appears to be much closer with Man and the northern parts of Ireland than with the surviving dialects of the Scottish Gaidhealtachd’. More significantly, perhaps, he has shown that ‘there are hardly as many examples [of *siabha*] in the rest of Scotland as there are in the Rins of Galloway alone’, and that outside Galloway a very large part of the distribution pattern is strikingly similar to that of the early Dalriadic settlement of Gaelic speakers in Scotland from the middle of the fifth century onwards. However, he has suggested that its survival in the Rins may bear witness to a pre-Norse stratum of Gaelic speakers in the area, independent of the colony of Dál Riata. The fact that the element is absent from the major part of Gaelic Scotland in its broadest sense seems to support this view, as does, perhaps, the phonological evidence.

Whether the frequency of the term *siabha* in Galloway is due to Irish influence independent of Dál Riata or not does not directly concern us here. What is significant is that although the element is found all over Ireland it is particularly common in Co. Down, which is in east Ulster, whereas *beann* or *binn* is more common in the west of that province. This is all the more significant when one considers that Down and Galloway lie opposite each other and that Galloway is also distinctive within Scotland in terms of the distribution of the element. The similarities are such that some of the names in both regions (and also in the Isle of Man) are practically identical in form: Slewbar, Slewcairn, Slewford, Slewmeen Hill and Slewsmuck in Galloway; Slioe Ruy, Slioe Veg and Slioe Karrin in the Isle of Man; *Sliahb Bearnach*,

---

38 Nicolaïsen, 'Slew- and *siabha*', p. 102.
39 Nicolaïsen, 'Slew- and *siabha*', p. 103.
40 de hÓir, 'Roinn nótaí', p. 5.
41 Nicolaïsen, 'Slew- and *siabha*', pp. 96 and 99.
Sláibh an Chairn, Sláibh Fada, Sláibh Mín, Sláibh Muc, Sláibh Rua and Sláibh Beag in the Mournes.

De hOir believed that many sláibh names are not transparent and appear to be quite archaic; he also agreed with Nicolaesen in thinking that bean or beinn names may be comparatively late. This latter opinion seems to be supported by the fact that sláibh did not remain productive for long in Scotland and that outside Galloway it was replaced in the lexicon, and ultimately in the onomasticon, in the sense of 'mountain' by beinn. However, the Mourné evidence may not tie in so well with these conclusions. Firstly we have noted that Down agrees with Galloway in that sláibh is by far the more common of the two elements sláibh and bean or be(e)in. Secondly, the sláibh names in Mourné are for the most part quite transparent and, although as many as a third may well be old, most, in terms of their semantics and morphology, have a modern appearance, e.g. Sláibh Bán and Sláibh na Muc. It is also highly significant that the old name Binn mBoirich later became Sláibh Dónaitt and that Binnéin became Sláibh Binneain. This also suggests that sláibh displaced bean in this area and not the other way around.

It is possible, at least in general terms, to identify a relative chronology of the mountain names in the Mournes. The earliest names seem to be compounds such as Echbroin, Liathroin, Guthard, and Foinnshláibh. Some of those names which contain Old Irish personal names must also be old, particularly Dín Mael Chobha and Sláibh Dónaitt. Names which are formed from an association of two nouns without the article also form an early stratum, Dromann Dombaigh for example. It is interesting that a greater proportion of those mountain names which have been adopted as townland names seem to be of this type, while more of the sláibh names seem to introduce the article, e.g. Sláibh na Muc and Sláibh an Iolair. Nouns followed by the adjective are found in both groups (townland and non-townland names), and such names may often be quite late in origin.

These are only very general conclusions and may not be cast in stone. This is equally true in terms of the difference in terminology and in the distribution of elements throughout the area. Many of the apparent differences may be due to a large extent to matters relating to topography and geology. The fact that sláibh, for example, is rarely attested in townland names may be explained by the fact that names of the latter type are usually indicative of settlement, cultivation, etc., activities which are scarcely possible on the higher slopes and mountains. This may also explain why tulach, on the other hand, is common in townland names. It may not explain, however, why cnoc, which is not at all different in meaning from tulach, is almost completely absent from the townland lists. Matters such as this require further investigation and much of the preliminary research has yet to be published, particularly in Ireland. When this work is more readily available we will be able to say much more about the nature of our mountain names, and I am certain that comparative work within and between the various Gaelic-speaking areas will prove to be particularly important.

APPENDIX OF NAMES

The abbreviations CF, CN, KL, KO, KY or WT after townland names indicate that they are situated in one or other of the six parishes of Clonduff, Clonallan, Kilkeel, Kilcoo, Kilbroney or Warrenpoint. See also note 35, above.

A: English Language Names

(1) surnames
- Batt’s Wall (earlier Batt’s Mountain)
- Bell Hill
- Carr’s Face
- Luke’s Mountain
- Spences Mountain
- Thomas’s Mountain
- Thunder’s Hill

(2) animals
- Eagle Rock
- ? Hares Gap
- Pigeon Rock Mountain (earlier Droim Lao ‘ridge of the calf’)

---

42 de hOir, ‘Reoinn nótai’, pp. 4 and 5; Nicolaesen, ‘Gaelic Mountain-Names’, p. 117.

C: TRANSLATED NAMES

Caisleán Airt Mbic Phiarais ‘Art Pierce’s castle’  Pierce’s Castle
Carraig na gColm  Pigeon Rock
Slabb an Cháirn  Carn Mountain
Slabb an Cholágh  Cock Mountain
Slabb an Ime  Butter Mountain
Slabb an Iolair  Eagle Mountain
Slabb na Cibe  Hen Mountain
Slabb na gCaoraigh  Sheep Hill
Slabb na gCloch  Rocky Mountain J2326
Slabb na gCloch  Rocky Mountain J2318

D: TOWNSLAND NAMES DERIVED FROM MOUNTAIN OR HILL NAMES

(1) ard, mullach, slabb, etc. (‘height’, ‘top’, ‘mountain’, etc.)
Ard Eachaidh ‘Eachaidh’s height’  Ardagh KO
Cúileannn ‘a steep, unbroken slope?’  Cullion CN
Guthard ‘resounding height’  Goward CF
? Leathbhd ‘sloping strip of ground’  Leode CF
Mullach Mór, An ‘the great top or summit’  Mullagheare CF
Slabb na Leargadh ‘mountain of the sloping expanse’  Sliivenalargy KO
Teamnaigh ‘conspicious or elevated place’  Tamar CF

(2) droim, lorgan, etc. (‘ridge’, ‘shin’, etc.)
Droim Benbh ‘ridge of the suckling pigs’  Drumonniff CF
? Droim Cré ‘ridge of the fold or enclosure’  Drurero KL
Droim Meáine ‘ridge of the ore or mine’  Drumaena KO
Droim Mór ‘large/great ridge’  Drumore WT
Droim Réidh ‘smooth ridge’  Drumreagh KY
Droim Seasc ‘barren ridge’  Drumseck KY
Dromaíonaí Dombnaigh ‘ridge or hillock of the church’  Drumindoneye KL
Dromaíonaí Leathan ‘broad or level ridge or hillock’  Drummanlane KL
Dromaíonaí Mbór ‘large ridge or hillock’  Drummanmore KL
? Dromaíona na Scambhail ‘ridge or hillock of the bare patch of rocks’  Drumascamph CF
Eachroim ‘horse-ridge’  Aughrim KL
Éadan Tromlaigh ‘hill-face abounding in elder-trees’  Edentrutinyl KO

B: HYBRID (DERIVATIVE OR RE-USED) NAMES

(1) streams and rivers
Cnoc Uí Ceirrín ‘Curran’s hill’  Crock Horn Stream
Droim Lao ‘ridge of the calf’  Drumlea Stream
Spinc Bhui ‘yellow crag or pinnacle’  Spinkwee or Cascade River

(2) mountains
Cill Eoghan ‘Eoghan’s church’  Killowen Mountains KL
Mána (tribal name)  Mourne Mountains East, Middle, West KL
? Ros Treachaidh ‘Trevor’s wood’  Rosstrevor Mountains KL
Scardán ‘waterfall’  Scardan Hill
Slabb an Cholágh ‘mountain of the cock’  Cock Mountain Common KO
Slabb Mbic Ráislaing ‘Mac Ráislaing’s mountain’  Wee Roosley
Slievemoughan (of uncertain origin)  Wee Slievemoughan
Glasdromainn, An ‘the green ridge or hillock’ Gladrumman KL
Liatrim ‘grey ridge’ Leitrim CF
Liatrim ‘grey ridge’ Leitrim KL
Lorgain Chonaire ‘long low ridge of the pass’ Lurganconary KL
Lorgain Riabhach ‘dun or grey long low ridge’ Lurganrehagh KL.
Lorgain Uí Chíente ‘Ó Cánite’s long low ridge’ Lurgancanty CN

(3) cabhán, cnoc, maol, tulach etc. (‘hill’, ‘mound’ etc.)
Baile Mhasile ‘townland of the bare or round hill or summit’ Ballyweely CF
Cabhán ‘round or small hill’ Cavan CF
Cnoc Beàrach ‘hill of heifers’ Knockbarragh KY
Maol Dorrán ‘Dorrán’s bare or round summit or hill’ Mullartown KL
Tulaigh Fhrioraigh ‘mound or hill of the heather’ Tullyree KO
Tulaigh Mhóir ‘large mound or hill’ Tollymore (Park) KO
Tulaigh na Sá ‘mound or hill of the berries’ Tullynasoo KO
Tulaigh Pórlamh ‘mound or hill of the roots’ Tullyframe KL
Tulaigh Uí Bhraoinnagáin ‘Branigan’s mound or hill’ Tullybranigan KO

(4) boirinn, carraig etc. (‘rocky place’, ‘rock’, etc.)
Bhoirinn, An ‘the rocky district’ Burren CN
Bhoirinn Bháin, An ‘white rocky district’ Burrenbane KO
Bhoirinn Riabhach, An ‘dun or grey rocky district’ Burrenrehagh KO
? Carr an Chuilinn ‘rugged place of the holy’ Carrullion CF
? Carraig Ul Chroisín ‘O’Crossan’s rock’ Carrickerscan CN
Carraig Uí Mhainistí ‘MacStay’s rock’ Carrickmacstey CN
? Carraigeanach ‘place of rocks’ Carriganagh KL
Crúin ‘hard ground’ Croan CN
Muine Scalp ‘scrub or thicket of the fissure’ Moneyscalp KO

(5) tamnach (‘clearing’)
Tambnach an Choitiche ‘clearing or grassy upland of the (memorial) stone’ Tannagharry CN
Tambnach Bhéithe ‘clearing or grassy upland of the birch’ Tamnyveagh KY

### Ó MAINNÍN

#### E: HILLS and MOUNTAINS

(1) slibh (‘mountain’, ‘hill’)
(a) compounds
Crotshliabh ‘humped mountain’ Crothlieve Mountain
Fionnshliabh ‘white mountain’ Finlieve
Fionnshliabh Beag ‘white mountain (little)’ Finlieve Beag
Fionnshliabh Mór ‘white mountain (great)’ Finlieve More
Maolsliabh ‘bare or round mountain’ Moolieve
Seanshliabh ‘old mountain’ Shanlieve
? Seanshliabh ‘old mountain’ Shan Slieve

(b) slibh plus descriptive adjective
Slibh Bán ‘white mountain’ Slieveban
Slibh Bearnach ‘gapped mountain’ Slieve Bearnagh
Slibh Beag ‘little mountain’ Slieve Beg
Slibh Bog ‘soft mountain’ Slievebug
Slibh Cionnbheideach ‘watching or guarding mountain’ Slieve Commedagh
Slibh Corrac ‘rugged or pointed mountain’ Slieve Corragh
Slibh Fada ‘long mountain’ Slievefada
Slibh Mín ‘smooth mountain’ Slievebreen
Slibh Rua ‘red mountain’ Slieve Roe
Slibh Rua ‘red mountain’ Slieveroe
? Sliabh Spalta ‘scorched or parched mountain’ Spalatha

(c) slibh plus qualifying noun
Slibh an Aoire ‘mountain of the shepherd’? Chimney Rock Mountain
Slibh an Choirn ‘mountain of the cairn’ Carn Mountain
Slibh an Chanain ‘mountain of the little cairn’ Slievearkan
Slibh an Íme ‘mountain of the butter’ Butter Mountain
Slibh Binneain ‘mountain of the little peak’ Slieve Binian
Slibh Lámbhagáin ‘creeping or crawling mountain’ Slievealamgan
Slibh Measáin ‘mountain of the mesáin of butter’ Slieveanasin
? Sliabh Measáin ‘mesáin-shaped mountain or mountain of the mesáin of butter’ Slieveanasin
Slibh na gCloch ‘mountain of the stones or rocks’ Rocky Mountain J2326
Sliabh na gCloch ‘mountain of the stones or rocks’
Rocky Mountain [J2318]
Sliabh na gCloch ‘mountain of the stones or rocks’ Slivenaglogh
Sliabh na gCloch ‘mountain of the stones or rocks’ Slivenaglogh
Sliabh na mBan ‘mountain of the women’ Slivenaman
Sliabh na nGourach ‘mountain of the drills or furrows’
Slivenagarragh

(d) sliabh qualified by names of animals
Sliabh an Choláig ‘mountain of the cock’ Cock Mountain
Sliabh an Iolaire ‘mountain of the eagle’ Eagle Mountain
Sliabh Loch Seannach ‘mountain of the lake of foxes’
Sliabh Mól ‘mountain of the ants’ Slievoughnagh
Sliabh Mól Bheag ‘little mountain of the ants’ Slive Meelbeg
Sliabh Mól Mór ‘great mountain of the ants’ Slive Meelmore
Sliabh Mac ‘mountain of the pigs’ Slive Muck
Sliabh na Circe ‘mountain of the hen’ Hen Mountain
Sliabh na gCaurach ‘mountain of the sheep’ Sheep Hill
Sliabh na Madadh ‘mountain of the dogs’ Slivenamaddy
Sliabh na mBroc ‘mountain of the badgers’ Slivenabrock
Sliabh na Mac ‘mountain of the pigs’ Slivenanuck
Sliabh na nGabhar ‘mountain of the goats’ Slivenagore

(e) sliabh plus personal name or surname
Sliabh Diarmada ‘Dermot’s mountain’ Slivedermot
Sliabh Dónairt ‘Dónart’s mountain’ Slive Donard
Sliabh Mártaín ‘Martin’s mountain’ Slievemartin
Sliabh Mhic Eocha ‘Mageogh’s mountain’ Slievenageogh
Sliabh Mhic Ruislaing ‘Mac Ruislaing’s mountain’ Slive Roosley

(f) sliabh names of uncertain origin
Sliveanowen
Slivenoughanmore

(2) barr, beann (‘summit’, ‘peak’)
Barr an Dá Shrubh ‘summit of the two rivers’ Barradashrugh
Beann Chrom ‘curved or stooped peak’ Ben Crom

Ó MAINNÍN

Beanna Boirche ‘the peaks of the peaked district’ Mourne Mountains
Broinn Bhinneáin ‘breast of Binneán (little peak)’ Wee Binnian
Sliabh Binnéad ‘mountain of Binneán (little peak)’ Sliive Binnian

(3) bruach, leacain, port, taobh (‘shelf’, ‘brow’, ‘bank’, ‘side’) Bruach na Madadh ‘brink or shelf of the dogs’ Broughnamaddy
Leacain Bheag ‘little brow or hillside’ Leckan Beg
Leacain Mhór ‘great brow or hillside’ Leckan More
Port Mór ‘great bank or raised ridge’ Portmore
Taobh Docráin ‘difficult side or slope’
Taobh Dubh ‘black side or slope’

(4) cnoc(an), tulach (‘hill’, ‘mound’)
Cnoc Bán, An ‘white hill’
Cnoc Criadh ‘hill of the cattle’
Cnoc na Fuola ‘hill of the meat’
Cnoc Sí ‘hill of the fairy mound’
Cnoc Uí Chorráin ‘Curran’s hill’
Cnocain Ra ‘red hillock’
Cnocain Ra ‘the marsh of Croc Dubh (black hill)’
Cnocain Ra ‘the marsh of Croc Dubh (black hill)’
Tulach Móin ‘mound or hillock of the bog’ Tullamona

(5) broinn, cionn, droim, etc. (‘breast’, ‘head’, ‘ridge’, etc.)
Broinn Bhinneáin ‘breast of Binneán (little peak)’ Wee Binnian
Cionn na hAla ‘head or peak of the rock or boulder’ Kinnaballagh
Droim Lao ‘ridge of the calf’
Pigeon Rock Mountain
Droim na Tresái ‘ridge of the river Trassey’ Trassey
Uacht ‘mountain-breast’
Ott Mountain

(6) droinn, grugán (‘hump’, ‘ridge’) Droinn an Choláig ‘hump or ridge of the cock’ Drinnahilly
Droinn lomhaí ‘tomhair’s hump or ridge’ Drinnevar
Droinn, Na ‘the humps or ridges’ Drums, The
Grugán Dubh ‘black hump or ridge’
Grugán Seach ‘hump or ridge of thornbushes’ Grugganskeagh
(7) **caisleán, crannóg, dúin ('castle', 'crannóg', 'fort')**

*Caisleán Ar Mhic Phiarais* 'Art Pierce's castle' Pierce's Castle

*Crannóg* 'prominent rock reminiscent of a crannóg' Crannoge

*Dún Mael Chóbha* 'Mael Chóbha's fort' Doan

(8) **carn, carraig, cloch, etc. ('cairn', 'rock', 'stone', etc.)**

*Carraig Bán, An* 'white cairn' Carban

*Carraig Bheag* 'little rock' Carrick Little

*Carraig Mhór* 'big rock' Carrick Big

*Carraig na gCóimh* 'rock of the pigeons' Pigeon Rock

*Cloch Fhada, An* 'the long stone' Cloghadda

*Cloch Ghearráin* 'stone of the horse' Cloghgarran

*Cloch Mhór, An* 'the big stone' Cloghmore

Cloaghchórcha (of uncertain origin)

*Craeg Dhubh* 'black crag or rock' Craigdoo

*Craeg na Loiste* 'crag or rock of the shallow depression' Craigalusta

*Craeg na Móna* 'crag or rock of the bog' Craignamona

*Spleag* 'pointed rock' Spellack

*Spleigech* 'place abounding in pointed rocks' Spelga

*Spinc Bhús* 'yellow crag or pinnacle' Spinkwee or Cascade River

? *Tór na mBroc* 'tall rock of the badgers' Tornamrock

(9) **alt, lagán, poll ('glen', 'hollow', 'hole')**

*Abhainn Ailt an Choarthainn* 'river of the glen of the rowan tree' Rowan Tree River

*Alt an tSogart* 'mountain or glen of the priest' Alttaggart Mountain

*Lag an Choire* 'hollow of the corrie or cauldron' Pot of Legawherry

*Lagán an Bhracháin* 'little hollow of the little shelf or brink' Legnanbruchan

*Poll an Phúca* 'hole of the goblin' Pollaphuca

*Poll Garbh* 'rough hole' Pot of Pulgarve

(10) **corrach ('marsh')**

*Corrach Ard* 'high marsh' Curraghard

? *Corrach Omoc Dubh* 'the marsh of Omoc Dubh (black hill)' Curraghknockadoo

(11) **miscellaneous**

*Crachta, Na* 'strips of land used for booling (summer grazing)'

Creaghts, The

*Formaol* 'round or bare summit or hill' Formal

*Ruain, Na* 'the red patches'

Rowans, The

*Suir Finn* 'Fionn's seat'

Seefin

F: NAMES OF UNCERTAIN ORIGIN

Cloaghchórcha

Crenville

Crosstone

Slieveanowen

Slievemoughanmore