

## Cian

by Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin

Cian (d. 1015), son of Máel-muad and king of South Munster, belonged to Uí Echach Muman, a dynasty of the Éoganachta. His father, who heads the pedigree of Cenél nÁedo, a lineage of Uí Echach, was his predecessor in the kingship. Cian had at least two brothers, Cathal and Rogallach. In 976 Máel-muad slew his suzerain Mathgamain (qv) son of Cennétig (qv), and laid claim to overkingship of Munster for two years before he was in turn slain by Brian Bórama (qv) in the battle of Belach Lechta. Notwithstanding the rivalry between Dál Cais and the Éoganacht dynasties for the provincial kingship, or perhaps because of it, a marriage-alliance was concluded whereby Cian took Sadb, daughter of Brian Bórama, as his wife. He was duly appointed to the kingship of Desmumu, or South Munster, under the lordship of Brian and seemingly remained an ally of his father-in-law till the battle of Clontarf. However, according to the twelfth-century propaganda work 'Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh' (§120), in the aftermath of the battle he demanded hostages from Donnchad (qv) son of Brian, and laid claim to the provincial kingship by right of an alleged agreement on alternate sovereignty between their two dynasties. In the political disturbances that followed, Cian and his brothers were slain by Domnall son of Dub-dá-boirenn, a dynast of the rival Éoganacht dynasty of Cenél Lóegaire. He was featured in the late medieval romance 'Leigheas Coise Chéin', in which a mysterious 'nephew' heals a broken leg inflicted on Cian by an otherworld woman; the tale became part of folklore. Cian's descendants, taking their surname from his father, formed the family line of Ua Máel-muad (O'Molloy).

---

*AU; Ann. Inisf.; AFM; Bk Leinster*, vi, 1377, 1416; Todd, *Cog. Gáedhel*, cxi, cxcii, cxciv, 213; J. V. Kelleher, 'The rise of the Dál Cais', E. Rynne, *N. Munster studies*, 236, 237–8; Ó hÓgáin, *Myth*, 86–7