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**The O'Donnell lords of Tír Conaill, 1537-1603:
A study of their efforts to maintain their local power in
sixteenthcentury Ireland**

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PhD History

2016

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O'Donnell in Tír Conaill, 1537-1566

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have many people to thank for their support and encouragement while I undertook the research and writing of this study. Foremost is my supervisor, Dr Alison Cathcart. I have known Ali now for more than ten years while she has acted as my supervisor and mentor for the last seven. It is no exaggeration to say that, without her understanding, knowledge and encouragement, it is unlikely that I would have managed to complete this project. She has often gone above and beyond the call of duty and her help in keeping me sane at times has been almost as invaluable as her constructive criticism and advice. I consider her a great friend and thank her for all she has done for me.

Thanks are also due to Allan Macinnes, my secondary supervisor. Allan has also been very encouraging and has taken the time to assure me on several occasions that I do have some idea what I am talking about! He has also forced me to think of the wider contexts at all times, got me to think about things from perspectives I had never considered, and has shared his expansive knowledge of the workings of Scottish Gaeldom freely. Thank you for all your help!

My friends and family have also helped me immeasurably. This was particularly true when my head would go down and I'd wonder whether I was saying anything worthwhile or if I would ever finish what I had started. In this regard, I must particularly thank my mother, Marion, who has had to listen patiently to my endless ruminations as I tried to work out what it was I knew and analyse what it all meant. This, alongside all the reassurance that everything would turn out alright, also helped keep me going. I hope I have made you proud.

Those friends who listened when I wanted to talk research and/or made sure I unwound and had fun when I needed to escape, I love you all. You didn't need to do it, but I am so grateful that you took the time. I am thinking here of Iain Pillans, James Myles, Joseph Griffin, Benedict Docherty, Simon Fitzpatrick, Neil McKeown, Kirsty Kinroy, Claire McGuire and, oh, myriad others. You know who you are. Thank you all.

I particularly need to thank my friend James for keeping me sane whenever I hit technical difficulties and panicked about sorting them. This was invaluable help!

Lastly, many thanks to some of the lovely postgrads I have met at Strathclyde these last few years. It has been wonderful meeting such intelligent but also compassionate and friendly people. In this regard I want to express particular thanks to Neil McIntyre and to Laura Paterson, who have been both supportive and awesome but also fantastic company and wonderful to learn from. If anything I've done or said has helped you guys as much as you've helped me, I'd be really pleased.

One last time, thanks everybody. I don't deserve you!

Abbreviations used in the text

AConn	<i>The Annals of Connacht</i> , (Dublin, 1944).
ALC	<i>The Annals of Loch Ce: a chronicle of Irish affairs from A. D. 1014 to A. D. 1590</i> , 2 volumes, (London, 1871).
AFM	<i>The Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters: from the earliest period to the year 1616</i> , 7 volumes, 2 nd edition, (London, 1856).
APC	<i>Acts of the Privy Council of England, 1542-1631</i> , new series, 46 volumes, (London, 1890-1964).
APCI	<i>The manuscripts of Charles Haliday, esq., of Dublin: acts of the Privy Council in Ireland, 1556-1571</i> , (London, 1897)
AU	<i>The Annals of Ulster: a chronicle of Irish affairs from A.D. 431 to A.D. 1540</i> , 4 volumes, (Dublin, 1897/1901).
BL	<i>The British Library</i>
B. L. Add. MS	<i>The British Library: Additional Manuscripts</i>
B. L. Cotton MS	<i>Manuscripts of the Cotton collection, assembled by Sir Robert Cotton (1571-1631)</i>
B. L. Harley MS <i>Robert</i>	<i>Manuscripts of the Harley collection, assembled by Harley and Edward Harley, earls of Oxford.</i>
B. L. Lansdowne MS <i>Petty,</i>	<i>Lansdowne manuscripts, collected by Sir William Petty,</i> <i>1st Marquess of Lansdowne, (b. 1737, d. 1835), and including the papers of William Cecil, Lord Burghley.</i>
Cal. Carew MSS	<i>Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts preserved in the Archbishopal Library at Lambeth</i> , 6 volumes, (London, 1877-1883).

Cal. Pat. Rolls	<i>Calendar of the patent and close Rolls of Chancery in Ireland of the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth, volume one, (Dublin, 1861)</i>
CDS	<i>Calendar of documents relating to Scotland preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office, London, 4 volumes, (London, 1881-1888).</i>
CP	<i>The papers of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, preserved at Hatfield House.</i>
CPR	<i>Calendar of entries in the Papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland, 20 volumes, (London, 1893-).</i>
CSP, Dom,	<i>Calendar of state papers, domestic series, of the reigns of Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth and James I: preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office, 12 volumes, (London, 1856-1872).</i>
CSPF	<i>Calendar of state papers, foreign series, of the reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1589: preserved in the Public Record Office, 23 volumes, (London, 1863-1950)</i>
CSPI	<i>Calendar of the state papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth: preserved in the State Paper Department of H. M. Public Record Office, 11 volumes, (London, 1860-1912).</i>
CSPI, revised ed.	<i>Calendar of state papers, Ireland, revised edition, 4 volumes, (Dublin 2000-2015).</i>
CSPRome	<i>Calendar of state papers, relating to English affairs, preserved principally at Rome in the Vatican archives and library, 2 volumes, (London, 1916-1926)</i>
CSPSco	<i>Calendar of the state papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603: preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum and elsewhere in England, 13 volumes, (Edinburgh, 1898-1969).</i>
CSPSp	<i>Calendar of letters, despatches, and state papers relating to the negotiations between England and</i>

CSPVNI	<i>Spain preserved in the archives at Simancas and elsewhere</i> , 13 volumes, (London, 1862-1934). <i>Calendar of state papers and manuscripts relating to English affairs, existing in the archives of Venice, and in other libraries in northern Italy, 1202-1675</i> , 38 volumes, (London, 1864-1947).
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
ER	<i>The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland</i> , 23 volumes, (Edinburgh, 1878-1908)
Fiants, Elizabeth	‘Calendar to fiants of Queen Elizabeth’, in <i>Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records in Ireland</i> , (Dublin, 1879-1890).
IHS	<i>Irish Historical Studies</i>
LP, Hen. VIII	<i>Letters and papers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII: preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum and elsewhere in England</i> , 28 volumes, (London, 1862-1932).
Cal. MSS Salisbury	<i>Calendar of the manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury, K. G., preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire</i> , 24 volumes, (London, 1883-1976).
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
PRIA	<i>Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy</i>
PRO	<i>The National Archives, Kew: Public Record Office</i>
SHR	<i>Scottish Historical Review</i>
SP Hen. VIII	<i>State papers published under the authority of His Majesty’s Commission: Henry VIII</i> , 11 volumes, (London, 1830-1852)
SP	<i>The National Archives, Kew: State Papers</i>

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Notes on conventions

The names of Irish lords have been anglicised. However, archaic instances of English or Gaelic spellings in direct quotations have been left as they were found where doing so would not render them incomprehensible to the reader.

The names of Englishmen have usually been given their modern spelling, except in instances of direct quotation where leaving them as they were found would not render them incomprehensible to the reader.

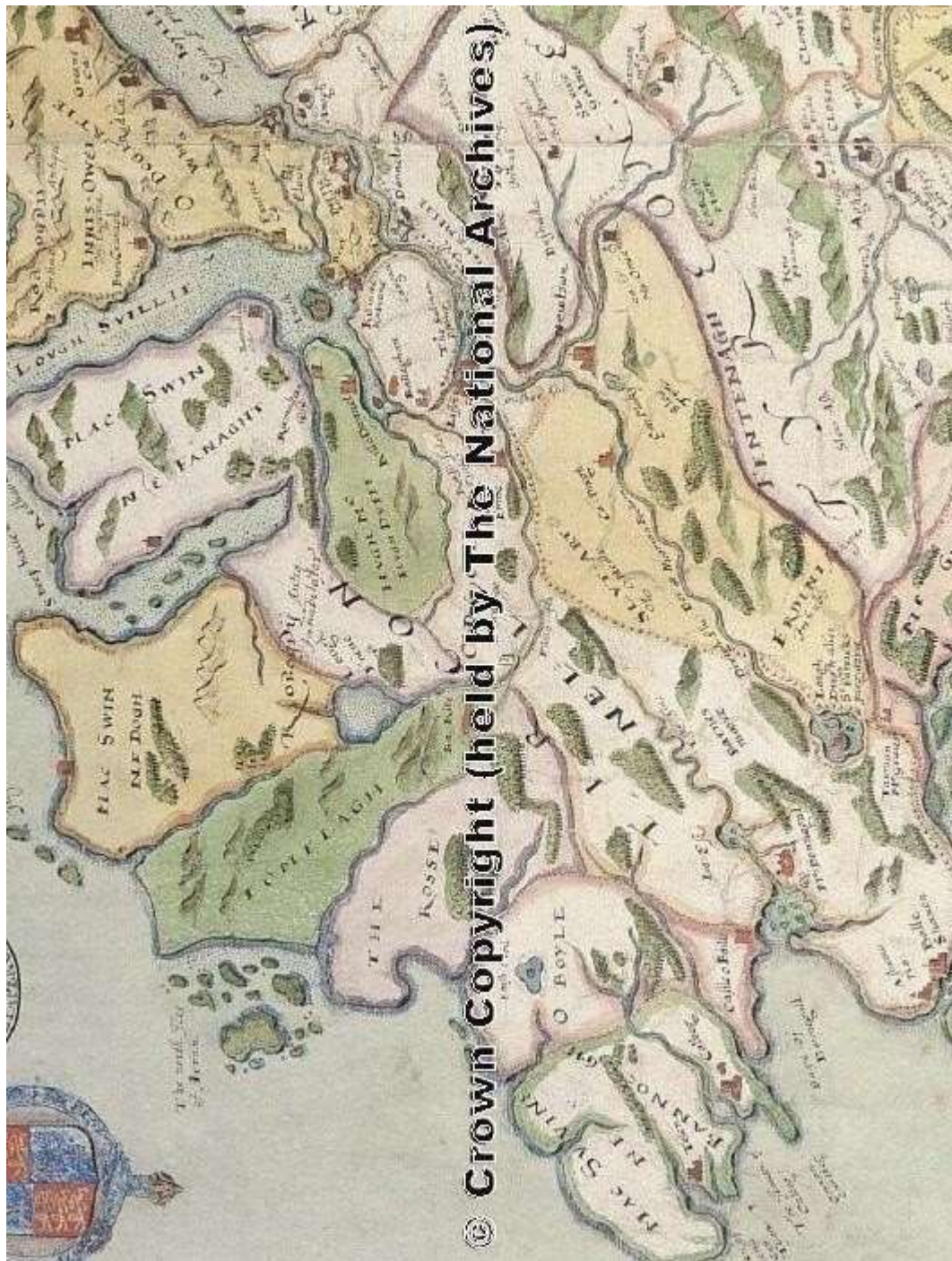
Though it is acknowledged that the MacDonalds of Dunyveg and Antrim were referred to as the MacDonnells in Ireland, this text uses the Scottish spelling throughout.

POLITICAL MAP OF IRELAND, c. 1500¹



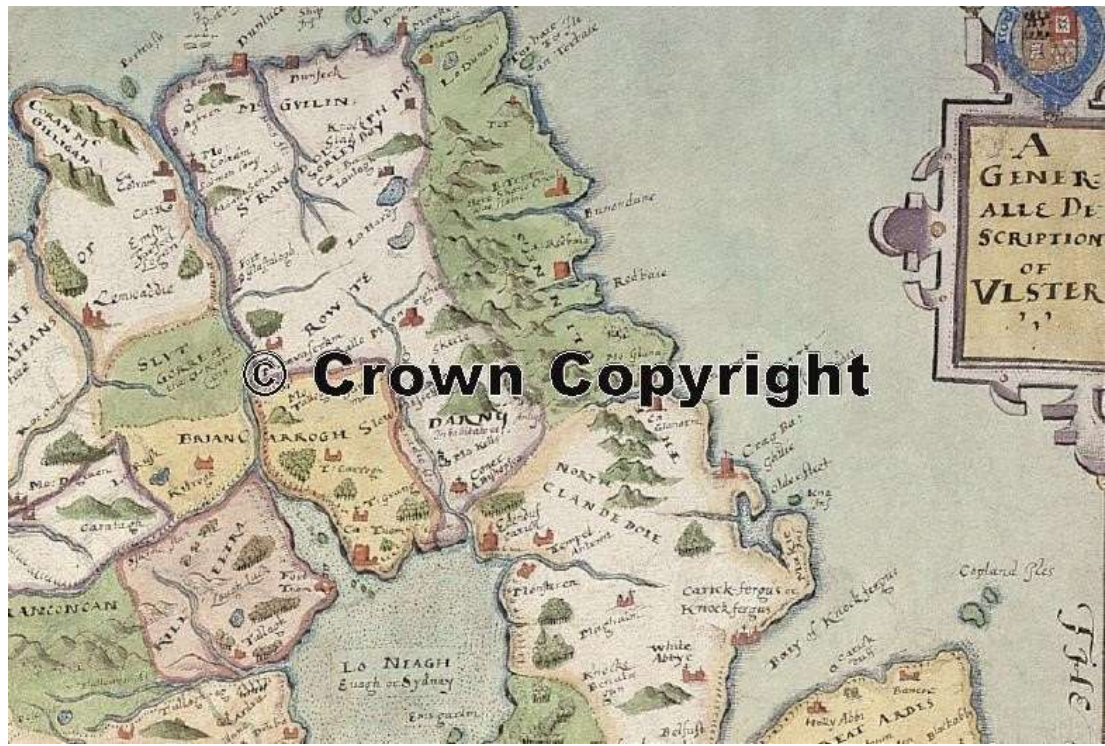
¹ Sir Adolphus William Ward, et al, eds. *The Cambridge Modern History Atlas*, (London, 1912), map 27, accessed at https://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/ward_1912.html, 13 June 2013.

‘A generale description of Ulster’ - the north-west²



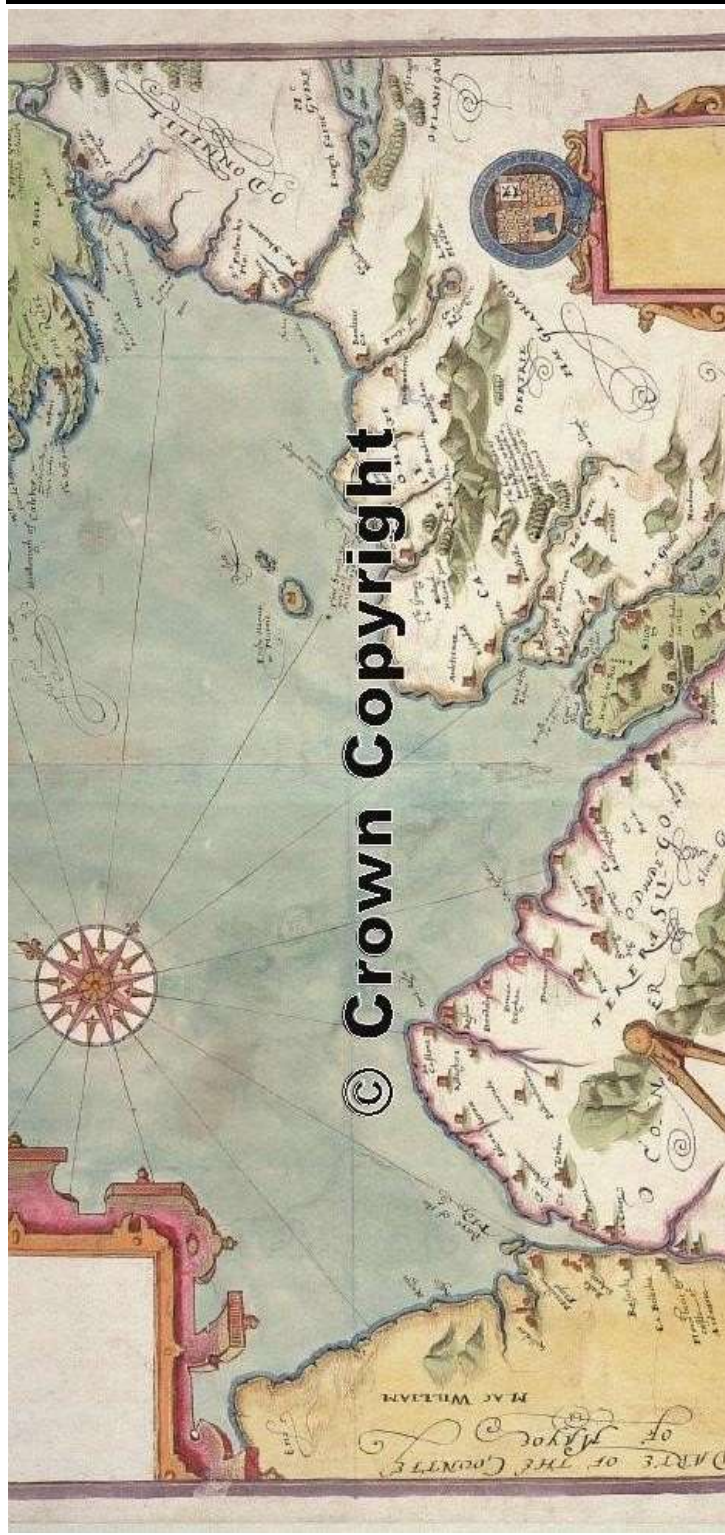
² Extract of Richard Bartlett's, 'A generale description of Ulster', 1602-3, TNA MPF 1/35. This image has been reproduced with the kind permission of the Image Library, The National Archives, Kew, London.

‘A generale description of Ulster’ – the north-east³



³ Extract of Richard Bartlett's, 'A generale description of Ulster', 1602-3, TNA MPF 1/35. This image has been reproduced with the kind permission of the Image Library at the National Archives in Kew, London.

MAP 4: THE COAST OF NORTHERN CONNAUGHT, 1602-3⁴



⁴ Extract of Richard Bartlett's map of 'part of the north-west coast of Ulster', 1602-3, TNA MPF 1/37. The map here depicts those areas of northern Connaught into which most O'Donnell lords tried to extend their sphere of influence. This image is reproduced with the kind permission of the Image Library at the National Archives, Kew, London.

MAP 5: MAJOR AND MINOR PORTS IN IRELAND⁵

IMAGE REDACTED FROM E-COPY

⁵ Extract of Timothy O'Neill's map of major and minor ports in Ireland. This is reproduced from Timothy O'Neill and Wendy Childs, 'Overseas Trade', in Art Cosgrove, ed., *A New History of Ireland: volume II: medieval Ireland, 1169-1535*, 499.

MAP 6: POLITICAL MAP OF IRELAND, c. 1169⁶

IMAGE REDACTED FROM E-COPY

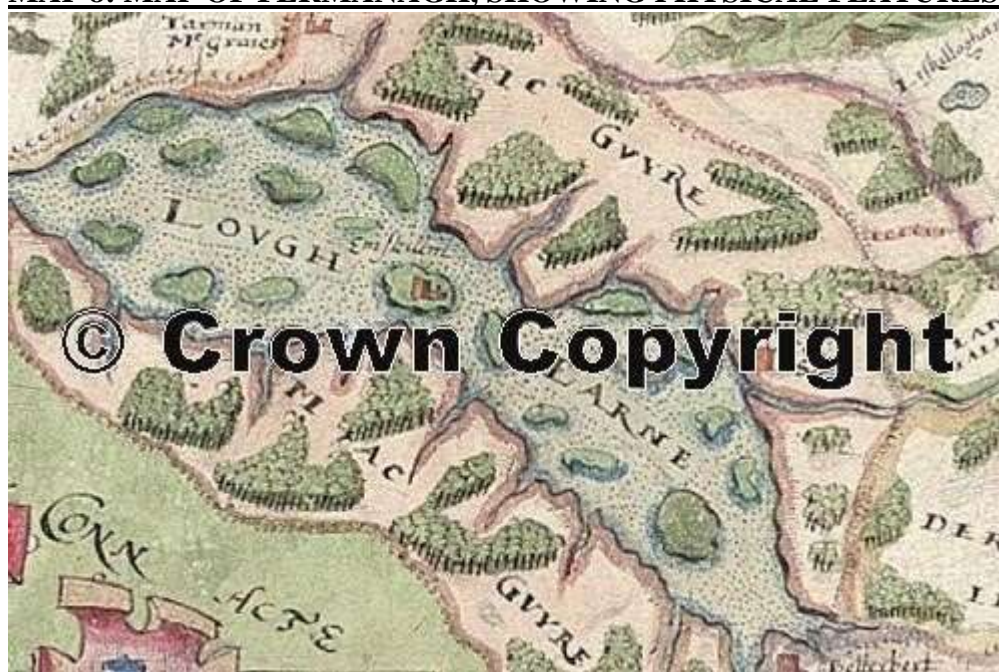
⁶ Extract of F. J. Byrne's political map of Ireland, c. 1169. This is reproduced from F. J. Byrne, 'The trembling sod: Ireland in 1169', in Art Cosgrove, ed., *A New History of Ireland: volume II: medieval Ireland, 1169-1535*, 2-3.

MAP 7: PHYSICAL MAP HIGHLIGHTING DIRECTIONS OF ATTACK⁷

IMAGE REDACTED FROM E-COPY

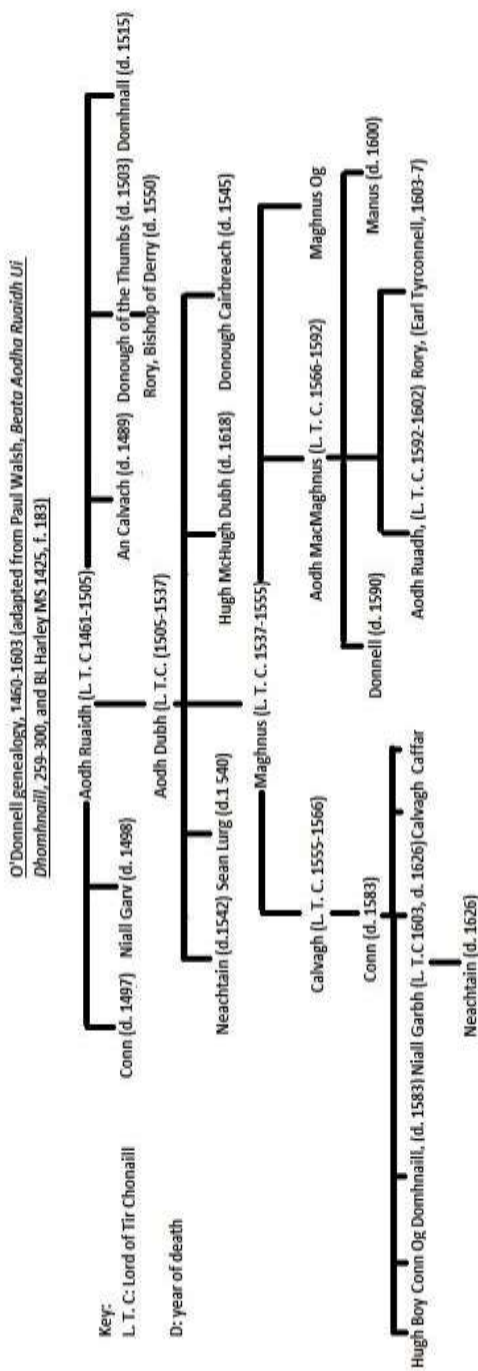
⁷ This map is reproduced from David Beers Quinn, “‘Irish’ Ireland and ‘English’ Ireland”, in Art Cosgrove, ed., *A New History of Ireland: volume II: medieval Ireland, 1169-1535*, 620. Amongst other things, the map shows the routes by which Irish lords would attack the territories of their local rivals. Of particular interest here is the means by which the O’Donnells and the O’Neills attacked each other. As can be seen, both parties utilised forays across the River Finn and Lough Foyle in attempts to subdue their opponents. It was for this reason that control over Cinel Moen in eastern Tír Conaill (where the Finn lay) and Inishowen (which was on one shore of the Foyle) were so important to the O’Donnells.

MAP 8: MAP OF FERMANAGH, SHOWING PHYSICAL FEATURES⁸



⁸ Extract of Richard Bartlett's, 'A generale description of Ulster', 1602-3, TNA MPF 1/35. It can be seen here that Fermanagh was relatively fully forested.

O'DONNELL GENEALOGY, C. 1450-1603



ABSTRACT

This study examines the reasons why the O'Donnell lords of Tír Conaill were never fully reconciled to the English crown between 1537 and 1603, with relations eventually deteriorating to the extent that Hugh Roe O'Donnell went into rebellion in the 1590s. Since the 1970s, a number of historians have explained Irish reaction to Tudor authority in terms of the increasing aggression of English policies as the sixteenth century progressed. This approach offers insight into certain English initiatives but Irishmen did not experience Tudor rule identically. Recognising this, recent historians have discussed the crown's efforts to work with certain Irish elites to reform the island. To some extent, this was the O'Donnells' experience of English rule. This being the case, this study discusses why reform never took root in Tír Conaill and why relations between the O'Donnells and the crown broke down. By considering English material, such as the State Papers, alongside Irish sources, like the Irish annals, this study offers a nuanced discussion of the local, national and supranational considerations which shaped the policy decisions of the Irishmen vis-à-vis the English crown. Overall, the evidence suggests that the O'Donnell lords were not reconciled to the crown because its support, promised on numerous occasions, was often lacking. The result was a break-down in trust between the two parties. Furthermore, although O'Donnell lords were willing to implement limited reform if this worked to their advantage, the English undermined their ability to exercise lordship in Tír Conaill by attempting to seize their local political and fiscal powers for the crown. Stressing the careful consideration that historians must pay to local Irish issues the conclusions suggest that, where Irishmen rejected English reform policies, this was principally due to the threat such changes posed to the local power and status of powerful Irish families.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE SURVEY & METHODOLOGY

Passed in June 1541, the 'act for the Kingly title' declared Henry VIII king of Ireland while stressing that he had hitherto held that title in all but name.⁹ In terming himself king of Ireland, rather than its overlord, Henry was rejecting the notion that Irish elites had the same status within their territories as he had over the whole island. His sovereignty over-rode all, and he wanted native Irish lords to join Anglo-Irishmen in recognising this. This would, he hoped, halt the attempts of Irishmen to overthrow his rule with assistance from foreign monarchs. One obstacle to Henry's hopes of unity under his authority was that Ireland was not a homogenous political block presided over by one leader. The island was instead split into around ninety lordships, all with competing interests and each ruled by the heads of the dominant families within them.² Recognising this, English officials suggested that those Gaelic Irishmen who were willing to pledge loyalty to Henry would henceforth join his English-Irish subjects in receiving equal treatment under English law and protection when their lands were attacked.¹⁰ A system termed 'surrender and regrant' was also devised.¹¹ Under this scheme Irish lords surrendered their territories to Henry, acknowledging him as their feudal superior and rightful owner of those lands.

⁹ Edmund Curtis and R.B. MacDowell, eds., *Irish historical documents, 1172-1922*, (London, 1943), 77. 2
Kenneth Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the Middle Ages*, (Dublin, 1972), 21.

¹⁰ Ciaran Brady, 'The decline of the Irish kingdom' in Mark Greengrass, ed. *Conquest and coalescence: the shaping of the state in early modern Europe*, (London, 1991), 94.

¹¹ The term was first used by W.F.T Butler, 'The policy of surrender and regrant', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 43, (1913), 58-9.

In return, he granted their holdings back to them.¹² The scheme was as attractive to some lords as Henry had hoped, as the idea of English titles and recognition of their local rule was welcomed.¹³

Furthermore, the mooted introduction of primogeniture suggested their direct descendants would succeed lineally as feudal title passed from father to son.¹⁴

Previously, new lords succeeded when people within their lordship chose them.¹⁵

Election was traditionally secured by the *tanist*, a member of the family selected from the *derbfine* and acknowledged as the future lord during his predecessor's lifetime.¹⁶ In practice, however, succession could be obtained by any individual

within the family strong enough to enforce his will. Thus, primogeniture was attractive to incumbent lords and their immediate families because it might allow them to legally monopolise the succession thereafter and without the need for war.

Henry also planned the destruction of the system of 'coyne and livery', under which lords exacted tribute from their dependents for 'free entertainment for the lord, his troops, servants and hangers-on'.¹⁷ If achieved this promised an overhaul of the way wealth and military power was distributed in Ireland. Ultimately these initiatives, alongside other English policies, were not uniformly successful in fostering closer relations between Irish lords and the English crown in the sixteenth century.

¹² Steven G. Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors, 1447-1603: English expansion and the end of Gaelic rule*, (London, 1998), 148-9.

¹³ Christopher Maginn, 'The Gaelic peers, English sovereigns and Tudor multiple monarchy', *Journal of British Studies*, 50, (2011), 567-8.

¹⁴ Brady, 'Decline of the Irish kingdom', 102.

¹⁵ Ibid; Gerald Hayes-McCoy, 'Gaelic society in Ireland in the late sixteenth century', in Gerald Hayes-McCoy, ed. *Historical Studies*, IV, (London, 1963), 55.

¹⁶ Nicholls, *Gaelic Ireland*, 25. Immo Warntjes explains that members of the *derbfine* were those whose fathers, grandfathers, or great-grandfathers had been a territory's ruler, see 'Regnal succession in early medieval Ireland', *Journal of Medieval History*, 30, (2004), 378.

¹⁷ Nicholls, *Gaelic Ireland*, 35.

This study examines why this was the case, focusing on the O'Donnell lordship of Tír Conaill in Ulster during the period 1537-1603. Accordingly, it investigates the political dealings of the O'Donnells at local level, with the Dublin government, the English crown and foreign rulers. The author's Masters by Research thesis considered events between 1541 and 1569 from the perspective of the O'Donnell lords, arguing that their relations with the crown in the mid-sixteenth century were sometimes more fractious than historians have generally allowed.¹⁸ The analysis offered by this thesis develops upon that earlier work, enabling a comparison of the local political aims and motivations of the O'Donnell lords over time. This 'long-term' approach makes it possible to chart how the relations between Tír Conaill's leaders and the crown evolved during the sixteenth century. Consequently, it is possible to reach an understanding of how the individual O'Donnell leaders discussed here experienced English rule. This clarifies why it was acceptable to lords of Tír Conaill early in the period but became unpopular in the 1580s and 1590s. In short, this was when English efforts to undermine the local power of the O'Donnells reached their zenith. One reason for this was that the English no longer considered the O'Donnells to be a useful counterweight to the power of the O'Neills of Tyrone in Ulster. Appreciating all this can allow a more accurate assessment of Hugh Roe O'Donnell's reasons for going to war with

¹⁸ James Alexander Mitchell, 'The O'Donnells of Tyrconnell, 1541-1569: a study of their reactions to English rule in the midsixteenth century', (unpublished MRes thesis, University of Strathclyde, 2010). While discussion of the politics of Manus, Calvagh and the first three years of the rule of Hugh McManus O'Donnell in chapters one to three of this work unavoidably recounts similar events and reaches similar broad conclusions in places, the analysis has been developed further. There is engagement with more secondary historiography and printed primary material, enabling fuller comparison with the experiences of other lordships and manuscript material is now considered also. Each of the three 'political' chapters also now follows an approach of discussing mainly the key aims of O'Donnell leaders and how their relations with the crown were affected by the family's determination to pursue these.

Elizabeth and her officials in the 1590s to be reached. Hugh Roe was effectively compelled by necessity to go to war with the crown to preserve his local predominance. As his predecessors had often been left in peace by English officials, they had not had to take such measures.

This study also differs from that earlier work in that fiscal factors are now examined to determine whether these played any role in creating discontent with English rule within Tír Conaill. This discussion reveals that the crown was interested in obtaining a share of the lordship's wealth, but some of the means by which the English went about this changed over time. The evolution of English fiscal policy towards the north-west is again revealed by the 'long-term' approach taken by the study. Initially, the crown was primarily interested to obtain rents from Tír Conaill in return for the acknowledgment of the O'Donnell lords' political primacy there. This initiative was never wholly successful because the English were often half-hearted in their support for the lords of Tír Conaill, who were less willing to pay a regular rent as a consequence. Still, the drive to obtain rents from Ulster remained a feature of English fiscal policy for the whole period. However, from the 1580s onwards, it was accompanied by two new practices which ensured that the O'Donnells began resisting English encroachments into Tír Conaill. Firstly, the English military in the north-west resorted to violence in order to obtain the rents and often took more than the agreed levies. Secondly, the crown began granting lands to English officials in the north in return for rents, entailing financial loss for the Irishmen who had previously held them. All this meant that, by the 1590s, Elizabeth I and her representatives were undermining the local political and fiscal power of the

lords of Tír Conaill. Accordingly, it is best to view their mounting resistance to English rule through the prism of their efforts to retain lordship over Tír Conaill and their other spheres of influence. Nevertheless, historians studying such questions have offered different arguments and utilised alternative approaches and methods of explanation.

Political explanations

Some commentators who have discussed the breakdown in crown-O'Donnell relations at the end of the sixteenth century have suggested either nationalist or antiEnglish sentiment shaped the policies of the-then lord, Hugh Roe O'Donnell. His biographer and near contemporary, Lughaidh O'Clerigh, insisted that O'Donnell and his allies fought in defence of their 'fatherland'.¹⁹ However, O'Clerigh's main aim was to exalt O'Donnell by portraying him as a national hero, which has prompted

Hiram Morgan to caution against overreliance on this assessment.²⁰ Nevertheless, Edmund Curtis and John Silke have both suggested that Red Hugh and his allies fought a nationalist campaign in opposition to English rule.²¹ Steven Ellis has challenged this, stressing that Curtis' early twentieth-century arguments were intended to 'provide the fledgling Irish Free State with respectable medieval precedents' by positing an earlier national unity which did not exist.²² More recently

¹⁹ Lughaidh O'Clerigh, *The life of Aodha Ruaidh ui Domhnaill*, I, trans. Paul Walsh, (Dublin, 1948), 165.

²⁰ Hiram Morgan, 'The real Red Hugh' in Padraig O'Riain, ed., *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh: the life of Red Hugh O'Donnell – historical and literary contexts*, (Dublin, 2002), 2-3.

²¹ Edmund Curtis, *A history of Ireland*, 2nd edition, (Dublin, 1936), 207-8; John J. Silke, 'O'Donnell, Hugh [Aodh O'Donail; known as Red Hugh, Hugh Roe, Aodh Rua], lord of Tyrconnell (1572-1602), chieftain and rebel', *ODNB*, online, (May 2006), paragraph 4 of 16.

²² Steven G. Ellis, 'Nationalist historiography and the English and Gaelic worlds in the late middle ages', *IHS*, 25, (1986-7), 2.

Darren McGettigan has instead argued that Hugh pursued an ‘anti-English’ agenda as a consequence of his kidnap and imprisonment in Dublin Castle between 1587 and 1592.²³ Yet this ignored the fact that he was perfectly prepared to embrace Dublin’s policies when this was beneficial.²⁴ This suggests that O’Donnell was only antiEnglish when it suited him. Ultimately, the idea that Hugh Roe and his allies had formed a nationalist or ‘anti-English’ resistance in opposition to crown rule is simply not tenable. For one thing, it is unlikely that Hugh viewed events through the prism of nationhood. As historians like Hugh Kearney, Steven Ellis and Raingard Esser have recently argued, people simply did not see their world in terms of rigid national boundaries in the sixteenth century.²⁵ Rather, as Sean Connolly has affirmed, local alignments, kin relationships and ‘dynastic loyalty’ continued to be more important determinants of allegiance and political behaviour.¹⁹ Furthermore, those who stress Hugh Roe’s national fervour have usually failed to explain how far his concerns and attitudes really differed from those of his predecessors who are generally not credited with such patriotism.²⁶ Closer study of the policies of the O’Donnell lords over the longer term reveals that Hugh’s attitudes, and his reasons for resisting English encroachments, were traditional and founded upon a desire to protect his own local power.

²³ Darren McGettigan, *Red Hugh O’Donnell and the Nine Years War*, (Dublin, 2005), 120-1.

²⁴ Hiram Morgan recently redressed this in his discussion of Red Hugh, see ‘The real Red Hugh’, 23.

²⁵ Hugh F. Kearney, *The British Isles: A history of four nations*, 2nd edition, (Cambridge, 2006), 3; Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Esser, ‘Introduction: Early modern frontiers in comparative context’, in Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Esser, eds., *Frontiers and the writing of history, 1500-1850*, (Hannover-Laatzén, 2006), 13. Kearney and Ellis are also examples of historians who have worked within the context of the ‘New British and Irish history’. The advantages and disadvantages of that particular approach are discussed in the ‘methodology’ section below. See 35-37. 19 S. J. Connolly, *Contested Island: Ireland, 1460-1630*, (Oxford, 2007), 40, 90.

²⁶ John Silke, however, suggests that Manus O’Donnell provided a template for a ‘national programme’ when at the forefront of the Geraldine League in the late 1530s, see his, ‘O’Donnell, Manus [Maghnus O Domhnaill], lord of Tyrconnell, (d.1563), chieftain’, *ODNB*, online (2004), paragraph 6 of 6.

Early opponents of nationalist explanations approached the issues of the sixteenth century from a unionist perspective. The nineteenth-century historians James Anthony Froude and Standish O'Grady argued that the Irish were not nationalist in outlook, the latter stressing that the O'Donnells were keen to befriend Elizabeth I but were driven to rebel by the aggressive actions of English officials.²⁷ Though both authors were fulminating against the prospect of Ireland being granted Home Rule, they did open the door to interpretations of the sixteenth century strife which went further than hypothesising nationalist resistance.²⁸ Certainly, there was some truth in the suggestion lords could work with English monarchs when this seemed to be beneficial. This was because allegiances were shaped by considerations of which political partner offered the prospect of helping men uphold their own power, rather than the nationality of prospective allies. Acknowledging this has prompted historians to delve deeper and discover exactly what aspects of English rule rendered it unpalatable to some and not others.

Nevertheless, some modern historians have continued to argue that there were stirrings of patriotic feeling within sixteenth-century Irish society. For Brendan Bradshaw, the 1541-3 Irish Parliament marked 'the origins of Irish political nationalism'. This was because Gaelic and English-Irish lords alike attended it, and the latter now perceived that they were part of a unified Irish kingdom.²⁹ Gaelic

²⁷ James Anthony Froude, *History of England from the fall of Wolsey to the defeat of the Spanish Armada*, vol. 2, (London, 1870), 134; Standish O'Grady, *The Flight of the Eagle*, 2nd edition, (Dublin, 1945), 188.

²⁸ James Anthony Froude, *The English in Ireland in the eighteenth century*, volume 1 (London, 1872), 3-5, 69. For a fuller assessment of the motivations behind Froude's work, see Ciaran Brady, *James Anthony Froude: an intellectual biography of a Victorian prophet*, (Oxford, 2013), 25-7, 76, 213, 216, 263, 275-6, 278-9, 293-6.

²⁹ Brendan Bradshaw, 'The beginnings of Modern Ireland', in Brian Farrell, ed. *The Irish Parliamentary Tradition*, (Dublin, 1973), 77-78.

lords like Manus O'Donnell were certainly willing to appear at Parliament when doing so was to their personal benefit, indicating some willingness to explore the possibility of embracing political reform. However, attendance at Parliament was far from uniform during the sixteenth century. This indicates that few shared in this new vision and that any form of national unity was as yet limited. Bradshaw, echoed recently by Marc Caball and David Finnegan, also suggests that patriotic fervour can be detected in literature produced by both English-Irish and Gaelic Irish writers from the mid-sixteenth century onwards.³⁰ This may be true, but this only gives us an insight into the thinking of the writers themselves. The extent to which such ideas were seeping into the consciousness of elite political figures in this period cannot be determined. The effects of such thoughts on Irish political society at large would appear to have been limited, because in practice there was no united Gaelic Irish and English-Irish front against English rule in the sixteenth century.

There was even a lack of solidarity amongst Gaelic Irish lords, which runs contrary to Steven Ellis' characterisation of the late sixteenth-century struggles as a straight clash between Gaelic Ireland and the English.³¹ As John McGurk has shown, even within the single lordship of Tír Conaill there was no unified bloc since infighting continued among rival families even in 1600.³² Therefore, Hugh Roe

³⁰ Brendan Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and historical scholarship in modern Ireland', *IHS*, 26, (1988-9), 345. Caball and Finnegan posit that this nationalism was based upon a common religious faith, see Marc Caball, *Poets and politics: continuity and reaction in Irish poetry, 1558-1625*, (Cork, 1998), 31, 48, 150; David Finnegan, 'Old English views of Gaelic Irish history and the emergence of an Irish Catholic nation, c. 1569-1640', in Brian Mac Cuarta, ed, *Re-shaping 1550-1700: colonisation and its consequences: essays presented to Nicholas Canny*, (Dublin, 2011), 211.

³¹ Ellis, 'Nationalist historiography and the English and Gaelic worlds', 8.

³² John McGurk, *Sir Henry Docwra, 1564-1631: Derry's Second Founder*, (Dublin, 2006), 91.

O'Donnell's experience of leadership was different from those of most of his predecessors in one critical way. He was forced to fight the crown as well as many of his Gaelic Irish rivals, whose desire to obtain regional predominance at all costs had not changed one iota. In pursuing these local quarrels, the political powers in late sixteenth-century Tír Conaill practiced politics just as their predecessors had done. Nevertheless, Brendan Kane has recently posited that the Irish 'nation' envisaged by the confederate leaders and their followers in the 1590s was a more limited 'dynastic' one, comprised of Irish overlords.³³ This sounds rather like any temporary alliance between self-interested elites seeking to preserve their local power. As shall be shown throughout this thesis, earlier O'Donnell and O'Neill leaders had often banded together whenever they were concerned about English efforts to erode their long-standing regional authority. In doing so they were just like the 1590s leaders, who were 'an aristocratic caste' who wanted to keep their power.³⁴ Consequently, this study argues that all sixteenth century O'Donnell lords were principally concerned with finding allies who would help them preserve their predominance in the north-west. For a time, lords like Manus O'Donnell thought the English crown might fulfil this role, but the family was to find that it eventually challenged their political authority instead.

In efforts to move beyond the interpretation that national fervour shaped the Irish resistance to English rule, some historians have focused on the nature of the

³³ Brendan Kane, 'A dynastic nation? Re-thinking national consciousness in seventeenth century Ireland', in David Finnegan et al, eds, *The Flight of the Earls*, (Derry, 2010), 124-5.

³⁴ Jonathan Bardon, *A history of Ulster*, 2nd edition, (Belfast, 2005), 94.

English crown's programmes of reform and Irish responses to these. In the late 1970s Brendan Bradshaw argued that surrender and regrant and other conciliatory policies emerged from the humanist ideals of English-Irish reformers who had been advocating policies which would benefit the whole Irish population since the 1510s.³⁵ There has been dispute over why these apparently inclusive schemes did not succeed. In the early 1970s, Geoffrey Elton asserted that the lawlessness of Ireland under St Leger in the 1540s proved that only conquest could have brought the island fully under English rule.³⁶ More recently, Hiram Morgan has been more refined in suggesting that some Irishmen instinctively opposed reform. In particular, Morgan argues that Hugh O'Neill, the 2nd Earl of Tyrone, did not want a remodelled Ulster because he preferred to pursue 'the traditional hegemony enjoyed by his forefathers in the province'.³⁷ Nonetheless, even Morgan is effectively arguing that political reconstruction through conciliation was doomed to failure in certain places because

of the policies pursued by the lords in those localities. Such interpretations are perhaps over-simplistic in their assertions that reform was simply impossible in some, or all, cases. An important determinant appears to have been the extent to which the crown was prepared to allow lords to retain their local political power even as they were ordered to change their methods of doing so.

Recognising this, some historians have insisted persuasively that certain reforms were actually attractive to Irish lords. Ciaran Brady has argued generally

³⁵ Brendan Bradshaw, *The Irish constitutional revolution of the sixteenth century*, (Cambridge, 1979), 48, 52, 182-3, 205.

³⁶ Geoffrey R. Elton, *England under the Tudors*, 2nd edition, (London, 1974), 384, 387.

³⁷ Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion: the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland*, (Woodbridge, 1993), 165.

that all elite men were willing to reform their lordships slowly if the Dublin government supported their efforts.³⁸ Some Irishmen, such as the earls of Thomond and Clanricard, ultimately succeeded in reaching an accommodation with the crown.³⁹ Therefore, it can be said that Irish lords would happily work with the crown when there was some benefit to this. This was also true in the case of Tír Conaill.

Indeed, Bradshaw has acknowledged that Manus O'Donnell was also amenable to reform in hopes of making territorial gains following the failure of the mid-1530s Geraldine rebellion which had resulted in the forfeiture of the vast Kildare estate.³⁴ Manus was not alone in this attitude within Tír Conaill and the political chapters of this thesis display how, in spite of their often fraught relationship with the crown, each sixteenth-century O'Donnell lord was keen to secure such preferment. The question then is why, with the initial support of many powerful Irish figures, reform did not take hold everywhere. One reason was that change was inconsistently implemented. The crown's focus often shifted elsewhere, as in the 1550s when Anthony St Leger was ordered to enforce religious conformity and chastise malcontents at the expense of pursuing conciliatory policies towards Irish overlords.⁴⁰ Further, as time went on, the chance to accept English patronage was denied to lords completely in several parts of Ireland, as Katharine Simms has

³⁸ Ciaran Brady, *The chief governors: the rise and fall of reform government in Tudor Ireland, 1536-1588*, (Cambridge, 1994), 2-3.

³⁹ Mary O'Dowd, 'Land and lordship in sixteenth and early-seventeenth century Ireland' in Peter Roebuck and Rosalind Mitchison, eds. *Economy and society in Scotland and Ireland, 1500-1939*, (Edinburgh, 1988), 18. ³⁴ Bradshaw, *Irish constitutional revolution*, 254.

⁴⁰ Ciaran Brady, 'Court, castle and country: the framework of government in Tudor Ireland', in Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie, eds. *Natives and newcomers: essays on the making of Irish colonial society, 1534-1641*, (Dublin, 1986), 45.

observed.⁴¹ The nature of the policies which replaced this goes some way to explaining the breakdown in relations between many of the Irish elite and the crown.

Many historians have argued that the English eventually abandoned conciliatory initiatives in favour of aggressive, colonial, policies. Where such practices were pursued, Irish elites were excluded from the chance of participating in a reformed polity and found that their territories were seized by English settlers and officials instead. Indeed, much dispute has centred upon discussion of the exact date at which these forceful policies were embarked upon, with the implication being that their adoption ensured that conciliatory policies were effectively eschewed thereafter.⁴²⁴³ In fact, different parts of Ireland had varying experiences of English policy. Indeed, it is because of this that there is such a divergence of opinion on when the policy of colonising Ireland really began. There also exists a wider historiography which considers the development of English colonial thought. Historians working in that area have suggested that Ireland was used as a test lab for English colonial policies which were eventually enacted in the New World and elsewhere too.³⁸ However, attempting to explain the ways in which lords of Tír Conaill experienced English rule in the sixteenth century within the context of the question of whether Ireland was a colony is problematic. It was not until the early

⁴¹ Katharine Simms, 'Late medieval Donegal', in William Nolan et al, eds. *Donegal: history and society: interdisciplinary essay on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 192.

⁴² For instance, Fiona Fitzsimons dates this to the 1530s when the Kildares were overthrown, 'Cardinal Wolsey, the native affinities, and the failure of reform in Henrician Ireland', in David Edwards, ed., *Regions and rulers in Ireland, 1100-1650: essays for Kenneth Nicholls*, (Dublin, 2004), 78. Brendan Bradshaw argues that the 1540s plantations in Laois and Offaly mark the policy's initiation, see Bradshaw, *Irish constitutional revolution*, 262, 281. Robert Dudley Edwards argues for 1556 as the start date, see R.W.D. Edwards, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors: the destruction of Hiberno-Norman civilization*, (London, 1977), 77, 87. Nicholas Canny suggests 1565-6, see Nicholas P. Canny, *The Elizabethan conquest of Ireland: a pattern established, 1565-76*, (Hassocks, 1976), 48, 180. Ciaran Brady identifies the 1580s and 1590s as the point at which hostility to the crown became general in the face of avaricious soldiers' aggressive behaviour, see his 'The Captains' games: army and society in Elizabethan Ireland', in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery, eds. *A military history of Ireland*, (Cambridge, 1996), 43.

seventeenth century that the north-west saw a large degree of crown-sponsored settlement from England and Scotland. Previously, other parts of the island had received planters but Tír Conaill had not. Therefore, though the O'Donnells became unhappy with English rule, this was not the consequence of a settlement policy being pursued in their territory. All this said it is important to acknowledge that O'Donnell leaders were sometimes concerned about settlements in other parts of Ireland. This was because of what such policies might mean with regard to English intentions towards Tír Conaill itself. At most, however, they were reacting to the prospect of having their lands settled upon rather than the fact that they had been.

Some historians have argued that the English never consciously pursued a colonial policy or did not see their policies as being colonialist. Raymond Gillespie suggests that Englishmen merely reacted opportunistically to 'political events', like the Nine Years War, after the fact.³⁹ There is a ring of truth to this, because mass settlement in the north-west did not take place until a power vacuum was created there by the flight of Rory O'Donnell, Earl of Tír Conaill, to the continent in 1607.

38 See, for instance, Nicholas Canny, 'The Ideology of English Colonisation: From Ireland to America', in David Armitage ed. *Theories of Empire: 1450-1800*, (Ashgate, 1998), 179-202; Brendan Bradshaw, 'Native Reaction to the Westward Enterprise: A Case Study in Gaelic Ideology' in R.K. Andrews, N.P. Canny & P.E.H. Hair, eds. *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland the Atlantic and America* (Liverpool, 1978), 65-80; N.P. Canny, 'The Permissive Frontier: The Problem of Social Control in English Settlements in Ireland and Virginia, 1550-1650' in R.K. Andrews, N.P. Canny & P.E.H. Hair, eds. *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland the Atlantic and America*, (Liverpool, 1978); 17-44; D.B. Quinn, 'Ireland and Sixteenth Century European Expansion' in T. Desmond Williams, ed., *Historical Studies*, I, (London, 1958), 21-32. On English colonial theory generally, see for instance, Howard Mumford Jones, 'Origins of the Colonial Idea in England', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 85, (1942), 448-65; D.B. Quinn, 'Sir Thomas Smith (1513-77) and the Beginnings of English Colonial Theory', *Proceedings of the American Historical Society*, 89:4, (1945), 543-60; David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, (Cambridge, 2000). On English colonial theory and application/effects in Ireland, see Nicholas Canny, 'Irish, Welsh and Scottish responses to centralisation, c.1530-c.1640' in Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer, eds., *Uniting the Kingdom? The making of British History*, (London, 1995), 147-69; Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650*, (Oxford, 2003).

39 Raymond Gillespie, *The transformation of the Irish economy, 1550-1700*, (Dundalk, 1991), 19-20.

As shall be seen, there is little evidence that a colonial policy had been pursued in any systematic way before this. Though Elizabeth had authorised plantations in

Munster and elsewhere, she had never done anything to support calls for settlements in Tír Conaill. In fact, throughout her reign she attempted to work with the lordship's existing powers to reach a political arrangement which was acceptable to her. This indicates again that the particularised experiences of lords at the local level must be understood if a full appreciation of the reasons why certain men reacted as they did to English rule is to be reached. Nevertheless, Steven Ellis and Allan Macinnes stress that the Tudors and, later, the Stuarts saw Ireland as their kingdom to people as they saw fit whenever they chose to do so.⁴⁴ It is certainly not clear that Irishmen themselves viewed aggressive English policies as a form of illegitimate annexation either. Bernadette Cunningham has recently argued that Gaelic sources indicate that Irishmen saw men like Henry Sidney as a 'noble knight exercising power over his opponents' rather than as the agent of a 'wider Tudor conquest'.⁴⁵ Given that the experience of men in Tír Conaill was that officials like Sidney tended to pick someone from the local area to support, this view holds some weight. He did not try to replace lords of Tír Conaill with settlers. However, it is important to recognise that Irishmen did not need to see English policy as colonialist in order to resist it. From the 1560s onwards, the O'Donnells intermittently had reason to fear that Englishmen meant to seize control over what the lords of Tír Conaill considered to be their own sphere of influence.⁴⁶ When English officials pursued any policy which threatened the local authority of the O'Donnell lords, they sought to resist just as they looked to repel local Irish challengers.

⁴⁴ Steven G. Ellis, 'Crown, community, and government in the English territories, 1450-1575', *History*, lxxi (1986), 198; Allan I. Macinnes, 'Making the plantations British, 1603-38', in Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Esser, eds, *Frontiers and the writing of history, 1500-1850*, (Hannover-Laatzén, 2006), 97.

⁴⁵ Bernadette Cunningham, *The Annals of the Four Masters: Irish history, kingship and society in the early seventeenth century*, (Dublin, 2010), 206.

⁴⁶ For just one example of this, see discussion of the uncertainty of the Ulster lords about the intentions of Henry Sidney following the attainder of Shane O'Neill in chapter three, pages 136-137.

The struggle for power between the O'Donnells and the crown for power in the north-west of Ireland was not a permanent feature of political life. In fact, it only reached its zenith late in the century. For much of the period, attempts were made to incorporate the family into the new political structures which the Tudors envisaged in Ireland. Of course, these assimilative policies included surrender and regrant which, as Christopher Maginn has argued, was resurrected in various forms throughout the century.⁴⁷ Another such scheme was the policy of composition. Bernadette Cunningham and Ciaran Brady have observed that this initiative was aimed at collecting fixed rents from Irish lords in order to bring them more fully under the crown's authority.⁴⁸ Though this demanded loyalty of Irish elites, it did recognise their standing within Irish society and represented an effort to work with them to effect change. Both these policies were pursued at times within Tír Conaill and, as shall be shown, the O'Donnell lords were interested in exploring whether they would benefit from their introduction into the north-west. Ultimately, however, the lords of Tír Conaill did not embrace reform fully because the crown lost interest in helping them to uphold their local power. Consequently, these policies were not successfully enacted in the north-west in the sixteenth century. What this suggests is that it is best to look to the failure of reform efforts in explaining why crownO'Donnell relations broke down. It is not the case that the lords of Tír Conaill were utterly unwilling to reform their lordship. Nor was it the case that the crown pursued aggressive, colonial policies there to the exclusion of conciliatory policies.

⁴⁷ Christopher Maginn, "'Surrender and regrant' in the historiography of sixteenth century Ireland", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 38, (2007).

⁴⁸ Brady, 'Court, castle and country', 40. See Bernadette Cunningham, 'The Composition of Connaught in Clanricard and Thomond, 1577-1641', *IHS*, 24, (1984), 7-8, on the initial success of the composition policy.

What all this suggests is that Brendan Kane's recent argument that neither aggressive policies nor assimilative initiatives were ever the 'settled' English approach in Ireland is accurate.⁴⁹ Kane goes on to suggest that both were 'recurring features of policy, deployable according to local circumstances' at any given time.⁴⁶ The evidence from Tír Conaill in this study bears this assessment out. In the following chapters it is possible to see that, on occasion, some Irishmen in the lordship were treated aggressively whilst others received favour. Generally it can be said that, throughout the period, there was usually some effort to co-opt one O'Donnell or another into a reformed political hierarchy. As the century wore on, however, this tended to be accompanied by efforts to erode the power of the O'Donnell lords over their sublords, which met with resistance. As mentioned, plantation was not a feature of life in Tír Conaill until the early seventeenth century. Nevertheless, it might be argued that the O'Donnell lords believed that some form of dispossession was afoot when the crown made efforts to remove their power over sublords in Ulster and northern Connaught, as in the 1580s and 1590s.⁵⁰ Of course, as outlined further below, the sublords themselves would refuse to acknowledge this where possible but this does not alter the fact that the O'Donnells would jealously guard their overlordship against any challenger. Never a completely dormant issue after 1541, this struggle over power in Tír Conaill and the surrounding areas explains a lot of the strife between the crown and the O'Donnells at the end of the

⁴⁹ Brendan Kane, *The Politics of Culture and Honour in Britain and Ireland, 1541-1641*, (Cambridge, 2010), 40. 46 Ibid, 40.

⁵⁰ See for instance discussion of O'Donnell expansionism and English responses in chapter three, 124-131, and chapter four, 205-217. See also discussion of English intervention in the local politics of Tír Conaill, chapter three, 162-182, and chapter four, 217-232.

century especially. It was only then that the English resorted to the use of sustained force in order to force the lords of Tír Conaill to accept that their power in the north-west must be reduced.

The work of those historians who have outlined particular English policy programmes has been useful in describing generally the sorts of schemes which most Irish elites eventually experienced. However, these provide only limited understanding because different lordships experienced English rule in varied ways. For instance, David Edwards has highlighted how the English seized the lands of certain lords in the Irish midlands from them in the mid-1540s.⁵¹ The lords of Tír Conaill had a different experience of crown rule for some time after this. Indeed, some two decades later Calvagh O'Donnell owed his restoration to power in Tír Conaill to English assistance.⁴⁹ Therefore, in order to understand the particular experience of the lords of Tír Conaill, it is best to consider in isolation the ways in which English policies affected elite men there. Consequently, this study focuses on the crown's initiatives in Tír Conaill and the surrounding areas in reaching an assessment of why relations between the O'Donnells and the crown broke down. Such an investigation reveals that Ciaran Brady's suggestion, that it was only in the 1580s and 1590s that English policy became generally more aggressive than conciliatory, comes closest to explaining the experience of Tír Conaill.

⁵¹ David Edwards, 'The escalation of violence in sixteenth-century Ireland', in David Edwards et al, eds. *Age of atrocity: violence and political conflict in early modern Ireland*, (Dublin, 2007), 63. 49 See chapter two, 110-112.

Nevertheless, even then Hugh Roe O'Donnell preferred to remain on good terms with the crown if possible and continued to seek a détente until 1600, when the English took the matter out of his hands by invading Tír Conaill at Lough Foyle.

Moreover, the family's relations with Englishmen were not always friendly before the 1580s. The failure of both parties to keep promises made in various pacts ensured that there were periods of hostility even then. Balancing the local perspective of the O'Donnells alongside the centrist viewpoint of the crown is crucial in order to understand the reasons for this.

The crown was annoyed when Irishmen struggled to introduce reform measures into their territories as expected. Brady has observed that this was difficult for lords because, far from bringing peace to Ireland, the conciliatory surrender and regrant policy resulted in many localised succession disputes as those excluded from the process resisted the change alongside other reforms.⁵² Support for reform amongst the overlords also declined over time because the crown failed to protect them in these local dynastic struggles as promised. This forced lords to defend themselves in the Gaelic tradition to prove they were worthy leaders at a time when the English crown was condemning the use of violence.⁵³ Not only that, as Christopher Maginn observed, deputies from Henry Sidney onwards began taking submissions from lesser men within lordships, propping them up against their overlords.⁵⁴ This represented an effort to draw the allegiance of vassals to the crown

⁵² Brady, 'Decline of the Irish kingdom', 102-3; Brady, *Chief Governors*, 26-7.

⁵³ Edwards, 'Escalation of violence in sixteenth-century Ireland', 41.

⁵⁴ Maginn, "'Surrender and regrant' in the historiography of sixteenth century Ireland', 965.

and away from Irish overlords, undermining their political power. As shall be shown, this happened repeatedly in Tír Conaill too. The English frequently intervened in succession disputes between competing branches of the O'Donnell family on behalf of those challenging the power of the incumbent lord. This saw the crown intermittently support Calvagh O'Donnell against Manus O'Donnell in the late 1540s and early 1550s, Con O'Donnell against Hugh McManus O'Donnell between the late 1560s and early 1580s, and Niall Garbh O'Donnell against Hugh Roe O'Donnell in the early 1600s.⁵⁵ Over time the English also tried to wrest power over Tír Conaill's sublords, such as the O'Dochertys and O'Gallaghers, away from the O'Donnells too.⁵⁶ Consequently, they eventually doubted the sincerity of English offers of support. Similar policies were followed in many areas of Ireland, but some lords experienced these at different times and some did not go through them at all.

Recognising that a fuller appreciation of Ireland's experience of English rule in the sixteenth century will only be reached by examining the divergent experiences of its people, historians have recently conducted a plethora of local studies which discuss events from the perspectives of individual lords. These lordship studies have revealed that acceptance of English rule was largely dependent on whether elites believed they had the support of the crown in retaining local power. Thus, David Edwards has shown that the Butlers of Ormond embraced English reforms because good relations with the crown meant they were allowed to retain their

⁵⁵ See the genealogical table on page xiv of this study, where the main competing branches of the O'Donnell family are apparent. There is also an analysis of this genealogy below in this chapter, pages 39-41.

⁵⁶ The reasons why power over these sublords was important to O'Donnell rule are outlined below, pages 43-48. ⁵⁵ David Edwards, *The Ormond lordship in County Kilkenny 1515-1642: The rise and fall of Butler feudal power*, (Dublin, 2003), 3, 92, 98, 100, 181.

regional supremacy by redistributing English patronage amongst their followers.⁵⁵ Conversely, the neighbouring earls of Desmond did not usually have the same access to the crown's sponsorship, meaning it was difficult for them to pursue reform without losing power over their adherents.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Elizabeth I often favoured the Butlers over the Desmond Fitzgeralds whenever disputes arose between them and allowed New English adventurers like Sir Peter Carew to seize lands in Munster.⁵⁸ These policies alienated the Desmond family, with resulting rebellion and their ultimate overthrow in the 1580s. Studies of Gaelic lordships of the midlands in this period have shown similar trends. The Fitzpatricks of Upper Ossory did well from surrender and regrant and were usually crown loyalists, while the O'Mores of Laois were dispossessed by the English and were hostile to their rule.⁵⁹

Within Ulster, Ciaran Brady has conducted work on the reaction of the Tyrone O'Neills to English rule in the mid-1500s. Brady asserts that both Conn Bacach O'Neill and his son, Shane, sought English recognition of their regional authority to protect them from their rivals.⁶⁰ However, like the earls of Desmond, both Conn and Shane found that the crown usually supported their local rivals when disputes arose meaning there was limited trust between O'Neill leaders and English officials.⁶¹ Shane in particular was promised things in 1563, such as recognition of

⁵⁷ Anthony M. McCormack, *The earldom of Desmond: 1463-1583: the decline and crisis of a feudal lordship*, (Dublin, 2005), 49, 53.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 77-8, 80-3, 86, 89, 93, 116.

⁵⁹ David Edwards, 'The MacGiollaPadraigs (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory, 1532-1641' in Padraig Lane and William Nolan, eds., *Laois: History and Society*, (Dublin, 1999), 328-30, 334-5; Vincent P. Carey, 'The end of the Gaelic political order: The O'More lordship of Laois 1536-1603' in Padraig Lane and William Nolan, eds., *Laois: History and Society*, (Dublin, 1999), 216, 219, 221.

⁶⁰ Ciaran Brady, *Shane O'Neill* (Dundalk, 1996), 7, 18-20.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 26, 49, 52-8. ⁶¹ *Ibid*, 53.

his overlordship over Maguire of Fermanagh and O'Reilly of East Breifne, which were never delivered.⁶¹ Disillusioned with English promises, Shane decided to preserve his position in his own way. Again, this illustrates how most lords craved an accommodation with the English, but some found that their local power would not be tolerated and their rivals were supported instead. This drove such men away from the crown, because recognition of their local authority was the key attraction of aligning with the English in the first place.

The sixteenth-century O'Neills have been thoroughly examined by historians as a consequence of their rebellious reputation. While Hugh Roe O'Donnell has received attention for similar reasons, the mid-sixteenth century O'Donnell lords have often been overlooked. Rare exceptions include Bradshaw's work on Manus O'Donnell, which described the lordship's external links through trade and religion, though discussion of Manus' local politics and the internal dynamics of the O'Donnell lordship were limited.⁶²⁶³ More recently, Darren Mac Eiteagain has discussed the importance of Tír Conaill's lesser families in upholding their overlords' power and outlined some of the O'Donnells' key political aims in northern Connaught and Ulster.⁶⁴ Both Mac Eiteagain and Ciaran Brady have also observed how these targets shaped the desire of O'Donnell lords to have the crown's support in their ongoing battle with the O'Neills of Tyrone for supremacy in the north.⁶⁴

⁶² Brendan Bradshaw, "'Manus the Magnificent': O'Donnell as Renaissance Prince" in Art Cosgrove and Donal McCartney, eds. *Studies in Irish history, presented to R. Dudley Edwards*, (Dublin, 1979), 18-21. See also J. G. Simms, 'Manus O'Donnell, 63rd lord of Tirconnell', *Donegal Annual*, 5/2, (1962), 115-21, which offers a brief overview of Manus' career.

⁶⁴ Darren Mac Eiteagain, 'The Renaissance and the late medieval lordship of Tír Chonaill, 1461-1555', in William Nolan et al, eds. *Donegal: history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 205, 221-2. ⁶⁴ Ibid, 223. Ciaran Brady, *A Viceroy's Vindication?: Sir Henry Sidney's memoir of service in Ireland, 1565-1578*, (Cork, 2002), 30.

Even these writers, however, have only discussed the mid-century O'Donnell leaders in a very general sense. It is as a consequence of this that the fact that relations between every O'Donnell lord and the English after 1541 could be hostile has been overlooked. This was the case because the crown periodically sought to prevent the Ulster overlords pursuing their traditional local policies. The next three chapters of this study illuminate this fact by charting the political associations between the English and each O'Donnell lord in this period. That survey highlights two key points about the course of relations between the lords of Tír Conaill and the crown. One, as mentioned above, is that O'Donnell leaders for a time believed that the English might provide the support they sought in their local wars. This view eventually became untenable as each found that the crown and its representatives wanted to put some brake or other upon their regional authority. The other is that it becomes apparent the policies of Hugh Roe O'Donnell in the 1590s were a continuation of tradition rather than a break with it founded upon anti-English sentiment. This holds true even though the crown did become his biggest rival for local power. Indeed, Hiram Morgan has argued that Hugh's main aim was to protect his lordship against the mounting aggression of English officials while expanding his influence into other territories if possible.⁶⁵ That Hugh's policies and attitudes were not particularly radical is thrown into sharper focus when they are considered alongside those of his predecessors. Ultimately, he followed them in prioritising personal success over ecclesiastical or national crusades. Nonetheless, certain

⁶⁵ On English encroachments, see Morgan, 'Real Red Hugh', 23; Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 113, 122-3; Even Darren McGettigan has conceded as much, while pushing other arguments, see McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 41-2, 67, 69-70.

religious and fiscal issues were also important to O'Donnell lords, insofar as changes in these spheres impeded upon their ability to exercise lordship.

Religious arguments

In 1536, Henry VIII claimed the title of supreme head of the Irish church. Brendan Bradshaw has observed that this made him 'the ultimate arbiter of the destiny of the religious orders' in Ireland.⁶⁶ Some historians have suggested that attempts to enforce this and other ecclesiastical changes best explain resistance to English rule in the sixteenth century. Early advocates of this view included the contemporaries Ludhaigh O'Clerigh and Philip O'Sullivan Beare, who argued that the Nine Years' War was fought 'for the liberty of the Catholic religion' against English efforts to destroy it.⁶⁷ However, O'Sullivan's acknowledged agenda was to provide a history pleasing to the 'Catholic reader', while Colm Lennon has argued that seventeenth century clerics like O'Clerigh aimed to prove their sixteenth-century predecessors were fervent Catholics too.⁶⁸ Still, some twentieth-century observers agreed that events like the Silken Thomas revolt of 1534 and the Nine Years War had their foundations in Irish religious grievance.⁶⁹ Enrique Garcia Hernan, in particular, has also argued that protecting the Catholic faith was Hugh Roe O'Donnell's main priority in pursuing the 1590s war.⁷⁰ Opponents argue that Irishmen often overemphasised their religious motivations in order to win military aid from

⁶⁶ Brendan Bradshaw, *The dissolution of the religious orders in Ireland under Henry VIII*, (Cambridge, 1974), 4.

⁶⁷ O'Clerigh, *Life of Aodha Ruaidh*, vol. one, 123; Philip O'Sullivan Beare, *Ireland under Elizabeth: chapters towards a history of Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth, being a part of the history of Ireland*, translated by M. J. Byrne, (London, 1970), 23, 48-50, 69.

⁶⁸ O'Sullivan Beare, *Ireland under Elizabeth*, xxvi; Colm Lennon, 'The Counter-Reformation in Ireland, 1542-1641', Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie, eds. *Natives and newcomers: essays on the making of Irish colonial society, 1534-1641*, (Dublin, 1986), 76.

⁶⁹ See R. W. D Edwards, *Church and State in Tudor Ireland: A history of penal laws against Irish Catholics, 1534-1603*, (London, 1935), 4, 277, 281; Canice Mooney, *The first impact of the Reformation*, (Dublin, 1967), 40; Robert J. Hunter, 'End of O'Donnell power', in William Nolan et al, eds. *Donegal, history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 237.

⁷⁰ Enrique Garcia Hernan, *Ireland and Spain in the reign of Philip II*, trans. Liam Liddy, (Dublin, 2009), 4.

Catholic European monarchs who were at variance with Protestant England.⁷¹

Certainly, the fact that Ulstermen were continually willing to befriend the Scottish Protestant Earls of Argyll indicates that religious status was accentuated by Irishmen only when it was useful or pertinent to do so.⁷² With regard to the O'Donnell lords, it is impossible to ascertain the extent to which any instances of their resistance towards English rule can be attributed to purely faith-based grievances. There is little direct evidence which allows historians to do more than speculate. Nevertheless, it remains useful to consider whether there was ever cause for O'Donnell lords to express grievance about particular ecclesiastical policies pursued by the crown.

The work of historians such as Brendan Bradshaw, Henry Jefferies and Nicholas Canny has revealed that there was little attempt to convert sixteenth-century Irishmen to Protestantism.⁷³ Superficially, therefore, it might appear that Ulstermen then had little reason to fear having religious change forced upon them. Alan Ford certainly suggests that they easily repelled any efforts the crown made to enact it in the north.⁷⁴ However, the idea of converting the native population to the new religion was only one facet of the Reformation. Another was the struggle for power over church lands throughout Ireland. As is outlined in chapter five, from the 1530s onwards the English followed a policy of dissolving Irish ecclesiastical

⁷¹ Ernest Hamilton argued that Hugh O'Neill, second earl of Tyrone, stressed his religious credentials in the late 1590s because he thought it made Spanish aid more likely during the Nine Years War, see *Elizabethan Ulster*, (London, 1919), 156. More recently, see Tadhg O hAnnrachain, 'The strategic involvement of continental powers in Ireland, 1596-1691', in P. Lenihan, ed. *Conquest and resistance: war in seventeenth century Ireland*, (Leiden, 2001), 28.

⁷² See also Jane H. Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English: the Irish aristocracy in the seventeenth century*, (New Haven, 2012), 8, where she notes that it was generally the case that identity was emphasised by Irishmen when it was of benefit to do so.

⁷³ Brendan Bradshaw, 'The reformation in the cities: Cork, Limerick and Galway, 1534-1603', in John Bradley, ed. *Settlement and society in medieval Ireland – studies presented to F. X. Martin*, (Kilkenny, 1988), 465. See also Henry A. Jefferies, *Priests and prelates of Armagh in the age of reformations, 1518-1558*, (Dublin, 1997), 147-8, 158; Nicholas Canny, 'The ideology of English colonization: from Ireland to America', in David Armitage, ed. *Theories of empire, 1450-1800*, (Aldershot, 1998), 200.

⁷⁴ Alan Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland, 1590-1641*, (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1997), 127.

buildings and claiming the financial benefits of the lands surrounding them where possible.⁷⁴ Alexandra Walsham has recently pointed out that such initiatives were very much part of the Protestant reformer ethos and were ‘inseparable from a tendency to engender new’ practices.⁷⁶ Therefore, this seizure of Irish church lands indicates that aspects of the Reformation were taking place, even if Irishmen were not necessarily being compelled to take part in it.

As was the case with the general political change sweeping Ireland in the sixteenth century, it must be acknowledged that different areas of Ireland experienced particular English ecclesiastical policies at varying times. The Irish midlands, of course, were subject to the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s and 1540s. It was not until much later that such policies were extended into the north. When they were, however, Irishmen there voiced discontent about them too. Steven Ellis observes that the Archbishopric of Tuam in nearby Connaught came under crown control in the 1580s, suggesting that the English were extending their ecclesiastical authority further northwards.⁷⁵ Moreover, English officials made deeply unpopular attacks upon Tír Conaill’s clerics and monasteries in the 1580s and 1590s.⁷⁶ It is argued here that this helps to explain why the O’Donnells came to complain about religious issues in the latter decade. One reason for this was that the O’Donnell lords stood to lose the financial benefits which came from having their own supporters hold these lands. Another was that O’Donnell leaders were

⁷⁴ See chapter five, 292-318, for discussion of English policy towards ecclesiastical lands in the sixteenth century. ⁷⁶ Alexandra Walsham, ‘Sacred topography and social memory: religious change and the landscape in early modern Britain and Ireland’, *Journal of Religious History*, 36, (2012), 34, 36.

⁷⁵ Steven G. Ellis, ‘Economic problems of the church: why the Reformation failed in Ireland’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 41, (1990), 245-6.

⁷⁶ Colm Lennon observes that these attacks were very unpopular with the Irish, see his *Sixteenth-century Ireland: the incomplete conquest*, (Dublin, 1994), 319.

expected to protect their clerical kinsmen who, in most cases, also proved to be far more valuable allies than the English crown ever was.⁷⁷ For similar reasons the Geraldine League too had had cause to express ecclesiastical concerns in the wake of the dissolutions of the monasteries in the Pale in the 1530s.

Some historians have outlined the structure of ecclesiastical life in Ireland. This has illuminated the realities of the operation of the Irish church and throws light upon some of the reasons why Irish elites enjoyed having power over it. Samantha Meigs has observed that there was ‘an extremely close association between the church and the ruling magnates in Gaelic Ireland’.⁷⁸ As Bradshaw and others had earlier affirmed, this was because clergymen were often relatives of leading political figures.⁷⁹ Thus, it has to be appreciated that retaining power over religious lands ensured that the lord’s family members continued to be provided for. Furthermore, Silke and McGettigan have both touched upon the financial and military benefits which accrued to lords from ensuring their followers retained control over ecclesiastical positions.⁸⁰ Silke, joined by Hiram Morgan, has also pointed out that the confederate lords were demanding recognition of their control over ecclesiastical lands and positions from the mid-1590s onwards.⁸¹ Nonetheless, such concerns have invariably been ignored in explaining why the lords of Tír Conaill became unhappy with English rule. It was in fact a significant issue. Some degree of power

⁷⁷ Charles P. Meehan, *The rise and fall of the Irish Franciscans*, 5th edition, (Dublin, 1877), 2-3, 6, 10.

⁷⁸ Samantha A. Meigs, *The Reformations in Ireland: traditionalism and confessionalism, 1400-1690*, (Basingstoke, 1997), 41.

⁷⁹ Bradshaw, *Dissolution of the religious orders*, 34; Nicholls, *Gaelic Ireland*, 91. See also St. John D. Seymour’s discussion of how the clerical positions of coarb and erenagh too were often retained by the same families down through the generations in ‘The coarb in the medieval Irish church, circa 1200-1550’, *PRIA*, (1921-4), 219-223, 227-8.

⁸⁰ Silke notes that this could allow lords to employ more mercenaries, see ‘Raphoe and the Reformation’ in William Nolan et al, eds. *Donegal, history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 268. Mac Eiteagain observes that some clergy possessed lands that yielded significant amounts of food, see Mac Eiteagain, ‘Renaissance and the Late Medieval Lordship of Tír Chonaill’, 210.

⁸¹ Silke, ‘Raphoe and the Reformation’, 279; Morgan, *Tyrone’s Rebellion*, 196.

over nominations to benefices was another aspect of local power which was jealously guarded by the lords of Tír Conaill. Further, the wealth of these lands gave lords financial incentives to resist the transfer of benefices into the hands of any rival authority. This included the English, who came to covet church lands throughout Ireland. For this reason, as Derek Hirst has recently acknowledged, Gaelic Irish lords had reason to be concerned about ecclesiastical reform.⁸² Accordingly, chapter five of this study argues that there was some reason for the O'Donnell lords to reject certain English ecclesiastical policies by the 1590s. This was because recent English attacks on church lands in Tír Conaill indicated that the hold of the O'Donnells and their clerical followers over the fiscal benefits of such territory was under threat. When their power over this had not been threatened, as Bradshaw has observed was true in the 1540s, the O'Donnells and other Irish lords were happy to befriend the crown.⁸³

Importantly, some historians have recognised that ecclesiastical concerns were not usually the sole cause of Irish discontent with English rule but instead were intertwined with other factors in explaining this. Ciaran Brady has shown that the leaders of the Pale rebellions of the early 1580s, who cited spiritual change as a grievance, were also motivated by opposition to the levels of cess imposed upon them by lord deputies.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, political success under the crown could cause lords to embrace the Protestant religion, while failure might make them resist its

⁸² Derek Hirst, *Dominion: England and its island neighbours, 1500-1707*, (Oxford, 2012), 48.

⁸³ Bradshaw, *Dissolutions of the religious orders*, 212.

⁸⁴ Ciaran Brady, 'Conservative subversives: the community of the Pale and the Dublin administration, 1556-86', in P. J. Corish, ed. *Radicals, rebels and establishments: Historical Studies XV*, (Belfast, 1985), 26, 29.

spread.⁸⁵ It should be evident from the foregoing that, within Tír Conaill, economic and political issues also played into complaints about the crown's ecclesiastical policies. Thus, this study argues that the laments of Hugh Roe O'Donnell about religious oppression should be taken seriously, but they existed alongside other factors which help explain the breakdown in crown-O'Donnell relations as well. Though perhaps problematic in its terminology, Marc Caball's characterisation of the crown's efforts to reform Irish ecclesiastical life as 'the religious ancillary of a broader colonial enterprise' is useful here.⁸⁸ Spiritual livings were threatened concurrently with other interests and traditions. In the O'Donnells' case, this finally reached their territory in the 1580s and 1590s when their political, religious and economic power came under severe threat. As elsewhere, there was now outright hostility to English encroachment on these grounds.

The struggle for general fiscal power

The economic life of Irish lordships is probably best broken down into internal and external spheres and an appreciation of both is necessary to paint a full picture of Irish commercial practices of the time. Internally, control over the economy entailed having access to the country's resources, for example its cattle.⁸⁶ If overlords were to increase their wealth, they needed to have political power over vast areas of land

⁸⁵ On this, see David Mathew, *The Celtic peoples and Renaissance Europe: a study of the Celtic and Spanish influences on Elizabethan history*, (London, 1933), 144, for an example of how success could have these results and Helen Coburn Walshe, 'Enforcing the Elizabethan settlement: the vicissitudes of Hugh Brady, bishop of Meath, 1563-1584', *IHS*, 26, (1989), 366, for the repercussions of political failure. See also Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English*, 9, where she observes that 'identity formation' was shaped by 'prevailing political, religious and socio-economic developments'. ⁸⁸ Caball, *Poets and politics*, 78.

⁸⁶ For instance O'Donnell lords were able to claim 1200 cows when inaugurating new O'Docherty lords of Inishowen, see Simms, 'Late medieval Donegal', 191.

where valuable goods were nurtured, caught and produced. This could be obtained by winning the adherence of clerics and sublords who held sway in these territories. Externally, financial power might be denoted by authority over a territory's ports, the goods that passed through them, and the customs of such trade.

Jane Ohlmeyer has recently observed that English policy in Ireland after 1541 was aimed at securing economic, as well as political, control of the island.⁸⁷ However, as a symptom of a paucity of evidence, most discussion of the Irish economy in the sixteenth century has tended to be baldly descriptive of commercial activity, with little said about the reasons why continuing control over this was attractive to powerful Irishmen. Nevertheless, a few historians have outlined the ways in which financial power was intertwined with the practice of lordship, as well as how Irish practices brought lords into conflict with the English crown. Within Ireland's internal economy, for example, raiding and collecting tribute in the form of cattle was a vital means of accumulating wealth.⁸⁸ English officials wanted Irishmen to stop garnering such exactions but, David Finnegan has illustrated, did not offer willing lords like the Tyrone O'Neills alternative means with which to maintain their wealth and, thus, their local power.⁸⁹ These English policies had ramifications in Tír Conaill too since, as Canice Mooney affirmed, much of the O'Donnells' wealth traditionally came from raids in Connaught, Breifne and Meath.⁹⁰ Abandoning these practices without substitute funding would have left O'Donnell lords unable to

⁸⁷ Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English*, 10.

⁸⁸ Sean O'Domhnaill, 'Warfare in sixteenth century Ireland', *IHS*, 5 (1946-7), 29-30; Katharine Simms, 'Warfare in the medieval Gaelic lordships', *Irish Sword*, 12, (1975-6), 99. 102.

⁸⁹ David Finnegan, *Tyrone's Rebellion: Hugh O'Neill and the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Ulster*, (unpublished M.A. thesis, National University of Ireland, Galway, 2001), 13.

⁹⁰ Canice Mooney, 'The friars and friary of Donegal, 1474-840', in Terence O'Donnell, ed. *Franciscan Donegal: A souvenir of the dedication of the Franciscan Church*, (Ros Nuala, 1952), 5.

maintain lordship. Indeed, as Aine Ni Duibhne has lately observed, sublords like the MacSweeneys benefited from the increased wealth of the lordship in successful times and this partially shaped their support for O'Donnell lords.⁹¹ Therefore, economic prowess was closely linked with the ability to maintain political authority. The English ultimately sought to relieve the O'Donnells of both. Unfortunately, to this juncture, historians have said little about the extent to which the crown's attempts to destroy the fiscal power of the O'Donnells fed into their mounting unhappiness with English rule.

Despite this deficiency there has been scattered appreciation of the crown's desire to obtain some share of the wealth of north-west Ireland, and some discussion of Irish reactions to this. Richard Bagwell has highlighted the crown's efforts to obtain rents from Tír Conaill.⁹² Like lords in Connaught and Munster, the O'Donnells were prepared to pay fixed rents in principle, because it offered the chance to have the crown's defence and a more stable income.⁹³ However, in practice the English failed to live up to these promises, which damaged the prospect of winning the lords' support for reform. One problem, outlined recently by McGettigan, was that English officials began seizing control of large numbers of Tír Conaill's cattle in the 1580s.⁹⁷ This occurred during attempts to collect rent for the crown and contributed to a feeling amongst Irishmen that the English were overextorting from them. Hiram Morgan has been one of those who have pointed

⁹¹ Aine Ni Dhuibhne, 'The story of MacSweeney Fanad', in David Finnegan et al, eds, *The Flight of the Earls*, (Derry, 2010), 118.

⁹² On Tír Conaill, see Richard Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, vol. 2, (London, 1885-1890), 321.

⁹³ On Connaught, see Cunningham, 'The composition of Connaught in the lordships of Clanricard and Thomond', 1-14. On Munster, see Ciaran Brady, 'Faction and the origins of the Desmond rebellion of 1579', *IHS*, 22, (1981), 294. 97 McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 46.

out that this was one reason why O'Donnell and O'Neill rebelled in the 1590s.⁹⁴

Certainly, economic complaints sometimes played a role in explaining Irish resistance to English rule. Ciaran Brady has argued that angry Palesmen came together in the 1570s in opposition to the levels of cess imposed upon them by the Dublin government.⁹⁹ Therefore, the question of the crown's efforts to obtain rent from Tír Conaill is an important one. Accordingly, chapter five charts the evolution of this policy and the O'Donnell reactions to it over time. It is also crucial to highlight the mounting struggle between the O'Donnells and the English for control over the lordship's internal and external economies. Historians have discussed the former in some depth, but have generally neglected to discuss the importance of English efforts to obtain power over Tír Conaill's external trade in the sixteenth century. An appreciation of this is crucial if a full understanding of the implications of English fiscal policy, and O'Donnell reactions to it, is to be reached.

Some historians have made efforts to describe the external trade of both sixteenth-century Ireland and, more specifically, Tír Conaill. Timothy O'Neill, R. A. Butlin and others have highlighted the prevalent trends in terms of the historical trade between Ireland and Scotland, England and Europe.⁹⁵ Therefore, external trade could be very rewarding for Irishmen, with Gaelic lords being no exception to this. As Kenneth Nicholls and Darren Mac Eiteagain have observed, Tír Conaill was particularly involved in the fishing industry, with a wide variety of trading

⁹⁴ Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion*, 113. ⁹⁹ Brady, *Chief governors*, 240.

⁹⁵ Timothy O'Neill, *Merchants and mariners in Medieval Ireland*, (Dublin, 1987), 24, 33.; R. A. Butlin, 'Land and people C. 1600' in F. X. Martin et al, eds, *New History of Ireland*, III, (Dublin, 1976), 163; Jacques Bernard, 'The Maritime intercourse between Bordeaux and Ireland, c.1450-1520', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 7, (1980), 15-16; Ada K. Longfield, *AngloIrish trade in the sixteenth century*, (London, 1929), 105, 128-9, 140-1, 153, 167-8; Cecil Parkinson, *The rise of the port of Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1952), 27, 33. Donald M. Woodward, *The trade of Elizabethan Chester*, (University of Hull, 1970), 7, 911.

partners in England, Scotland, France, and within Ireland itself.⁹⁶ Mac Eiteagain has also observed that the O'Donnells were keen on having power over Sligo and the River Bann because of the fishing trade which went on in these areas.⁹⁷ This information is extremely useful in providing a picture of O'Donnell economic aims. However, this study seeks to assess the effects that English endeavours to muscle into this trade, outlined by Ada Long field and others, had on relations between the crown and the O'Donnells.⁹⁸ To this point, discussion of this has been limited.

Though there have been differing interpretations of how successful the English were in taking control of the Irish economy in the sixteenth century, these have focused on ascertaining where and when the English had gained total control.⁹⁹ However, it is important to discover how far the O'Donnells perceived that their livelihood was under threat, as there was a creeping English ascendancy in economic matters in Ulster that the lords must have been aware of. Indeed Standish O'Grady suggested that, in the 1580s, the MacSweeney sublords in Tír Conaill were 'very unwilling to submit to the crown' as they feared losing revenue from harbour dues.¹⁰⁰ Some historians, such as Robert Hunter and Raymond Gillespie, have remarked upon the distress of Rory O'Donnell once his loss of economic power became apparent but have had less to say regarding whether financial concerns played into resistance to English rule before this.¹⁰¹ By charting the course of

⁹⁶ Nicholls, *Gaelic Ireland*, 115, 120. On trading partners, see Mac Eiteagain, 'Renaissance and the late medieval lordship of Tír Chonaill', 206.

⁹⁷ Mac Eiteagain, 'Renaissance and the late medieval lordship of Tír Chonaill', 207.

⁹⁸ Longfield, *Anglo-Irish Trade*, 44-5, 59-61; Peter E. Pope, *Fish into wine: the Newfoundland plantation in the seventeenth century*, (London, 2004), 91; Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, 23, 28.

⁹⁹ Ada Longfield argued that the growth of north-eastern towns, which relied on English trade, was evidence of the crown's success, see *Anglo-Irish trade*, 198. Meanwhile, Robert Hunter has lately stressed that Tír Conaill's havens did not fall under English power until after 1603, see Hunter, 'End of O'Donnell power', 236-7.

¹⁰⁰ Standish O'Grady, *Red Hugh's captivity: a picture of Ireland, social and political, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth*, (London, 1889), 84.

¹⁰¹ Hunter, 'End of O'Donnell power', 230; Gillespie, *Transformation of the Irish economy*, 22.

English interest in obtaining power over the external trade of the north-west, this study seeks to redress this deficiency.

Chapter five argues that fiscal issues were occasionally important in determining O'Donnell policy towards the English crown in the sixteenth century. This was particularly true when nearby lordships fell under the economic sway of English officials as in the 1570s and in the 1590s. That this was of concern to the overlords of Ulster is indicated by the fact that they appealed to the crown upon economic, as well as political and religious, grounds in the 1590s. O'Donnell lords had been willing to consider doing things differently and to share some of the proceeds of the local economy with the crown if their political power was preserved. However, while the monarchy had originally set out in the 1540s to obtain rents in return for defending loyal subjects, the English ultimately came to undermine the commercial power of those same people completely. In doing so, they challenged the very foundations of their ability to exercise lordship in Tír Conaill, which is again the best prism through which to view O'Donnell reactions to English policy.

Methodology, and consideration of the O'Donnells' local concerns and interests

This study seeks to answer a few key questions. Chief among these is why the O'Donnell lords of Tír Conaill were unable to reach a lasting agreement with the English crown. Further, there is consideration of whether political, ecclesiastical or fiscal factors played a significant role in causing the relations between the O'Donnell leaders and the English crown to break down over time. In addition the extent to which the policies of Hugh Roe O'Donnell represented a break with those pursued by his predecessors in the role of lord of Tír Conaill will be examined. Printed primary and archival material, such as the State Papers and Irish annals, are

utilised in reaching conclusions to these questions. Both well-known sources and those deserving of greater attention have been analysed with the aim of establishing what particular English policies meant for O'Donnell power in the north-west, and the O'Donnell responses to such initiatives. In analysis of the State Papers and other official documents, emphasis has been placed on correspondence between the O'Donnell leaders and the crown, as well as government officials. This is intended to throw light upon the reasons O'Donnell lords gave when they voiced displeasure with English rule in Ireland. Communication between various English officials and the crown has also been examined. This can illuminate the opinions that government functionaries held of the O'Donnells, and how these evolved over time. Meanwhile, the Irish annals have been utilised to provide the critical local context alongside the national picture to enable a fuller appreciation of how these could interact to shape O'Donnell policy towards the crown.

The long-term approach taken by the study also reveals that tensions between O'Donnell lords and the crown were evident from 1541 onwards, because there was always some disagreement about the limits of the family's regional power. Hugh Roe O'Donnell made war against the English in the 1590s for the simple reason that their efforts to limit O'Donnell power in the north-west reached their zenith then. Therefore, it is accepted that O'Donnell resistance to English rule was shaped principally by political concerns, as the struggle centred on the maintenance of the family's local authority. Nonetheless, ecclesiastical and economic issues help to explain the increasing discontent of O'Donnell lords with crown rule as fiscal control in these spheres was necessary if they were to exercise lordship fully. The defeat of the Ulster confederates in 1603 enabled James VI and I, the new king of

England and Ireland, to seize all these powers for the crown and clip the wings of Rory O'Donnell while creating him earl of Tír Conaill.

As mentioned above, it is through the prism of threats to their regional power that the reactions of Irish lords to English rule are best understood. Accordingly, this work incorporates the approach adopted by other local studies of viewing events from the perspectives of the lords themselves and considering how their domestic concerns shaped reactions to English rule. This is in effect microhistory, an approach which can include examining events from the perspective of particular individuals and can be beneficial for several reasons.¹⁰² One advantage is that close analysis of the local situation of a subject facilitates an appreciation of the nature of the societal structure and the 'numerous individual strategies' of the people within it.¹⁰⁸ With regard to this study, such an approach throws light on the extent to which the political, religious and economic spheres in Tír Conaill were interlinked and control over them intimately bound up with the ability to exercise lordship. As Brendan Smith has recently observed, acknowledging the importance of these local inter-relations can enable an appreciation to be reached of how they could shape a lord's policies towards the crown, which can result in challenges to 'traditional interpretations of national developments'.¹⁰³ In practice, this gives crucial context to decisions being made by O'Donnell leaders in the conduct of their relations with the crown. For instance, O'Donnell lords were often forced to suppress several local

¹⁰² Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It', *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (no. 1), (1993), 12. 108 *ibid*, 33.

¹⁰³ Brendan Smith, *Crisis and survival in late medieval Ireland: the English of Louth and their neighbours, 1330-1450*, (Oxford, 2013), 20. See also Ginzburg, 'Microhistory', 33, for a similar argument.

challengers for the lordship.¹⁰⁴ On occasion, this led them to seek closer relations with the English in the hope of receiving support in these struggles. Although often interpreted as ‘loyalty’, viewing events from the regional perspective reveals that it was pragmatism on the part of the incumbent lord.

The close focus on individuals, as Jane Ohlmeyer has asserted, can facilitate an understanding of the various ‘tensions’ which created the desire of men on the ‘periphery’ to resist rule from the ‘centre’.¹¹¹ This is beneficial because it enables a fuller appreciation of the factors behind history’s struggles to be realised. It also allows the experiences of particular lords and lordships to be studied and helps to avoid postulating a generalised Irish picture which did not exist. However, it can also provide a basis for comparison with other parts of Ireland to see where experiences converged and diverged. Nevertheless, if used in isolation, this methodology can lead historians to neglect the wider context in their analyses of local conditions.¹¹² This pitfall can be avoided if steps are taken to ensure that, as well as engaging with the wider historiography, there are efforts to understand the aims and concerns of the main protagonists that the central subjects interacted with on the national and supranational level. Accordingly, where appropriate, this thesis discusses events throughout the Atlantic Archipelago and in sixteenth-century Europe generally. Doing so is imperative if the range of local, national and supranational considerations which fed into the making of O’Donnell policy towards the English crown is to be fully appreciated. Similarly, this also helps to clarify why

¹⁰⁴ See, for instance, chapter two, page 86, where Manus O’Donnell’s local struggles between 1537 and 1540 are noted. ¹¹¹ Jane H. Ohlmeyer, *Civil war and restoration in the three Stuart Kingdoms: the career of Randal MacDonnell, marquis of Antrim, 1609-1683*, (Cambridge, 1993), 5. ¹¹² Ginzburg, ‘Microhistory’, 31.

international actors such as Philip II of Spain and Elizabeth I followed the policies they did towards Ireland.

This need to acknowledge the inter-relatedness of the histories of the ‘nations’ of the Atlantic Archipelago was first emphasised by John Pocock, in his ‘plea’ for a ‘New British History’, in 1975.¹⁰⁵ Pocock observed that these ‘national’ histories were usually written with little reference to the others in the insular world.¹⁰⁶ Historians, Pocock argued, ought to recognise that the histories of these nations had been intertwined for several centuries and produce accounts which reflected these interrelations.¹⁰⁷ Critically, Pocock believed that a ‘New British History’ ought to focus upon the ‘contacts and penetration’ between the three seats of ‘Anglo-Norman power’ in Ireland, Scotland and England, and their Gaelic and marcher hinterlands.¹⁰⁸ In charting the responses of O’Donnell lords to English encroachments into the north of Ireland, and the interactions of both the crown and Ulstermen with prominent Scottish figures, this case study embraces the idea that the histories of the people of these countries can only be understood by reference to each other. Of course, the main focus of this thesis is its discussion of the particularised ways in which the lords of Tír Conaill reacted to English initiatives. However, given that Ulster is only a short hop across the sea from Scotland, the O’Donnells’ relations with men there were also important in determining how the Ulstermen reacted to English policies. Indeed, connections between Gaelic Ireland and Gaelic

¹⁰⁵ J. G. A. Pocock, ‘British History: A Plea for a New Subject’, *Journal of Modern History*, 47, no.4, (December 1975), 601-621.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, 604.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 605.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 605.

Scotland in particular were so close that Steven Ellis has argued that it is best to view these areas as regions of a ‘pan-Gaelic world’ which lay adjacent to the ‘English districts of Ireland’ which were ‘part of a wider English state’.¹⁰⁹ In short, then, the links between these men in all these places must be given their place in any history which discusses the policy moves of elite Ulstermen, like the O’Donnells of Tír Conaill.

Nevertheless, the model of analysis posited by Pocock is not without its drawbacks. While it is a useful framework within which to examine certain relationships, it is unfeasible to study the interactions between all the peoples and communities of the archipelago in one work. Nor is it even desirable to do so in some cases, because some relations are more significant than others in explaining certain historical phenomena. Indeed, few historians who have broadly adopted the ‘New British History’ framework have written truly ‘British’ histories, probably for that reason.¹¹⁰¹¹¹ Furthermore, those who have utilised this approach have tended to continue to focus on wider, overarching questions. This can also lead to generalisations about the experiences of peoples in particular parts of the Archipelago. For this reason, local studies such as this one are becoming increasingly important as a means of avoiding this pitfall because they lay emphasis

¹⁰⁹ Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 46.

¹¹⁰ For examples of some histories which have utilised the ‘New British History’ framework, with varying degrees of success, see Hiram Morgan, ‘British Policies before the British State’ in Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill, eds, *The British Problem, c. 1534-1707: State Formation in the Atlantic Archipelago*, (Basingstoke, 1996), 66-88; Jane Dawson, ‘William Cecil and the British Dimension of Early Elizabethan Foreign Policy’, *History*, 74 (1989), 196-216; Jane Dawson, ‘Two Kingdoms or Three? Ireland in Anglo-Scottish Relations in the middle of the sixteenth century’ in Roger A. Mason, ed., *Scotland and England, 1513-1815* (Edinburgh, 1987), 113-38; Jane H. Ohlmeyer, ‘Seventeenth-century Ireland and the New British and Atlantic Histories’, *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), 279-95; Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*; Steven G. Ellis, *Tudor frontiers and noble power: the making of the British state*, (Oxford, 1995); Steven G. Ellis, *The Making of the British Isles: the state of Britain and Ireland, 1450-1660*, (Harlow, 2007); Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, eds, *Uniting the Kingdom? The making of British history*, (London, 1995); Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill, eds, *The British Problem, c. 1534-1707: State Formation in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Basingstoke, 1996).

upon particularised experiences. Overemphasis on the ‘New British History’ can also lead to the prioritisation of relations within the Atlantic Archipelago at the expense of discussion of the wider European context. This is problematic, because an appreciation of the continental picture is necessary if the actions of actors in the British Isles are to be fully understood. Without discussion of the motivations and concerns of European leaders, it is impossible to assess accurately their ability and willingness to become involved in Irish politics. This means that the range of policy options open to Irish lords at any one time can be obscured or misinterpreted. This had led some historians to over-estimate the extent to which Irishmen became committed to cementing alliances with certain continental leaders. Similarly, the behaviour of European princes had an effect on the policies pursued by the Tudors in Ireland. For this reason, this study attempts to include discussion of the wider European context whenever this helps to understand the policies pursued by the crown and the O’Donnell lords.

In utilising the framework of the ‘New British History’, this study is similar to Scottish histories which discuss the efforts of the Stewart monarchs to extend their power into the Scottish Highlands and Islands and the reactions of the islanders to this.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, while Ireland is obviously the main focus here, efforts are made to understand interactions between Irish lords, the English crown, Scottish monarchs and European leaders. There is again some similarity with Scottish historiography

¹¹⁹ See, for instance, Alison Cathcart, ‘The Statutes of Iona: The Archipelagic Context’, *Journal of British Studies*, 49, (2010), 4-27; Robert A. Dodghson, *From chiefs to landlords: social and economic change in the Western Highlands and Islands, 1493-1820*, (Edinburgh, 1998); Norman MacDougall, *James IV*, (Edinburgh, 1989), Jamie Cameron, *James V: The personal rule, 1528-1542*, (East Linton, 1998).

which charts these trends.¹¹² One particularly good example of this is Jane Dawson's *The politics of religion in the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots*. This was effectively a microhistory as it followed the efforts of Archibald Campbell, fifth Earl of Argyll, to expand his influence throughout the Western Isles of Scotland and into Ireland, and to establish strong links with the English and Scottish monarchies.¹¹³ By viewing events through the eyes of her subject, Dawson was able to show how English rebuffs could shape Argyll's subsequent Irish policy, for example.¹²² By this means Dawson highlighted how the policies of Elizabeth I created reactions in the Scottish islands which had ramifications for the province of Ulster. Therefore, the benefit of this approach is that the effects of interchanges between local, national and supranational political actors upon the local policies of particular individuals are illuminated. By outlining the forces at play in England, Scotland, Spain, France and elsewhere, the factors which caused historical actors like James VI, Philip II and Elizabeth I to act as they did with regard to Ireland are also highlighted in this study.

While the wider context is given its place here, the focus is upon the local considerations of the O'Donnell lords which were of daily importance to them. Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter outlines these in order to provide a foundation upon which the actions of the O'Donnell leaders examined can be understood throughout this thesis. Like Argyll, the O'Donnell lords expected their allies to help them pursue regional predominance in their sphere of influence.

¹¹² For example, see Alison Cathcart, 'James V, king of Scotland – and Ireland?', in Seán Duffy, ed., *The World of the Galloglass: kings, warlords, and warriors in Ireland and Scotland, 1200-1600*, (Dublin, 2007), 124-143, and her 'The Forgotten '45: Donald Dubh's rebellion in an archipelagic context', *SHR*, 91, (2012), 239-264. These discuss, respectively, the interactions between James V and Henry VIII's Irish subjects and the efforts of Henry to utilise disaffected Scottish islanders against those Scots who opposed his 'Rough Wooing' of Scotland. In short, they give place to the intertwined nature of the history of Scotland, England and Ireland.

¹¹³ Jane E. A. Dawson, *The politics of religion in the age of Mary, Queen of Scots: the Earl of Argyll and the struggle for Britain and Ireland*, (Cambridge, 2002). 122 Ibid, 111-2, 124-7, 142.

Simply put, friendly parties had to recognise the O'Donnell leader as supreme in Tír Conaill and lend support to the family's regional claims in Ulster and northern Connaught. Like Argyll, too, the O'Donnell lords were ready to involve themselves in the politics of England, Scotland and further afield in search of this assistance. But what precisely were the bounds of these various claims to power; whom did O'Donnell lords claim suzerainty over; and how far was this accepted by others? The rest of this chapter discusses these points.

Any O'Donnell leader's first concern was to ward off challenges from contenders for his position within Tír Conaill itself. As mentioned above, any member of the *derbfine* could claim the lordship under Gaelic practice.¹¹⁴ This meant that when a new leader assumed the lordship, there were no guarantees his rule would be accepted by men who had their own claims to power. For instance, when Aodh Ruaidh O'Donnell was succeeded in 1505 by his son, Aodh Dubh, there were two other living sons who could have launched a claim by Gaelic law if they were powerful enough to enforce it.¹¹⁵ As it happened, Aodh Dubh seems to have had little difficulty holding onto power, although he was eventually challenged by his son Manus in the 1530s.¹¹⁶ For his part, Manus had several living male siblings in 1537 and had to suppress challenges at the beginning of his rule.¹¹⁷ It was these local struggles, as chapter two argues, which governed his interest in closer relations with the English because their recognition of his authority in Tír Conaill seemed to offer a solution to his local problems. Again, however, he managed to rule without

¹¹⁴ See footnote 9 above for a definition of this.

¹¹⁵ See 'Genealogical Table', xiv.

¹¹⁶ See 'Genealogical Table', xiv.

¹¹⁷ See 'Genealogical Table', xiv. See chapter two, 86, on Manus' early struggles.

much issue for several years until his son, Calvagh, overthrew him in 1554.¹¹⁸ For almost four decades after this, the struggle for local power in Tír Conaill was continuous because successive lords were unable to subdue those who sought to press their own claims to the territory.

As the genealogical table illustrates, there were two main competing branches for the lordship of Tír Conaill from the mid-1550s onwards.¹¹⁹ When Calvagh assumed power, he was challenged forcefully by his half-brother, Hugh McManus O'Donnell. The offspring of these two men fought over control in the lordship for the rest of the century. After Calvagh's death in 1566, Hugh McManus took the reins in Tír Conaill but was locked in a struggle for control with Calvagh's son, Con, for much of the next two decades.¹²⁰ One critical effect of this was that Tír Conaill was left exposed to the machinations of both Turlough O'Neill, lord of Tyrone, and the crown as the contending O'Donnells cast around for support. However the contest for power in Tír Conaill was only to become, if anything, more complex after Con's death in 1583.

Hugh McManus retained power until 1592, but there were competitors for the lordship sharpening their claws for a few years before this.¹³⁰ One challenger was, Hugh Roe O'Donnell, the son of Hugh McManus and his Scottish wife, Finola MacDonald. In the late 1580s, there were two main threats to Hugh Roe's chances of taking control in Tír Conaill one day. His half-brother, Donnell O'Donnell, had risen to prominence while Hugh was imprisoned in Dublin Castle from 1587 to

¹¹⁸ See chapter two, 89-90.

¹¹⁹ See 'Genealogical Table', xiv.

¹²⁰ The struggle between these two is discussed in chapter three, pages 162-165. ¹³⁰ This battle for power in Tír Conaill is outlined in chapter three, 174-178.

1592.¹²¹ However, Finola was to defeat Donnell in battle in 1590, thus removing one rival to her son.¹²² She also put paid to the challenge of Hugh O’Gallagher, who had claimed to be a son of Calvagh O’Donnell’s, in 1588.¹²³ Nevertheless, when Hugh

Roe emerged from Dublin Castle, there remained other potential challengers. Hugh McHugh Dubh of Rathmelton, a contemporary of Manus O’Donnell, was still alive and regarded as a threat by Hugh Roe. Meanwhile, the sons of Con O’Donnell, led by Niall Garbh (d. 1616), also were rivals of Hugh and, ultimately, played a key role in his downfall. Thus, O’Donnell lords had to be constantly concerned with local politics, lest power fall into the hands of their many challengers. To understand why the lordship of Tír Conaill was coveted so much and by so many, it is important to outline the advantages this power brought with it and why, once gained, it was critical to retain this control to its fullest extent in order to continue exercising lordship and enjoying its benefits.

The lands held directly by the O’Donnell lords lay in southern and eastern Tír Conaill, and control over these areas was crucial for various reasons.¹²⁴ Possession of some of the territory was important for strategic purposes; for instance, holding Ballyshannon Castle in the south of the lordship gave the family a base on the northern bank of Lough Erne. This facilitated attacks by sea on Fermanagh, as evidenced by the tactics of Hugh McManus O’Donnell against Shane Maguire in the early 1560s.¹²⁵ Ballyshannon also served as a base from which to

¹²¹ See chapter three, 175-176.

¹²² See chapter three, 178-179.

¹²³ See chapter three, 178-179.

¹²⁴ See Map 2 on page vii.

¹²⁵ Shane Maguire to Lord Lieutenant Sussex, 25 November 1562, *CSPI*, I, (1509-1573), 210.

seize Belleek and Bundrowes Castles on the southern bank of the Erne. Achieving this gave

O'Donnell leaders a foothold in northern Connaught, from which assert to their traditional claims there. With control of Belleek, O'Donnell leaders could also assault that part of Fermanagh which lay on the southern bank of the Erne. In short, power in southern Tír Conaill was critical to furthering the O'Donnells' expansionist aims. Whoever had power there would be the one to benefit most were they successful in furthering that sphere of influence.

Another place of strategic importance was Lifford Castle on the River Finn in the east of Tír Conaill, which had been built by Manus O'Donnell in 1527.¹²⁶ Though O'Donnell leaders would claim authority over the area, Katharine Simms has observed that Lifford was frequently a base from which dissident O'Donnells mounted opposition to their lords in the sixteenth century.¹³⁷ Consequently, Lifford frequently fell under the axis of the O'Neill lords of Tyrone as challengers in Tír Conaill sought aid from that quarter. This could be a particular problem when an O'Neill was based across the Finn at Strabane, as Turlough Luineach O'Neill was during his rule from 1567 to the 1590s. At that time, Hugh McManus struggled to maintain control in Tír Conaill because his opponent Con O'Donnell was stationed at Lifford and had aligned with Turlough Luineach against O'Donnell. Thus, it was in the interest of a ruling O'Donnell to have power at Lifford or, at least, to have someone friendly there to repel O'Neill raids into Tír Conaill from Strabane.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Simms, 'Late Medieval Donegal', 194. 137

Ibid, 194.

¹²⁷ See Map 7 on page xii for an illustration of the typical lines of attack of O'Neills into Tír Conaill and O'Donnells into Tyrone.

Some areas under direct O'Donnell power were also coveted for the economic advantages possessing them could bring. For instance, it is evident that the area around Assaroe Abbey in the south of the lordship was rich in corn and cattle.¹²⁸ Meanwhile Lifford overlooked the River Finn, where salmon fishing took place. The O'Donnells and O'Neills generally competed over the proceeds of this, though it was even shared on occasion.¹²⁹ Furthermore, Donegal Castle stood upon Lough Eske on the bay of Donegal. As English observers like Thomas Cusack and Henry Sidney stated, this allowed the O'Donnells to receive trading ships very close to their chief house.¹³⁰ Thus, there were economic advantages as well as strategic ones to holding as many of these places as possible. The same reasoning explains, in part, why power over the sublords in Tír Conaill was also important.

As the century wore on, the English attempted to take power over the inferior lords in the north-west into Elizabeth's hands. The lords of Tír Conaill guarded this power jealously, because it was critical to ensuring their continued predominance in the area. While the O'Donnells held sway in south and east Tír Conaill, the rest of the lordship was divided amongst other prominent sublords.¹³¹ If the leaders in these areas were friendly to an O'Donnell's rule, he had a higher chance of defeating his local challengers and could accrue economic and political benefits from the outlying territories.¹⁴³ Amongst the most important sublords in the territory were the

¹²⁸ 'A declaration of my employments by Sir Conyers Clifford', 20 December 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 333.

¹²⁹ Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, II, 127. See also Map 2 on page vii of this study.

¹³⁰ 'Book by Sir Thomas Cusack declaring the state of Ireland', 8 May 1552, SP 61/4, f. 143v; Lord Deputy Sidney, Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare, Sir Nicholas Bagenal and Francis Agar to Queen Elizabeth, 12 November 1566, *CSPI*, revised edition, II, (1566-7), 129.

¹³¹ McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, 20-30. 143
Ibid, 23.

O'Dochertys of Inishowen, the O'Gallaghers and the MacSweeney branches of Banagh, Fanad and Doe.

O'Docherty's territory in Inishowen, in the extreme north of the lordship, was flanked by Lough Swilly to the west and Lough Foyle to the east. Both the monastery of Derry and, further north, Greencastle overlooked the Foyle.¹³² In western Inishowen, Castle Burt and Buncrana lay upon Lough Swilly. Having allies in charge of these places was useful to O'Donnell lords for several reasons. Firstly, it offered the prospect of claiming some part of the lucrative fishing trade there. They might also have access to Inishowen's fertile lands and plentiful cattle, which also came to be highly coveted by English observers in time.¹³³ Indeed, O'Donnell lords traditionally charged 1,200 cows in order to nominate new O'Docherty leaders, so it is evident that the lords of Tír Conaill did seek to gain from Inishowen's wealth.¹³⁴ Secondly, both the Foyle and Swilly could serve as landing places for Scottish mercenaries and it was beneficial to O'Donnell lords to have this happen without resistance from Inishowen's inhabitants. Lastly, it was important that the O'Dochertys act as the first line of defence in the north against any unwanted visitors who might use that route to enter Tír Conaill. Without this protection, invaders would find it easier to penetrate deep into the heart of the lordship. Similarly, a favourable presence at Derry and the town of Culmore might prevent O'Neill incursions into Inishowen too.¹³⁵ Therefore, just like power over the

¹³² See Map 2 on page vii of this study.

¹³³ 'A description of Lough Foyle and the country adjoining, endorsed by Sir Henry Docwra', 19 December 1600, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-31 July 1601), 93-94.

¹³⁴ Simms, *Late Medieval Donegal*, 191.

¹³⁵ See map 2 on page vii of this study, as well as map 7 on page xii.

O'Donnells' own holdings, there were both economic and strategic reasons for the lords of Tír Conaill to seek influence in Inishowen.

As it happened, for the most part the O'Dochertys did support O'Donnell lords and played a full part in the life of the lordship. The lords of Inishowen were expected to contribute militarily by bringing 60 horsemen and 120 footmen whenever O'Donnell went on a hosting.¹³⁶ The O'Dochertys, along with all the other sublords of Tír Conaill, also took part in 'political councils' in the sixteenth century.¹³⁷ As mentioned, O'Donnell also nominated new O'Docherty leaders, who were expected to recognise the lord of Tír Conaill as their overlord in return.¹³⁸ Therefore, on occasions the O'Dochertys did provide political and military support, and the O'Donnell would grant legitimacy to his O'Docherty nominee in return. Nonetheless, periodically the O'Dochertys would attempt to throw off O'Donnell overlordship and, at such times, there were no shortage of external parties interested in aiding them to do so. For instance, the O'Neill lords of Tyrone, of which more below, and sometimes the earls of Argyll were interested in gaining influence in Inishowen.¹³⁹ As the century wore on, the same became true of the English crown. For the reasons outlined here, O'Donnell lords were just as desperate to ensure they retained this power.

The three branches of the MacSweeneys were also important within Tír Conaill. The first MacSweeneys had arrived in Ireland as mercenary support for the

¹³⁶ McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, 29.

¹³⁷ Simms, *Late Medieval Donegal*, 188.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹³⁹ Dennis Campbell, dean of Limerick, to Sir Robert Cecil, March 1601, *CSPI*, X, (November 1600-31 July 1601), 255. In this letter Campbell, a cousin of Argyll's, suggests that O'Docherty is 'naturally' dependent on the 'house of Argyle' which indicates, at least, that Argyll would like to have power over Inishowen.

O'Donnells in the late thirteenth century and later received grants of land in Tír Conaill as a reward for their service.¹⁴⁰ In short, their military support had been critical in enabling O'Donnell lords to make war. MacSweeney Fanad's territory was in the north-west of Tír Conaill and was flanked by Sheephaven Bay to the west and Lough Swilly to the east. The O'Donnells had first granted the area to the MacSweeney Fanads in the fourteenth century.¹⁴¹ The lords of Fanad were still expected to contribute to O'Donnell's military effort, by providing 120 men whenever a hosting was called.¹⁴² Fanad was very rocky and lightly forested too, meaning it was not particularly fertile.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, like Inishowen, it offered access to Lough Swilly and MacSweeney Fanad had built Rathmullan Castle on the shore there.¹⁴³ This was useful for landing Scottish mercenaries in a friendly place and it also offered access to the profits of the fishing there. Another important building in the territory was Kilmacrennan Abbey, where O'Donnell leaders were inaugurated and which had great symbolic significance for this reason.¹⁴⁴ The O'Donnell lords also legitimised new MacSweeney Fanad lords by initiating them on the same site.¹⁴⁵ In short, there were close political and military links between the MacSweeney Fanads and the lords of Tír Conaill.

To the west of MacSweeney Fanad's country lay MacSweeney Doe's lands,

¹⁴⁰ Darren McGettigan, 'MacSweeney', in Seán Duffy, ed. *Medieval Ireland: an encyclopaedia*, (Routledge, 2005), 506-7.

¹⁴¹ Katharine Simms, *From kings to warlords: the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later Middle Ages*, (Woodbridge, 2000), 123.

¹⁴² Simms, 'Gaelic Warfare in the Middle Ages', 110-12. 155

See Map 2, page vii of this study.

¹⁴³ See Map 2, page vii of this study.

¹⁴⁴ Simms, 'Late Medieval Donegal', 188. 158

Ibid, 188.

which the lords of Doe had originally been granted in the fifteenth century.¹⁴⁵ Their territory was bounded to the east by Sheephaven Bay and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean and the territory of Tomelagh.¹⁶⁰ MacSweeney Doe's main castle was Doe Castle, which faced Tory Island to the north-west.¹⁴⁶ This was an important fishing station, from where Shane McManus Og O'Donnell was noted to have taken part in the trade late in the century.¹⁶² Like the other sublords in Tír Conaill, and especially the other branches of the MacSweeneys, the MacSweeney Doe was expected to contribute to the military effort of the O'Donnells in bringing 120 men to hostings when required.¹⁴⁷

In the south-west of Tír Conaill lay the lands of MacSweeney Banagh and O'Boyle. The MacSweeney Banaghs had been granted their lands in the late fifteenth century, and their main castles were at Bawan and Ralin in Donegal Bay.¹⁴⁸ Again, MacSweeney Banagh was expected to contribute to O'Donnell's military effort and bring 60 galloglasses to hostings called by the overlord.¹⁴⁹ It was useful to O'Donnell to be on good terms with MacSweeney Banagh because his country lay near the haven of Killybegs, identified by Kenneth Nicholls as an important fishing station.¹⁶⁶ Thus, again, there were economic reasons for the O'Donnell lords to seek control in this part of Tír Conaill. Similarly, both MacSweeney's territory and that of O'Boyle overlooked the bay of Donegal. This was particularly true of O'Boyle's main castle, Castle Boyle. Therefore, though the lands in these territories

¹⁴⁵ Simms, *From kings to warlords*, 123. ¹⁶⁰

See Map 2, page vii of this study

¹⁴⁶ McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, 27. ¹⁶²

Ibid, 22.

¹⁴⁷ McGettigan, 'MacSweeney', 506-7.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 506-7; McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, 27.

¹⁴⁹ McGettigan, 'MacSweeney', 506-7 ¹⁶⁶

Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland*, 115.

were not fertile, they were useful for retaining control of the coast. This was critical in enabling the lords of Tír Conaill to keep enemies out of the lordship, just as influence in Inishowen was.

Lastly, another important family within Tír Conaill were the O’Gallaghers, whose lands lay around Inis Saimber on the Erne.¹⁵⁰ The O’Gallagher family performed several important functions on behalf of the O’Donnell lords. They protected the lords’ territory by acting as castle gatekeepers to O’Donnell leaders, suggesting a high level of trust between the two families.¹⁶⁸ Certain O’Gallaghers like Owen MacToole O’Gallagher and Owen MacShane O’Gallagher became close confidants of the O’Donnell leaders, such as Hugh McManus and also Hugh Roe.¹⁵¹ They were a clerical family too and the likes of Redmund O’Gallagher held the Bishopric of Derry in the sixteenth century.¹⁵² As always, the O’Donnells could hope for some part of the financial benefits and food produce of the Bishopric when their allies controlled it. For these varied reasons, O’Donnell lords sought to have all these sublords under their sway, as this was imperative in order for O’Donnell power to be upheld in the face of external and internal threats. Of course, these men would only support O’Donnell rule while it was also worthwhile for them. Consequently, the lords of Tír Conaill had to enrich the territory in order to pay for the continued support of their sublords.

One way in which the O’Donnell lords could achieve this was by pursuing

¹⁵⁰ McGettigan, *Red Hugh O’Donnell*, 23. 168

Ibid, 20.

¹⁵¹ See chapter three, 147-148, for Owen MacToole and McGettigan, *Red Hugh O’Donnell*, 24, on Owen Machine.

¹⁵² McGettigan, *Red Hugh O’Donnell*, 23. See also chapter five, 301.

expansionist initiatives. Accordingly, a central plank of O'Donnell policy was to lay claim to overlordship over northern Connaught. If they managed to do this successfully, there were economic benefits to be had. These included the payment of tribute from the likes of O'Connor Sligo of Carbury, MacDermot of Moylurg, O'Dowda of Tirrereagh, O'Gara of Coolavin, MacWilliam Burke of Mayo and others.¹⁵³ For example, lords of Tír Conaill claimed a black rent from Sligo which in the 1570s amounted to £360 per annum.¹⁵⁴ Sligo was of interest also because it was rich in cattle and possessed fertile lands for feeding these animals, as well as being an important fishing centre.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, Mayo was rich in cattle, as were MacDermot's lands in Roscommon which also produced much corn.¹⁵⁶ If they could obtain some share of these resources, the O'Donnell lords would be well regarded by their followers at home. Therefore, one aim of the expansionist policy which O'Donnell leaders attempted to pursue in northern Connaught was to enrich Tír Conaill and, thereby, solidify their domestic power. This could also fund further expansionism.

There were also strategic reasons why O'Donnell leaders sought to expand into northern Connaught. Influence over the O'Rourkes of Leitrim and the O'Reillys of East Breifne could allow penetration further south into Connaught as well as enabling O'Donnell lords to surround Maguire of Fermanagh on his

¹⁵³ See map 1 on page vi for details of where these territories lay. Some of them are also visible on map 4 on page ix.

¹⁵⁴ W.F. T. Butler, *Gleanings from Irish history*, (London, 1925), 208.

¹⁵⁵ William Camden, *Camden's Britannia: newly translated into English with large additions and improvements*, (London, 1695), 1005; Connolly, *Contested Island*, 24.

¹⁵⁶ Camden, *Camden's Britannia*, 1003, 1005.

lordship's southern border.¹⁵⁷ Powerful O'Donnell lords sought to compel men in northern Connaught to serve them militarily too, as is evident from Manus O'Donnell's agreement with Tadhg O'Conchobhair Sligo in 1539 and in Hugh McManus' letter to Edward Fitton, President of Connaught, in 1571.¹⁵⁸¹⁵⁹ In claiming overlordship in northern Connaught, therefore, the O'Donnell lords made the same kinds of economic and military demands of the sublords there that were placed upon inferior men in Tír Conaill itself.

Nevertheless the ability of the O'Donnells lords to put these claims into practice was constrained by a number of factors. Generally, new O'Donnell lords sought to display power over Connaught soon after their inauguration and when they had quelled the challenge of any dissident O'Donnells who disputed their rule.¹⁶⁰ However, when there was trouble at home, this necessarily lessened the ability of the O'Donnell lords to assert their claims in northern Connaught. This was most evident during the rule of Calvagh O'Donnell as he and his son, Con, were hard-pressed simply staving off the threat the marauding Shane O'Neill of Tyrone posed to Tír

¹⁵⁷ See map 1 on page vi for details of where these territories lay.

¹⁵⁸ Maura Carney, ed., 'Agreement between O'Domhnaill and Tadhg O'Conchobhair Sligo concerning Sligo Castle (23 June 1539)', *IHS*, iii (1942-3), 285-6, 290; Hugh McManus O'Donnell to Sir Edward Fitton, president of 'High Connacht', 13 July 1571, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 53.

¹⁶⁰ For instance, see chapter two, 81-82, for evidence of Manus pursuing this policy and chapter three, 125, for instances of Hugh McManus doing the same.

Conaill.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, the likes of O'Connor Sligo resisted O'Donnell demands when possible and even the strongest lord of Tír Conaill could not always compel men in the western province to pay tribute.¹⁶² As the century wore on, moreover, the English crown and its officials became less willing to countenance O'Donnell influence in northern Connaught. Previously, the Tudors had tacitly accepted the expansion of the lords of Tír Conaill into the area because it was politically convenient. However, Henry VIII believed he was heir to Connaught and wanted to cede as little power there as possible to O'Donnell.¹⁶³ At the end of the period, Elizabeth's view was the same. Neither monarch had acknowledged officially O'Donnell claims in the western province nor would they. Ultimately, the lords of Tír Conaill could subdue Connaught only intermittently, because their presence there was disputed by both the western lords and, later, the English crown.

The O'Donnells' biggest rivals for most of the sixteenth century, however, were the O'Neills of Tyrone. These two families squabbled for predominance in Ulster, with each making claims for military service upon the followers of the other.¹⁶⁴ In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, their main disputes were over the territories of Inishowen and Cinel Moen in Tír Conaill, and overlordship in Fermanagh. The financial benefits of power in Inishowen have been outlined above, but it was strategically important too. If a dissident O'Donnell held sway in Cinel Moen, then the O'Neills had the ability to march north through Tír Conaill into

¹⁶¹ See chapter two, pages 98-113, for more on Shane's dominance in Tír Conaill, which was only halted in 1566 because Lord Deputy Sidney finally assisted Calvagh O'Donnell against O'Neill.

¹⁶² For instance, O'Connor sought to have Elizabeth I acknowledge his rule over Sligo and the return of all castles there from O'Donnell's possession in 1568. See 'Indenture between Queen Elizabeth and Sir Donald O'Conchuyr, alias O'Connor Sligo', 20 January 1568, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 378.

¹⁶³ Christopher Maginn, *William Cecil, Ireland, and the Tudor State*, (Oxford, 2012), 16.

¹⁶⁴ Colm O Lochlainn, 'O Domhnail's Claim for Military Service', *Irish Sword*, V, (1960-1), 117-118; Myles Dillon, trans. 'Ceart ui Neill', *Studia Celtica*, I, (1966), 1-18.

Inishowen. This could give the lords of Tyrone total power over the Swilly as well as the Foyle, enabling them to conduct the flow of mercenaries into these two loughs to their own interest. As a consequence of this, control in Cinel Moen was crucially important.¹⁶⁵

The territory of Cinel Moen lay in eastern Tír Conaill, encompassing the area around Lifford and Strabane, already identified as important in the ongoing struggle for control in the north between the O’Neills and the O’Donnells. The O’Neills claimed power in Cinel Moen, as well as in Inishowen, on the grounds that they were

‘senior in race’ to the O’Donnells, and because these territories had been the ‘homeland’ of the O’Neills centuries before.¹⁶⁶ Although each O’Neill leader would try to seize control of these lands those based in western Tyrone, like Turlough Luineach O’Neill, were in a better geographical position to make a constant effort to do so than lords based in central Tyrone. Turlough’s headquarters at Strabane was an ideal base from which to unsettle O’Donnell by offering support and encouragement to those who challenged his rule in Tír Conaill. Indeed Darren McGettigan has observed that Hugh McManus O’Donnell struggled to overawe Tír Conaill because his rival, Con O’Donnell, held sway in Cinel Moen and was assisted in retaining power there by Turlough.¹⁶⁷ As rebellious O’Donnells controlled Cinel Moen for much of the century, concern about the O’Neills’ ability to influence Tír

¹⁶⁵ Edmund Curtis, *A History of Medieval Ireland from 1086 to 1513*, 2nd edition, (Routledge, 2013), 258. See also Map 6 on page xi for the location of Cinel Moen.

¹⁶⁶ Curtis, *A History of Medieval Ireland*, 258.

¹⁶⁷ McGettigan, *Red Hugh O’Donnell*, 35.

Conaill's politics in this way was a central reason why O'Donnell lords looked to the English crown to recognise their power in Cinel Moen after 1541.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, these local concerns played a critical role in ensuring that certain O'Donnell leaders were interested in close relations with the crown at the national level.

The two Ulster overlords were also at variance over who should be overlord of Fermanagh. Power there was attractive for several reasons. As with any other lord, Maguire could be compelled to pay tribute to anyone who overawed him. Manus O'Donnell was notably successful in obtaining this in the early 1540s.¹⁶⁹ If subdued, Maguire would also be expected to contribute to O'Donnell's military effort. Furthermore, Maguire's territory was heavily wooded which may have allowed access to timber for house or cot-building.¹⁷⁰ One difficulty was that neither an O'Donnell nor an O'Neill leader could easily prevent their rival from launching attacks on Fermanagh. The lords of Tyrone could pass south through the territory of the Sliocht-Airt O'Neills to reach it, while the O'Donnells' powerbase in southern Tír Conaill meant they too had easy access to Maguire's territory. One or the other was more likely to obtain control in Fermanagh if his provincial foe was troubled by domestic strife. An O'Neill, especially if based in central Tyrone, might have to fight his way through the territories of several dissident O'Neills to reach Maguire's lordship. Meanwhile an O'Donnell could be drawn into Cinel Moen in order to subdue dissidents there. Given the fluctuating nature of Irish politics, the

¹⁶⁸ See chapter two, 72 and chapter three, 159-160 for examples of the crown's intervention in the dispute over Cinel Moen.

¹⁶⁹ See chapter two, 83.

¹⁷⁰ See Map 8, on page xiii of this study, which shows that Fermanagh was relatively heavily wooded.

struggle for power in Fermanagh never truly ended. Even in 1600 the confederate allies, Hugh

Roe O'Donnell and Hugh O'Neill, squabbled over who should be allowed to nominate a new lord of Fermanagh.¹⁷¹ Thus, all these local disputes were active points of contention between the O'Neills and the O'Donnells throughout the sixteenth century.

Another important factor in Ulster's politics in the sixteenth century was the rise of the MacDonalds of Antrim and Dunyveg. They had been a power in the Western Isles of Scotland for centuries. However, by the early decades of the fifteenth century the Scottish monarch, James I, became resolved to deal with this semi-autonomous family in the west.¹⁷² Successive Scottish kings tried to curb the influence of the MacDonalds in the islands and the likes of Donald Balloch MacDonald, who resisted crown rule, were decried as rebels.¹⁷³ Following this, the MacDonalds increasingly used lands they had previously gained in Ireland as an escape route whenever relations with the Scottish crown were poor.¹⁷⁴ These territories included the Bisset lands in north-east Ulster, which had been acquired through the marriage of John Mor MacDonald to Majory Bisset in 1399.¹⁷⁵ Further, the marriage of John Cahanagh MacDonald to a daughter of the Savage family had seen MacDonald influence spread into County Down.¹⁹³

¹⁷¹ McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, 92.

¹⁷² George Hill, *An historical account of the McDonnell's of Antrim*, (Belfast, 1873), 29.

¹⁷³ Donald Gregory, *History of the Western Highlands and Isles of Scotland from A. D. 1493 to A. D. 1625*, 2nd edition, (Edinburgh, 1975), 38.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

¹⁷⁵ Jane E. A. Dawson, *Scotland Re-formed, 1488-1587*, (Edinburgh, 2007), 180. 193 Gregory, *History of the Western Highlands and Isles*, 35-6.

Following the dissolution of the Lordship of the Isles in 1493, the MacDonalds became determined to increase their power in Ulster in order to ease the ‘subsistence burden on their homelands’ as they no longer had access to the resources of the wider Western Isles and Ross as before.¹⁷⁶ By the mid-1550s, their expansionist aims in Ulster were beginning to be realised. They had successfully won some power over the MacQuillin lordship of the Route to the west of the Bisset lands, which was later acknowledged in maps as the territory of Sorley Boy MacDonald.¹⁷⁷ The MacDonalds, as J. Michael Hill has argued, had ambitions to stretch their influence still further throughout Ulster and as far west as Tír Conaill.¹⁷⁸ Ultimately, they took advantage of Hugh McManus O’Donnell’s need for aid in the late 1560s to secure a foothold in Tír Conaill through his marriage alliance with Finola MacDonald.¹⁷⁹ At the time Hugh was unsure as to the English crown’s intent towards him and also faced local threats in the form of Con O’Donnell and Turlough Luineach O’Neill. Given that O’Neill also sought Scottish aid, O’Donnell would have been in a weak position had he not followed suit. His decision to do so was crucially important in determining the course of Ulster’s subsequent history.

Now the MacDonalds had a stake in the succession in Tír Conaill and could solidify their influence there if Finola’s offspring succeeded Hugh McManus. Though Hugh’s eldest son Donnell was borne by an Irishwoman, he would always face contenders in the form of Finola’s sons, Hugh Roe and Rory.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, as

¹⁷⁶ Dawson, *Scotland Re-formed*, 181.

¹⁷⁷ See map 3 on page viii of this study.

¹⁷⁸ J. Michael Hill, *Fire and Sword: Sorley Boy MacDonnell and the rise of the Clan Ian Mor, 1538-1590*, (London, 1993), 34.

¹⁷⁹ . See also chapter three, 137-138.

¹⁸⁰ See genealogical table on page xiv of this study.

mentioned above, Finola took measures in the late 1580s and 1590s to ensure that it was her son, Hugh Roe, who took power in Tír Conaill. Though this was principally a local struggle, her actions were viewed unfavourably by the English because they had long desired to remove the influence of the Scottish islanders from Ulster. For this reason, it is possible that the fact that Hugh Roe was half Scottish ensured that some officials were set upon his defeat. Certainly, Hugh's leadership in Tír Conaill promised to ensure that MacDonald influence continued there. A Scottish monarch of England, in the person of James VI & I, had no such concerns and willingly created Rory O'Donnell, also half-Scottish, Earl of Tír Conaill in 1603.

Having outlined the local political, economic and strategic concerns of the lords of Tír Conaill and other important powers in Ulster, the following chapters will discuss how these interests intertwined with English attempts to bring the O'Donnells under Tudor power. The crown's policies towards Tír Conaill and the surrounding areas are examined throughout this thesis, as are the varying local, national and supranational factors which shaped O'Donnell reactions to these initiatives. This throws light on the reasons why O'Donnell leaders embraced English rule when they did and rejected it at other times. Further, this perspective enables an understanding of the full range of policy options available to O'Donnell lords at particular times as they sought to retain his local authority and further it if they could.

CHAPTER TWO – THE LORDSHIPS OF MANUS AND CALVAGH O'DONNELL IN TÍR CONAILL, 1537-1566

Throughout the 1530s and for some time beyond, Irish politics continued to be focused around the furtherance of personal, family or dynastic interests.¹⁸¹ There have been varying perceptions of how Manus O'Donnell's efforts to pursue these aims interacted with the increasing English presence in Ireland in this period. John Silke has asserted that Manus was hostile towards the English and initiated a policy of courting foreign aid to smash 'the English colony' centred in the Pale, a policy imitated by Ulster lords for the remainder of the century.¹⁸² Hugh Kearney, meanwhile, argued that the external policy of O'Donnell lords was usually to seek links with Scotland while their local rivals, the O'Neills of Tyrone, 'looked to the English monarchy for support'.¹⁸³ In contrast, Edmund Curtis declared that, after Manus' submission to the crown in 1541, the O'Donnells were 'for most of the century...a pro-English power in the north west, used by the government to balance the still-greater O'Neills'.¹⁸⁴ But it is a mistake to view Manus as a leader immutably committed to particular alliances. Indeed Brendan Bradshaw has compared O'Donnell with Shane O'Neill, who displayed a 'readiness to innovate and adapt in the light of new conditions' as the lord of Tyrone between 1559 and 1567.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ S. J. Connolly, *Contested Island: Ireland 1460-1630*, (Dublin, 2007), 40, 90.

¹⁸² John J. Silke, 'Raphoe and the Reformation', in William Nolan et al, eds, *Donegal: history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 276.

¹⁸³ Hugh F. Kearney, *The British Isles: a history of four nations*, (Cambridge, 1989), 151.

¹⁸⁴ Edmund Curtis, *A History of Ireland*, 2nd edition, (Dublin, 1936), 172. More recently, S. J. Connolly has asserted that the O'Donnells and the crown were 'traditional allies'. See *Contested Island*, 113.

¹⁸⁵ Brendan Bradshaw, 'Manus the "Magnificent": O'Donnell as Renaissance Prince', in Donal McCartney and Art Cosgrove, eds, *Studies in Irish history: presented to R. Dudley Edwards*, (Dublin, 1979), 16.

That said Manus did have an overarching policy, which was the traditional O'Donnell desire for regional predominance in Ulster. Indeed this thesis suggests that, within the local political sphere, O'Donnell lords had three particular aims: to solidify their power within Tír Conaill itself and ward off both internal and external challenges to this; to expand their power throughout Ulster and Connaught, with allies who would help them do this being coveted; and to overcome the O'Neills of Tyrone in the battle for provincial supremacy in Ulster. In pursuing this last aim, Manus most often followed the policy of Hugh Ruadh I O'Donnell (the lord of Tír Conaill between 1461 and 1505), which had been to 'encircle Tyrone with a ring of power friendly to Tyrconnell'.¹⁸⁶ In trying to achieve this after 1541, Manus' preference was for an alliance with the English crown, purely because it was asserting itself visibly in Ireland and courting local elites. As Brendan Kane has argued, the O'Donnells were notable for their repeated 'negotiations with the Crown to convert their traditional titles to English-style ones'.¹⁸⁷

While there were sometimes close relations between O'Donnell leaders and the English crown and its officials, this was not a permanent state of affairs. Indeed, Alexander Richey observed, as long ago as 1870, that the O'Donnells were supported and 'flattered' whenever the English were concerned about the O'Neill threat in Ulster, but otherwise ignored.¹⁸⁸ This was evident during Manus' time and especially during the rule of Calvagh O'Donnell, when the crown's disinterest left Tír Conaill at the mercy of Shane O'Neill for a spell. Furthermore, the English

¹⁸⁶ Stephen Gwynn, *The History of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1924), 154.

¹⁸⁷ Brendan Kane, *The Politics and Culture of Honour in Ireland, 1541-1641*, (Dublin, 2010), 42.

¹⁸⁸ Alexander G. Richey, *Lectures on the history of Ireland, second series: from A.D. 1534 to the date of the plantation of Ulster*, (Longman, 1870), 400.

began intermittently interfering within Tír Conaill itself and sought to limit the family's ability to extend its power throughout Ulster and Connaught. Showing the pragmatism which Bradshaw highlights, Manus O'Donnell was only too happy to look to Scotland or even his O'Neill rivals for alliances when such situations arose. Conversely, Calvagh O'Donnell was particularly weak and completely dependent on the English monarchy's wavering assistance. This chapter argues that there never was a particularly firm or stable relationship between these O'Donnells and the crown. Instead, both the English rulers and O'Donnell leaders based their allegiances upon considerations of which ally seemed most likely to help them further particular causes at a given time. In pursuing this argument, there is discussion of the relationship dynamic between the O'Donnells, the O'Neills and the crown during the reigns of Manus and Calvagh O'Donnell, and sections on these respective lords bookend the chapter. There is also examination of early instances of English efforts to limit the expansionism of Irish elites and O'Donnell responses to this, and English interference within Tír Conaill itself and the reactions that provoked. This approach illustrates that issues which later deepened the schism between the O'Donnells and the crown had their roots in this period.

The crown, O'Donnell and O'Neill dynamic during the lordship of Manus O'Donnell

The traditional enemies of the O'Donnells were the O'Neills of Tyrone, Ulster's other great power. These two families had been at perpetual war for control over Fermanagh, Inishowen and Cinel Moen from the fifteenth century onwards.¹⁸⁹ As

¹⁸⁹ Mary O'Dowd, 'Gaelic economy and society' in Raymond Gillespie and Ciaran Brady, eds. *Natives and newcomers: essays on the making of Irish colonial society, 1534-1641*, (Dublin, 1986), 123. ¹⁰ For more on this struggle, see chapter one, pages 50-52.

already outlined, the struggle over the latter two areas was founded upon O'Neill claims that these territories in the north and east of Tír Conaill had been their homelands centuries before.¹⁹⁰ On the O'Donnells' part, it was intolerable that either of these areas fall under O'Neill control for strategic, political and economic reasons.¹⁹⁰ In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, these families were able to squabble over power in the north freely, because the Dublin government's sway there was then very weak.¹⁹¹ But in the early decades of the sixteenth century, moves were afoot to reassert crown authority throughout Ireland. Henry VIII had planned to have the earl of Surrey bring native Irish lords under English rule in the 1520s, though this scheme had foundered.¹⁹² A feature of English thinking had been that lords willing to live under Henry's authority would be rewarded with knighthoods and other noble titles.¹⁴ Following the Kingship Act of 1541, these ideals formed the basis of the surrender and regrant agreements conducted between the English crown and various Irish lords.

By 1531, some Irishmen had displayed willingness to forge closer relations with the crown. These included the-then lord of Tír Conaill, Hugh Dubh O'Donnell, who sought to win Henry's military support against Conn Bacach O'Neill, lord of Tyrone. Consequently, Hugh Dubh pledged that he was willing to 'bee governed by the Lawes of England'.¹⁹³ He also assisted the Lord Deputy, William Skeffington, during the Kildare rebellion of 1534-5 in order to obtain assistance against O'Neill

¹⁹⁰ For more on these issues, see chapter one, pages 50-52.

¹⁹¹ Robert A. Dodghson notes that clans in Scotland tended to be strongest where the Scottish monarchy's power was most limited. See *The Age of the Clans: The Highlands from Somerled to the Clearances*, (Edinburgh, 2002), 16.

¹⁹² Nerys Patterson, 'Gaelic Law and the Tudor Conquest of Ireland: The social background of the sixteenth century recensions of the pseudo-historical prologue to the *Senchas Mar*', *IHS*, 27, (1991), 201. 14 Connolly, *Contested Island*, 78.

¹⁹³ John Davies, *A Discoverie of the True Causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued, nor brought vnder obedience of the Crowne of England, Untill the Beginning of His Maiesties Happie Raigne*, (Dublin, 1612), 115.

and Manus O'Donnell, Hugh's son, who had aligned with the lord of Tyrone.¹⁹⁴

This mirrored the policies that earlier lords of Tír Conaill had often followed towards powers outside Ireland, as they had long sought external assistance in their local wars. It was for this purpose that previous O'Donnell leaders had contracted marriage alliances with the MacDonalds of the Isles and other families in the west of Scotland in the thirteenth century.¹⁹⁵ In the 1490s, meanwhile, Hugh Roe I O'Donnell sought aid from James IV of Scotland and this policy was also pursued, albeit unsuccessfully, by Hugh Dubh between 1507 and 1513.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, when Manus assumed power in 1537 he was aware of precedents which suggested that the ruling O'Donnell could obtain military assistance from England and Scotland. Thus, Manus too was willing to work with Henry VIII, and Darren McGettigan has acknowledged that O'Donnell recognised his chances of retaining local power were heightened if some form of 'arrangement' was reached with the Dublin government.¹⁹⁷

Though Manus O'Donnell was keen on friendship with Henry VIII, the new lord of Tír Conaill found it would not be automatic because years of apparently rebellious behaviour meant Englishmen were suspicious of him. He had been opposed to his father, who had been aligned with the crown. The English official

¹⁹⁴ Alison Cathcart, 'James V, King of Scotland-and Ireland?'; in Seán Duffy, ed., *The World of the galloglass: kings, warlords, and warriors in Ireland and Scotland, 1200-1600* (Dublin, 2007), 136-7; Lughaidh O'Clerigh, *The Life of Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill*, volume 2, ed. Paul Walsh, (Dublin, 1957), 21. For discussion of the O'Donnell/Skeffington alliance, see Brendan Bradshaw, *The Irish constitutional revolution of the sixteenth century*, (Cambridge, 1979), 173.

¹⁹⁵ Katharine Simms, *From kings to warlords: the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later Middle Ages*, (Woodbridge, 2000), 122. For more on the MacDonalds' increasing involvement in Ireland from that point onwards, see chapter one, pages 52-54.

¹⁹⁶ Gwynn, *History of Ireland*, 159-60. Examples of Hugh Dubh's dealings with James IV can be found in R. K. Hannay, *The Letters of James IV, 1505-1513*, (Edinburgh, 1953), 70-1, and *ER*, xiii, (1508-1513), lxxx-lxxxi.

¹⁹⁷ Darren Mac Eiteagain, 'The Renaissance and the late medieval lordship of Tír Chonaill, 1461-1555', in William Nolan et al, eds., *Donegal: History and Society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 223. 20 'Book by Robert Cowley: The state of the realm of Ireland, April 1538', SP 60/6/ f. 121v.

Robert Cowley had also stressed that Manus and his ally Conn Bacach O'Neill wanted power over all Ulster and Connaught, and highlighted O'Donnell's links with James V of Scotland and the king of France.²⁰ While Manus had principally courted these foreign monarchs in order to gain assistance in his local wars, his policies were viewed as disloyal by English onlookers. This impression was strengthened when the Irish Council became aware of his links with the Geraldines and his proposed marriage to Eleanor Fitzgerald, 'a suster of therle of Kildareis'.¹⁹⁸ This grouping was viewed with wariness since the Geraldines had attempted to capitalise upon Henry's break with Rome following the English Reformation. They had sought support from Catholic European monarchs by utilising the rhetoric of a Catholic crusade against the 'heretic' English king during the Silken Thomas revolt of 1534-5.¹⁹⁹ Michael O Siochru has acknowledged that the likes of Charles V of Spain and James V were not keen on 'open war' with England, but that Henry could not be sure of their intentions and had to take the threat to his Irish lordship seriously.²⁰⁰ After this rebellion was suppressed, the king decided that Thomas Fitzgerald's relatives must forfeit their lands to prevent them reasserting their power within Irish politics and destabilising the island again.²⁰¹ However Henry's decision to reform the Irish Church in 1536 prompted further resistance there and gave

¹⁹⁸ Lord Ossory and others of the Irish Council to Thomas Cromwell, 2 January 1536, SP 60/3 f. 1v.

¹⁹⁹ Ciaran Brady, 'England's defence and Ireland's reform: The Dilemma of the Irish viceroys, 1541-1641' in Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill, eds., *The British Problem, c1534-1707: state formation in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Basingstoke, 1996), 93. On suspected Scottish aid during the Silken Thomas revolt, see Alison Cathcart, 'James V, King of Scotland-and Ireland?', 134.

²⁰⁰ Micheál Ó Siochru, 'Foreign involvement in the rebellion of Silken Thomas', *PRIA*, 96, C, (1997), 49.

²⁰¹ Steven G. Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors 1447-1603: English expansion and the end of Gaelic rule* (London, 1998), 113.

Catholic monarchs another means of attacking his authority.²⁰² For Henry, it now became even more imperative that Ireland was governed by someone ‘reliable’ and not those Irishmen who might align with foreign monarchs to remove the English presence from the island.²⁶ Consequently, English concern about the rebellious Geraldine grouping never diminished and the behaviour of Manus O’Donnell, as part of this faction, caused unease among English officials even before he became lord of Tír Conaill.

When Hugh Dubh O’Donnell died in summer 1537, Manus assumed the lordship of Tír Conaill and the alarmed Irish Council informed Henry VIII that Manus and O’Neill were together ‘a great power and to be feared of your subjects’.²⁰³ However O’Donnell now wanted to distance himself from Conn Bacach and become aligned with the English instead. Soon, in a letter to the Lord Deputy, Leonard Grey, Manus tried to make moves in this direction by arguing that he had only ever defended himself against his father and had done ‘nothing against the King’.²⁰⁴ Besides offering to serve Henry, Manus stressed his loyalty in having ‘refused utterly’ to ally with lords from the south and west of Ireland.²⁰⁵ This veiled threat was intended to remind Lord Deputy Grey that O’Donnell could easily find other allies.

²⁰² Gerald A. Hayes-McCoy, ‘The Royal supremacy and ecclesiastical revolution, 1534-1547’, in T. W. Moody et al, eds. *A New History of Ireland*, III, (Oxford, 1976), 55. 26 Connolly, *Contested Island*, 84.

²⁰³ *AU*, iii, 615; The Lord Deputy and Irish Council to Henry VIII, 12 August 1537, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 125.

²⁰⁴ Manus O’Donnell to Lord Deputy Leonard Grey, 20 August 1537, *LP Hen. VIII*, xii, part ii, (June-December 1537), 207.

²⁰⁵ Manus O’Donnell to Lord Deputy Leonard Grey, 20 August 1537, *LP Hen. VIII*, xii, part ii, (June-December 1537), 207. 30 Lord Leonard Grey to Thomas Cromwell, 1 September 1537, *LP Hen. VIII*, xii, part ii, (June-December 1537), 232.

Grey favoured courting Manus' friendship, believing that he might 'do good service against O'Neill' but Henry VIII was disinterested.³⁰ Manus responded by solidifying his alliance with the Geraldines but continued pressing for the king's acceptance, writing to Grey in July 1538 to deny involvement in the conspiracy and promising to 'fulfyll all thinges' which had been previously offered.²⁰⁶ Links with James V of Scotland were also played down, with O'Donnell claiming that he merely followed his father's example in seeking weaponry to use against Henry's rebellious subjects.²⁰⁷ In response to these overtures, John Alen, the Irish Chancellor, suggested that pardoning O'Donnell and O'Neill would separate them from the Geraldine faction, but Henry remained unmoved.²⁰⁸

The Geraldine League finally emerged into the open in the late 1530s citing a mixture of political and religious grievances. Manus' prominence within the movement was revealed by his alignment with Eleanor Fitzgerald and O'Neill against the English in the summer of 1538.²⁰⁹ Eleanor was the aunt of the heir to the Kildare estates, young Gerald Fitzgerald. This grouping later expanded to include James of Desmond and Tadhg O'Connor Sligo, while Eleanor sought to recruit other Connaught and Ulster lords too.²¹⁰ John Alen believed that the League would have papal and Scottish aid and proposed that Henry send 'five or six shippes' to O'Donnell's country to block the Scots' route into Ulster.²¹¹ Also alarming to English officials were reports in early 1539 that O'Neill intended to proclaim

²⁰⁶ Manus O'Donnell to Lord Leonard Grey, July 1538, *SP Hen. VIII*, volume iii part ii, (1538-1546), 98.

²⁰⁷ Manus O'Donnell to Lord Leonard Grey, July 1538, *SP Hen. VIII*, volume iii part ii, (1538-1546), 98.

²⁰⁸ John Alen to Thomas Cromwell, 29 November 1538, *LP Hen. VIII*, xiii, part ii, (August-December 1538), 390.

²⁰⁹ Ormond to the Irish Council, 25 June 1538, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii part ii, (1538-1546), 44.

²¹⁰ Ormond to Robert Cowley, 20 July 1538, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii part ii, (1538-1546), 52.

²¹¹ John Alen to Thomas Cromwell, 10 July 1539, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii part ii, (1538-1546), 136-7.

himself king of Ireland at Tara and the attack on the English Pale by O'Donnell and O'Neill

that summer, although this was soon avenged by Leonard Grey at Bellahoe.²¹²

Many explanations have been proffered to explain O'Donnell's motives for participating in the League. John Silke suggested that Manus aimed to 'destroy' the English colony in the Pale, while Hiram Morgan asserted that the League sought to secure young Gerald's restoration and challenge Henry's control over the Irish church.³⁸ There is certainly evidence that the lords sought to defend the privilege of Irish elites, even if the predicament of the Fitzgeralds was not their paramount concern.²¹³ Indeed, Ciaran Brady and Colm Lennon argue that Grey's aggressive behaviour towards Irishmen following the Silken Thomas revolt made them wary of English intentions towards them.²¹⁴ As David Edwards has observed, Grey was also distrusted because he had promised that several prominent members of the Fitzgerald family would be spared following their rebellion, only to renege on this and oversee their executions.²¹⁵ Local political concerns also played a part according to Brendan Bradshaw, who affirmed that O'Donnell joined the League to ensure he was not left vulnerable to attack by the Geraldine allies of O'Neill.⁴²

²¹² 'Confession of Connor More O'Chonnour, messenger to young Gerald, before the Lord Chancellor, the Treasurer of the Wars, and Sir John White, in Dublin Castle, 17 April, 30 Hen. VIII', *LP Hen. VIII*, xiv, part i, (January-July 1539), 552; *AComm*, 713. ³⁸ Silke, 'Raphoe and the Reformation', 276; Hiram Morgan, 'British policies before the British state', in Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill eds., *The British Problem, c1534-1707: state formation in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Basingstoke, 1996), 73.

²¹³ Brendan Bradshaw has argued that Manus was concerned the Kildares' removal would be repeated elsewhere, which motivated him to take part in the League. See 'Manus the Magnificent', 32.

²¹⁴ Colm Lennon, *Sixteenth-century Ireland: the incomplete conquest* (Dublin, 1994), 150-1; Ciaran Brady, *The chief governors: the rise and fall of reform government in Tudor Ireland, 1536-1588* (Cambridge, 1994), 2.

²¹⁵ David Edwards, 'The Escalation of violence in sixteenth-century Ireland', in David Edwards et al, eds. *Age of atrocity: violence and political conflict in early modern Ireland*, (Dublin, 2007), 57-8. This became known as the 'Pardon of Maynooth' and was synonymous with false promises made by some English officials. ⁴² Bradshaw, *Irish constitutional revolution*, 175.

The evidence suggests that O'Donnell was indeed afraid of wider English policy towards him, while Bradshaw's suggestion that Manus feared being isolated in local politics is also accurate. In 1538 O'Neill, apparently on Grey's orders, had attacked both Manus and Maguire of Fermanagh, while the deputy had also demanded that O'Donnell pay him 800 cattle, though he refused.²¹⁶ This combination of an English official with Manus' principal local rival gave him cause to believe that the crown was set on supporting the lord of Tyrone in the struggle for power in Ulster. For now, remaining within the League and giving the appearance of subservience allowed Manus to stave off the aggression and extortion of Grey and O'Neill. However, O'Donnell was also motivated to appear innocent because, now that he was lord of Tír Conaill, he sought to break away from O'Neill and align with Henry. As it happened, the Irish Council accepted that Grey's conduct had compelled Manus to join the League and wanted to use this to separate him from that faction, though Henry was slow to capitalise on these ideas even when O'Donnell was pardoned in May 1540.²¹⁷ This episode also typified another trend. While

Manus' requests for friendship with the crown were ignored he remained closely aligned with O'Neill in the League, even if this was perhaps through necessity rather than choice. This dynamic re-emerged at different points throughout the century, illuminating that the O'Donnell-O'Neill alliance in the 1590s was merely long-lived rather than wholly novel. The king was finally forced to take heed of the counsel of

²¹⁶ 'The examination of Lord Leonard Grey', *LP Hen. VIII*, xvi, 128-138.

²¹⁷ 'The examination of Lord Leonard Grey', *LP Hen. VIII*, xvi, 128-138.

his advisers regarding Manus and others in the League, because they were exploring alternative avenues in their quest for aid.

Cordiality already characterised relations between O'Donnell and James V of Scotland, who had promised in 1534 to 'refuse no just request' for aid that the Irishman might make, prompting him to request assistance when he became Lord of Tír Conaill.²¹⁸ But James did not lend a direct hand to Manus' war effort, preferring to intervene in less overt ways such as supporting his bid to receive papal dispensation for his marriage to Eleanor Fitzgerald.²¹⁹ O'Donnell must have been disappointed since he was seeking to 'monopolise' access to Scottish mercenaries, 'artillery and other equipment'.²²⁰ Still James held out the prospect of future military backing and O'Donnell continued to seek assistance, with reports in March 1539 suggesting that he wanted 6000 Scotsmen for the Geraldine League's war upon the English.²²¹ Ultimately, James never made a firm commitment regarding aid but the very prospect of a Geraldine League-Scottish alliance finally forced the English to engage with Irish malcontents. For his part, O'Donnell was compelled to revise his own policy moves once more.

In May 1540 O'Donnell despatched young Gerald to France and opened negotiations with the crown, wherein he was pardoned by Henry VIII and promised to display 'faythfull obedyens' to the king thereafter.²²² Alison Cathcart has argued

²¹⁸ Cathcart, 'James V, King of Scotland-and Ireland?', 132-3; R. K Hannay, ed. *The letters of James V*, (Edinburgh, 1954), 275.

²¹⁹ Hannay, ed. *Letters of James V*, 321. As Alison Cathcart argues, James was then willing to 'aggravate' Henry, but could not make open war upon him because Scotland lacked a strong, reliable European ally, see Cathcart, 'James V, King of Scotlandand Ireland?', 126.

²²⁰ Mac Eiteagain, 'Late Medieval Lordship of Tír Chonaill', 212.

²²¹ Hannay, ed. *Letters of James V*, 339. For the March 1539 rumours, see Thomas Wusle, Constable of Carrickfergus, to Mar Laurens, Constable of Ardglass, March 1539, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 149.

²²² Bradshaw, 'Manus the "Magnificent"', 28, 32-3. For the 1540 submission terms, see Manus O'Donnell to King Henry VIII, 20 June 1540, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 217.

Manus did so because the leverage he had in possessing young Gerald was nonexistent without aid, which was not forthcoming.²²³ Manus could also see that the English were now determined to make Irishmen obey Henry, and recognised that his 'political future would be secured through an outward, superficial submission to the Tudor state than holding on to the tenuous hope of James's intervention'.⁵¹ Indeed, the Scottish court had been neither a reliable nor consistent source of aid, so Manus had not pursued that option to the exclusion of all others. In line with Bradshaw's assessment of his pragmatic character, O'Donnell had entertained all possibilities throughout and an English arrangement was as palatable as any other if it shored up his local position. Ultimately, as Richard Bagwell argued, Manus was merely reverting to 'his father's policy' towards Henry, who eventually accepted this to ward off the threat of a foreign invasion of Ireland.²²⁴ It is also evident that O'Donnell did not see himself as powerless to negotiate without possession of young Gerald, and Manus seems to have taken part in the League's unsuccessful efforts to offer the kingship of Ireland to James V of Scotland in 1540.²²⁵ O'Donnell's continuing involvement was due to his desire to hasten the fashioning of a full alliance with Henry, since the 1540 submission stated only Manus' obligations to the crown and offered him little in return.

The English were now alarmed by the League's brazenness and sought to prevent Irishmen offering the kingship to foreign rulers. The Dublin government

²²³ Cathcart, 'James V, King of Scotland-and Ireland?', 139. 51
ibid, 141-2.

²²⁴ Richard Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, I, (London, 1885), 247.

²²⁵ Cathcart, 'James V, King of Scotland-and Ireland?', 126, 140; James refused the Irish kingship on the grounds that he was at peace with Henry.

realised that the rebels believed they could freely do this because Henry had title to Ireland only through the grant of the isle to Henry II by Pope Adrian in 1155. Consequently, Irishmen were likely to exploit this weakness whenever they were unhappy with English rule.²²⁶ As the new Irish deputy, Anthony St Leger's solution to this was the Kingship Act. The proposed legislation was aimed at securing Henry's claim to the Irish throne by drawing native Irish lords towards closer relations with the crown and having them join English-Irishmen in adhering to English law, particularly in regard to rights to land.²²⁷ St Leger believed this would be successful if he included native Irishmen in his network of patronage and, consequently, the Irish Council recommended in September 1541 that Henry re-grant their lands to those Irishmen who submitted to the crown.⁵⁶ The king would be spared the burden of paying to defend Ireland from foreign powers, and the island would now turn a profit as lords would be able to live quietly in their possessions.⁵⁷ Though Henry initially fretted that this would not halt rebellion and might prevent a future conquest of Ireland, he ultimately accepted suggestions that this would strengthen his Irish claims and deny malcontents the right to dispute them.²²⁸²²⁹ These incentives combined to interest the king in coming to terms with the lords in 1541.

²²⁶ Morgan, 'British policies before the British state', 73; The Lord Deputy and Irish Council to Henry VIII, 30 December 1540, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 56.

²²⁷ Hayes-McCoy, 'Royal supremacy and ecclesiastical revolution', 47; Brady, 'Dilemma of the Irish viceroys', 93. 56 Lord Deputy Anthony St Leger to Henry VIII, 21 February 1541, *LP Hen. VIII*, xvi, (1540-1), 261-2. For the Council's recommendation, see Copy of report by the Council in London to Henry VIII, 23 September 1541, SP 60/10 f. 133. 57 Copy of report by the Council in London to Henry VIII, 23 September 1541, SP 60/10 f. 133.

²²⁸ For Henry's scepticism, see King Henry VIII to the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland, 2 May 1541, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, 302-3, (1538-1546), and the king's letter to the same recipients on 8 September 1541, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, 302-3, (1538-229), 323-4. Henry's change of heart is evident in his acknowledgement that he had accepted the name and title of King of Ireland into his style. See Henry VIII to the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland, 14 April 1542, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, 302-3, (1538-1546), 370.

Manus O'Donnell, meanwhile, had sought security since 1537 and was attracted to the terms presented to him by St Leger in 1541 for various reasons. In theory, O'Donnell would possess more territory within Tír Conaill. Lords had traditionally owned only mensal lands which provided for 'the lord's chief household', with the remainder of the lordship belonging to the whole sept. Surrender and regrant granted feudal tenure to lords meaning they alone would own the lands.²³⁰ Adopting the English practice of primogeniture over tanistry as the means of determining succession offered the prospect of securing the rights of the current lord and his descendants, making incumbents very powerful.⁶⁰ Hiram Morgan illustrates how this type of settlement allowed the lord of Tyrone, Conn O'Neill, to 'steal a march on his rival Niall Connallach, whom the crown had previously supported'.²³¹ O'Donnell sought to secure himself against his local rivals in a similar fashion, and hoped to extricate himself from allegiance to Conn O'Neill by swearing fealty to Henry.²³² In short, closer relations with the crown appeared to offer Manus more security than he had dreamed of hitherto. For these reasons, surrender and regrant appealed to O'Donnell, who decided to shift from a position of alignment with O'Neill to friendship with the English crown.

The respective interests of both parties was represented in the initial surrender and regrant agreement Manus made with St Leger at Cavan in August 1541.⁶³ English concerns regarding the attempts of foreign rulers to influence Irish lords were highlighted by the fact that O'Donnell refuted allegiance to the Pope,

²³⁰ Kenneth Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the Middle Ages*, (Dublin, 1972), 36-7. On feudal tenure, see W.F. T. Butler, *Gleanings from Irish History*, (London, 1925), 196. ⁶⁰ Bradshaw, *Irish constitutional revolution*, 196.

²³¹ Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion: the outbreak of the Nine Years' War in Tudor Ireland*, (Woodbridge, 1993), 22.

²³² Bradshaw, 'Manus the "Magnificent"', 30. ⁶³ *AFM*, v, 1463.

accepted Henry's sovereignty over Ireland and agreed to assist the deputy against Irish rebels.²³³ Meanwhile, one of Manus' sons was to receive a 'civil' education in England, which was aimed at ensuring an English cultural reformation took root in Tír Conaill.²³⁴ Brendan Kane has pointed out that O'Donnell was probably happy to accept this because the idea of sending their sons to be fostered in England was not necessarily alien to Irish lords who already practiced this with English-Irish allies in the Pale.⁶⁶ That Manus was expected to attend the Irish Parliament thereafter suggests that he was now to be included among the political elite, as does the condition whereby he promised to take 'such title' as he was granted by the king.²³⁵ Finally, the Irish government was to 'assist and defend O'Donnell and his lands against all who injure him or invade his country' which satisfied his primary aim of securing his lordship from his enemies.²³⁶

Hiram Morgan believes this agreement marked the resumption of a 'natural alliance' between the O'Donnells and the crown against the O'Neills which spanned 'most of the sixteenth century'.²³⁷ In seeking friendship with the crown, Manus was certainly following what Stephen Gwynn called the 'policy which had been tradition in the O'Donnell house for more than fifty years'.²³⁸ Yet crown-O'Donnell relations were often rocky after 1541 and joint campaigns against the O'Neills were infrequent. Speaking generally of the relations between Irish lords and the English following 1541, Bradshaw has argued that they broke down when St Leger left

²³³ 'Submission of O'Donnell', 6 August 1541, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 183-4.

²³⁴ 'Submission of O'Donnell', 6 August 1541, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 183-4. 66 Kane, *Politics and Culture of Honour in Ireland*, 33.

²³⁵ 'Submission of O'Donnell', 6 August 1541, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 183-4.

²³⁶ 'Submission of O'Donnell', 6 August 1541, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 183-4.

²³⁷ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 113.

²³⁸ Gwynn, *History of Ireland*, 189-90.

Ireland to be replaced by aggressive colonialists in 1547 as Irishmen, now fearing for their lands, lost trust in the English.²³⁹ Other historians place the breakdown in crown-lord relations at later dates, though most accept that cordiality remained prevalent throughout the 1540s.²⁴⁰ In truth, Irish lordships experienced English rule in varied ways at different times and no definitive date can be used as a marker delineating a point at which lords, *en masse*, decided to abandon friendship with the crown. Nevertheless, it can be useful to consider localised politics and how English efforts to insert themselves into the regional hierarchy affected crown-O'Donnell and even O'Donnell-O'Neill relations. This reveals that while Manus desired good relations with the English, these had to be on his terms. Equally, officials were determined that O'Donnell pursued policies which were deemed to be in English interests. This led to disagreements over Tír Conaill's internal politics and

O'Donnell expansionism, which are considered in the following two sections.

Manus also expected his English allies to support him against O'Neill in the north, but found that assistance was intermittent at best. This sometimes caused O'Donnell to shrink from English friendship soon after the accord of 1541, much to the chagrin of government officials. At such times, Manus sought alternative allies and even entertained friendship with O'Neill on occasion. However, it must be acknowledged that O'Donnell's discontent with English rule was never total during this period and rifts were usually mended.

After Manus' submission to St Leger in August 1541, their alliance appeared relatively strong as the deputy found O'Donnell willing to assist in forcing O'Neill

²³⁹ Bradshaw, *Irish constitutional revolution*, 258, 261, 270.

²⁴⁰ Brady, *Chief governors*, 40-1; Mary Ann Lyons, *Franco-Irish relations, 1500-1610: politics, migration and trade*, (Woodbridge, 2003), 59; Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 155-6.

to submit to Henry VIII.²⁴¹ Manus must have been pleased to, in effect, act as the deputy's man in Ulster by helping bring O'Neill to heel. O'Donnell hoped to benefit from this favour in other ways. Ciaran Brady has argued that St Leger's success in cultivating relations with lords was based upon distributing patronage amongst them, and the deputy certainly proposed that Manus deserved a gift of parliamentary robes and the earldom of either Tír Conaill or Sligo.²⁴² Henry VIII accepted these suggestions, granting 'Odoneyls sute for his landes, and...the Erledom of Tyrconel'.²⁴³ A further sign of the esteem in which Manus was then held was his mooted inclusion amongst those thought worthy of presiding on a council to be established in the west and north of Ireland.²⁴⁴ The aim was for political reform to include extra responsibilities for loyal lords who would become more answerable to Henry. Despite these intentions, this scheme did not then get off the ground and problems which had arisen with O'Donnell, one of St Leger's favourites, illustrated how difficult the reform process could be.

In spring 1542, Manus wrote to Henry asking 'to be excused from Parliament'. O'Donnell made his request on the grounds that he had had no redress for an attack on his lands by his brother which had occurred when Manus was on campaign with St Leger against O'Neill in late 1541.²⁴⁵ This complaint may well have been genuine since, Jane Ohlmeyer has stressed, absences from their lordships left some lords 'exposed to politicking back at home'.²⁴⁶ However Henry was angry

²⁴¹ The Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland to Henry VIII, 28 August 1541, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 314; Anthony St Leger to Henry VIII, 29 August 1541, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 318-320.

²⁴² Brady, *Chief governors*, 33-40; The Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland to Henry VIII, 28 August 1541; *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 317; Anthony St Leger to Henry VIII, 29 August 1541, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 320.

²⁴³ King Henry VIII to the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland, 23 September 1541, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 334.

²⁴⁴ 'The Government of Ireland', 1542, *LP Hen. VIII*, xvii, (1542), 382-3.

²⁴⁵ Manus O'Donnell to King Henry VIII, 22 April 1542, *LP Henry VIII*, xvii, (1542), 140-1.

²⁴⁶ Jane H. Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English: the Irish aristocracy in the seventeenth century*, (New Haven, 2012), 212, 218.

and took Manus' refusal to attend Parliament as a sign that he was not as 'civile' as St Leger had suggested.²⁴⁷ The king's failure to recognise Manus' genuine predicament must have frustrated him, as did the failure of the English to defend him against local rivals as he had been promised.²⁴⁸ The question of O'Donnell's attendance at Parliament continued into 1543. In April, St Leger proposed attacking Tír Conaill if Manus did not appear as he had promised, with suspicion also fuelled by concerns that he was 'accumulating as many galloglass' as possible.²⁴⁹ Though officials interpreted O'Donnell's defiance over coming to Dublin and his forcebuilding as indicators of disloyalty, each was necessary to protect his local power in the absence of English aid. Fortunately, the Council soon decided that Manus had at least one genuine cause for grievance, in that a promised grant of the Bishoprick of Elphin to his chaplain had never been finalised, and decided to give him another chance.²⁵⁰

Relations between O'Donnell and the crown improved in summer 1543 when Manus attended Parliament, where he and Conn O'Neill allowed St Leger to settle their various contentions. The deputy decreed that O'Donnell should possess Inishowen as he exhibited 'releases of that lordship' made from O'Neill's ancestors to the O'Donnells, and Cinel Moen was partitioned between the two.²⁵¹ On balance, St Leger had largely ruled in Manus' favour in acknowledging his power over much of those long-disputed territories, though he may have preferred to have been

²⁴⁷ King Henry VIII to Manus O'Donnell, 2 June 1542, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 385.

²⁴⁸ King Henry VIII to Manus O'Donnell, 2 June 1542, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 385.

²⁴⁹ Anthony St Leger to King Henry VIII, 6 April 1543, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii part ii, (1538-1546), 445-6; The Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland to Henry VIII, 5 June 1543, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii part ii, (1538-1546), 470.

²⁵⁰ The Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland to the Council of England, 5 June 1543, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii part ii, (1538-1546), 4701.

²⁵¹ 'Earl of Tyrone and Lord Magonius O'Donnell', 14 July 1543, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 205-6.

granted power over the whole of Cinel Moen. Indeed, it is unclear how substantial the lands granted to O'Neill in that area were. Nevertheless, Manus was satisfied enough to release his brothers Egnéchan and Donough from captivity and restore them to their lands at St Leger's request, confirming to the deputy that O'Donnell 'desyred cyvile ordre'.²⁵² This supports Brendan Bradshaw's assertion that Irish lords were amenable to reform, as Manus was certainly willing to investigate whether resorting to Parliament was beneficial for him.⁸⁵ This time it had proved to be, since St Leger was willing to support his causes against O'Neill, which was the principal reason

O'Donnell had been attracted to the idea of forging close links with the English. The Ulster lords were also spurred on to attend Parliament by the hope that they might receive English titles and promotion within government circles.²⁵³ Mary O'Dowd has argued that this seemed conceivable at a time when the earls of Thomond and Clanricard received such favour in return for their perceived loyalty.²⁵⁴ O'Neill was in fact created an earl that year, reinforcing the idea that such advancement was possible. For these reasons there is little doubt that Manus coveted close links with the crown. Nonetheless, his primary motivation was a desire to obtain aid against O'Neill which was not always forthcoming.

Though O'Donnell may have been pleased to accept St Leger's decisions in the 1543 Parliament, Conn O'Neill was not. He wrote to Henry in May 1544

²⁵² 'Earl of Tyrone and Lord Magonius O'Donnell', 14 July 1543, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 206; Anthony St Leger to King Henry VIII, 18 July 1543, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part 2, (1538-1546), 478-9. ⁸⁵ Bradshaw, *Irish constitutional revolution*, 254.

²⁵³ Christopher Maginn, 'Surrender and regrant in the historiography of sixteenth century Ireland', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 38, (2007), 967.

²⁵⁴ Mary O'Dowd, 'Land and lordship in sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Ireland', in Peter Roebuck and Rosalind Michison, eds. *Economy and Society in Scotland and Ireland, 1500-1939*, (Edinburgh, 1988), 18.

complaining that Manus retained power in Inishowen and Cinel Moen, and asking for control of these areas.²⁵⁵ Failing to receive satisfaction on the issue, O'Neill attacked O'Donnell's lands, sparking reprisals.⁸⁹ Though English representatives had done nothing to actively aid O'Neill's raids upon Tír Conaill, they had done little to defend Manus from them either. If O'Donnell was unhappy about this, it would explain why he was suspected of involvement in a French plot to land 15,000 men in Tír Conaill to set up Gerald Fitzgerald against Henry.²⁵⁶ As Steven Ellis has observed, the king was then trying to engage Irish lords in his war effort against the French as a means of including Irishmen in the 'wider business of state'.²⁵⁷ However his suspicions of some Irishmen led Henry to enlist the help of Donald Dubh MacDonald and the Earl of Lennox to ensure that neither Lowland Scotland nor Ireland would be an issue while the king campaigned in France.²⁵⁸ Though Manus ultimately refused to participate in the French plot and instead sought to regain St Leger's trust by informing him of these overtures, it is likely that O'Donnell hoped to ensure the English were aware he could obtain foreign support if he desired it.⁹³

St Leger certainly made renewed efforts to please O'Donnell when he appeared at the Parliament in 1545. Manus was freed from paying rent to O'Neill

²⁵⁵ Conn O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, to King Henry VIII, 1 May 1544, *LP Hen. VIII*, xix, part i, (January-July 1544), 289-290. ⁸⁹ *AFM*, v, 1489.

²⁵⁶ The Lord Justice and Council of Ireland to Henry VIII, 13 June 1544, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 503-4; The Council with the Queen to the Council with the King, 28 September 1544, *LP Hen. VIII*, XIX, part ii, (August-December 1544), 169.

²⁵⁷ Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 156.

²⁵⁸ Alison Cathcart, 'The Forgotten 45: Donald Dubh's rebellion in an archipelagic context', *SHR*, XCI, (October 2012), 242-4.

⁹³ Anthony St Leger to Wriothesley, 26 February 1545, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 506-7.

for Inishowen, and the latter had to pay compensation for spoiling Tír Conaill in 1544.²⁵⁹

Furthermore, St Leger once again promised that the English would defend O'Donnell if O'Neill attacked him.²⁶⁰ Though he had room to doubt whether all this would be performed, Manus was doubtless pleased with the outcome as it suggested that

English officials favoured him over O'Neill. Political reform was currently attractive because it was beneficial for him and his relationship with St Leger was relatively strong. Sadly for Manus, Sir Anthony was soon replaced by a succession of English officials who were less interested in preserving O'Donnell's power. The result of this was another temporary realignment in the O'Donnell-O'Neill-crown dynamic at the end of the 1540s.

At the close of the 1540s, the Ulster lords briefly reunited in opposition to English policy. The arrival of Edward Bellingham as deputy was accompanied by efforts to plant Leix and Offaly in the midlands, which Steven Ellis has recognised created fear of a 'general plantation' of Ireland and caused lords to intrigue with Scotland and France.²⁶¹ The O'Mores and O'Connors had attempted to resist English power but had been crushed, which only added to the concerns of northern lords that a similar fate could soon befall them.²⁶² This was, after all, only a decade or so removed from the overthrow of the Kildares, which was fresh in some minds. It was for this reason, as well as interference by Bellingham within Tír Conaill itself,

²⁵⁹ 'Conclusion of peace between Tyrone and O'Donnell', 24 August 1545, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 214.

²⁶⁰ 'Conclusion of peace between Tyrone and O'Donnell', 24 August 1545, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 214.

²⁶¹ Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 265.

²⁶² Connolly, *Contested Island*, 25.

that O'Donnell joined other Ulstermen found to be ready to align with Desmond and others in a plot to use French aid to 'drive the King's friends out of the realm'.²⁶³ As James Melville later recalled, O'Donnell and O'Neill together met with a French emissary, from whom they asked assistance in throwing off English rule in return for becoming 'subject to the King of France'.⁹⁹ In seeking this external aid the two Ulster lords were merely replicating, with more success perhaps, the policy of seeking foreign assistance that they had followed as heads of the Geraldine League a decade previously. Manus had been happy with English rule, but now his discontent brought him closer to O'Neill again. This again reinforces the pragmatic nature of O'Donnell's politics in that he would align with whoever seemed most likely to help him preserve his position, even his principal local rival.

In pursuing this policy, Manus joined others in offering to transfer the sovereignty of Ireland despite having previously accepted that Henry VIII was lawful king. O'Donnell's *Life of Colum Cille* is perhaps illustrative of his stance in this matter, as he wrote that only the 'best man' could really be king of Ireland, whoever was chosen.²⁶⁴ Therefore, Manus believed that he could freely remove his allegiance from an unsuitable monarch and would willingly align with O'Neill to seek the removal of that person when such a situation arose. J. Michael Hill suggests that the

²⁶³ William Cantwell to Edward Bellingham, Lord Deputy of Ireland, 7 October 1549, *Cal. MSS Salisbury*, I, (1306-1571), 76. Bellingham's interventions in Tír Conaill are discussed more fully in the 'internal interference' section below. ⁹⁹ A. Francis Stewart, ed., *Memoirs of Sir James Melville of Halhill, 1535-1617*, (London, 1929), 21-22.

²⁶⁴ Manus O'Donnell, *The life of Colum Cille*, ed. Brian Lacy, (Dublin, 1998), 26.

MacDonalds and the O'Neills were the real players in this plot, with Manus playing a subsidiary role.²⁶⁵ O'Donnell did avoid associating with French representatives so as not to provoke English suspicion but was in fact at the forefront of the conspiracy, writing to the French king in February 1550 in an attempt to keep negotiations afloat.¹⁰² Ultimately, these efforts went nowhere, but Manus was not unhappy as events turned in his favour once more. By early 1550, the deputyship lay vacant and John Alen pushed for a man of conciliatory mien to take charge, arguing that Bellingham's 'rough handling' of the Irish had caused them to seek foreign aid.²⁶⁶ Ultimately, O'Donnell's old ally, Anthony St Leger, was reappointed Irish deputy and instructed to induce Manus to 'serve the king and not to embrace forren acquaintances'.²⁶⁷ As in the mid-1540s, the spectre of French interference in Ulster had caused English officials to seek to pacify lords in the north. This worked as, although Manus had flirted with foreign rulers while unhappy with Bellingham's rule, the lord of Tír Conaill was now willing to try again to obtain English assistance in his local wars.

A notable difference in the O'Donnell-O'Neill-English dynamic in the early 1550s was that all three worked together against the increasingly powerful Clan Donald South in Ulster. In 1551, Protector Edward Somerset sent Sir James Crofts to Ireland to replace St Leger as deputy, as it was believed a more forceful approach was needed to repel the threat that France and Scotland posed towards Edward VI's

²⁶⁵ J. Michael Hill, *Fire and Sword: the rise of Sorley Boy MacDonnell and the Clan Ian Mor, 1538-1590*, (London, 1993), 33. 102 Lyons, *Franco-Irish relations*, 89, 91.

²⁶⁶ 'Instructions from John Alen to his brother Thomas Alen to declare to the government of England', February 1550, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 106.

²⁶⁷ 'Remembrances for Yrelande', July 1550, SP 61/2 f.131.

English and Irish possessions.²⁶⁸ Within this context, the English sought to prevent an alliance between the MacDonalds, the O'Neill and the O'Donnells by 'aiding the Irish chiefs' against these Scots.¹⁰⁶ The Irish lords had their own reservations about the spread of MacDonald power in Ulster. There had been tension between the MacDonalds and O'Donnell since the early 1540s when Colla and James MacDonald had supported MacQuillin of the Route against O'Donnell's ally in the area, O'Kane of Coleraine.²⁶⁹ The Scots were also causing trouble in Tír Conaill itself, as exemplified by their slaying of Caffar O'Donnell on Tory Island in September 1551, which explains why Manus readily joined O'Neill and Lord Deputy Crofts in an attack on the MacDonalds that same year.²⁷⁰ The need for aid against these enemies explains why both Manus and Conn Bacach afterwards accepted Crofts' decision to free Maguire of Fermanagh from O'Donnell and O'Neill overlordship.¹⁰⁹ The Ulster lords were concerned about the MacDonalds' growing influence in Ulster and displayed again willingness to accept English arbitration in their disputes in the hope this would secure assistance in preserving their powerful provincial positions. They were also ready to align with each other, albeit temporarily, if this goal could be obtained. As usual, these alliances were fleeting and lasted only as long as they delivered the promised benefits, in this case defence against the MacDonalds. Given that they had by 1555 seized full control of MacQuillin's lordship of the Route, which O'Neill and O'Donnell traditionally

²⁶⁸ Connolly, *Contested Island*, 116-7. ¹⁰⁶ Hill, *Fire and Sword*, 33.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 27-9. See map 3 on page viii of this study for the territories of MacQuillin and O'Kane which lay on either side of the River Bann, which was known for its rich fishing.

²⁷⁰ *AFM*, V, 1521; Thomas Cusack to the Earl of Warwick, 27 September 1551, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 116-7. ¹⁰⁹ Thomas Cusack to the Earl of Warwick, 27 September 1551, SP 61/3 f.153-153v.

squabbled over, it is evident that friendship with the crown did not help the Ulster lords thwart the rise of the Scots for long.²⁷¹

Crofts' efforts to bring unity amongst the Irish Ulster lords soon faltered also, as Conn Bacach O'Neill complained in early 1552 that Manus' son, Calvagh O'Donnell, had robbed 3000 marks worth of goods from Tyrone. This prompted the Irish Council to declare later that year that Calvagh would be reprimanded if this was repeated.²⁷² Some Dublin officials now believed that the O'Donnells, rather than the O'Neills, represented the main obstacle to peace within Ulster. Thomas Cusack argued that Manus in particular was a destabilising influence in Tír Conaill, having fought against both his father and his son.²⁷³ This led Cusack to suggest that Calvagh and other perceived loyalists should be persuaded to attack their respective lords and, afterwards, to further reform.²⁷⁴ This stance perhaps explains why Dublin did little to stop Calvagh when he procured the assistance of James MacDonald and the fourth earl of Argyll to overthrow Manus in 1555.²⁷⁵ What is certain is that, though

O'Donnell had been promised repeatedly since 1541 that he would be assisted against his local enemies, he had been left to defend himself as often as not. The result of this had been that he revived the tactics of the Geraldine League on a few

²⁷¹ George Hill, *An historical account of the MacDonnells of Antrim, including some notices of other septs, Irish and Scottish*, (Belfast, 1873), 46, 122-3.

²⁷² 'Twenty-six articles of complaint exhibited by the Earl of Tyrone; being a particular declaration of the injuries committed against him', 9 February 1552, SP 61/4 f.20; 'Earl of Tyrone', December 30, 1552, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 234-5.

²⁷³ 'Booke by Sir Thomas Cusake: the state of Ireland', 8 May 1552, SP 61/4 f.143v.

²⁷⁴ 'Booke by Sir Thomas Cusake: the state of Ireland', 8 May 1552, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 245.

²⁷⁵ 'Report that agents of Lord James M'Donnell of the Isles of Scotland are offering aid to the Calough O'Donnell', 24 April 1555, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 133. On Argyll, see Jane E. A. Dawson, *The politics of religion in the age of Mary, Queen of Scots: the Earl of Argyll and the struggle for Britain and Ireland*, (Cambridge, 2002), 21. 115 O'Dowd, 'Gaelic economy and society', 124-5.

occasions by aligning himself with O'Neill and seeking foreign aid. The principal aim of these dalliances with his local rival was to obtain assurances that the crown would henceforth honour its promises, rather than to initiate any serious attempt to overthrow English rule. As Alexander Richey suggests, Tír Conaill went through long periods of being ignored. This might have been acceptable when Manus was not under any threat locally, but otherwise he had to work to bring himself to the attention of English officials once again. As shall be discussed in the following two sections, the crown's general failure to help Manus uphold his power in Tír Conaill was compounded by its occasional challenges to his local authority, though it is correct to recognise that O'Donnell too broke promises along the way.

The crown, Manus O'Donnell and the expansionist policies of the lords of Tír Conaill

One issue which provoked periodic discord between the crown and Manus O'Donnell after 1541 was his determination to extend his power throughout Ulster and Connaught. This was simply how Gaelic Irish politics was traditionally conducted and the O'Donnells had long been an expansionist power in north-west Ireland. Such policies were attractive because overlordship over new areas meant the payment of tribute, normally in the form of cattle and foodstuffs.¹¹⁵ Thus, expansion made lordships wealthy and powerful, helping to fund further war efforts and extension of the lord's sphere of influence.²⁷⁶ The O'Donnells had periods of great success in such endeavours. Since the thirteenth century, when Donnell Mor O'Donnell, the second O'Donnell lord, was credited with sway over Fermanagh and Carbury in Connaught, the family had imposed themselves upon other lordships

²⁷⁶ Simms, *From kings to warlords*, 99, 109.

whenever possible.²⁷⁷ Leaders such as Turlough O'Donnell (Turlough of the Wine, lord of Tír Conaill, 1380-1422), Hugh Roe I O'Donnell (1461-1505) and Hugh Dubh O'Donnell (1505-37) were particularly successful in compelling lords throughout Fermanagh and northern Connaught to recognise their overlordship.²⁷⁸ The effect of this was that much of the O'Donnells' wealth came from exacting tribute from these lords to the south. Furthermore, an alliance with the dissident O'Neills of Clandeboy meant the O'Donnells sometimes had influence over the O'Kanes of Coleraine and the MacQuillins of the Route, often claiming military service from them.²⁷⁹ At their strongest, Darren Mac Eiteagain argues, the lords of Tír Conaill were the 'immediate overlords of nine north-western counties'.²⁸⁰ With several motivating reasons, therefore, the extension of O'Donnell power was a major part of the family's overall policy. Nonetheless, it was never certain that O'Donnell lords would be able to pursue this policy successfully because of the fact that it was based upon their ability to compel others to acknowledge this overlordship.²⁸¹ The lords of northern Connaught did not accept these claims in principle and would reject them whenever possible. In time, the English crown would become interested in

²⁷⁷ Katharine Simms, 'Late medieval Donegal' in William Nolan et al, eds., *Donegal: History and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 184, 187.

²⁷⁸ *ibid*, 190; Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland*, 137-8; David Beers Quinn, 'Irish' Ireland and 'English Ireland', in A. Cosgrove, ed. *A New History of Ireland*, ii, (Oxford, 1987), 621. See Maps 1 and 4 on pages vi and ix, respectively, for an illustration of some of the territories in the northern Connaught which the O'Donnells attempted to claim power over when possible.

²⁷⁹ Mac Eiteagain, 'Renaissance and the late medieval lordship of Tír Chonaill', 204-5.

²⁸⁰ *ibid*, 204.

²⁸¹ See chapter one, 49-50.

furthering its own power in the area and would deny that the O'Donnells had any right to overlordship there. Of course, this did not stop the lords of Tír Conaill from trying to exert their authority in the area.

Manus O'Donnell adopted these expansionist policies as his own. His 1532 publication, the *Life of Colum Cille*, implies that he thought himself entitled to territories throughout Ireland. Colum, identified as a sixth-century saint and O'Donnell's kinsman, was said to have been entitled to the Irish kingship 'by blood' but rejected it to concentrate on religious concerns.²⁸² This inferred that the ruling O'Donnell was the rightful Irish king. Manus also laid claim to lands in northern Connaught, stressing that Colum was granted the area forever by Aed Mac Ainmenech, the high-king of that province, in return for restoring his daughter to life.²⁸³ O'Donnell further suggested that the O'Neills of Tyrone were also kinsmen of Colum and, therefore, the O'Donnells.²⁸⁴ This may have been Manus' way of defending his continuing friendship with Conn O'Neill, the lord of Tyrone, or, alternatively, a means of asserting claims to Tyrone for himself as Colum Cille's rightful descendant. This would have made O'Donnell supreme in Ulster, which was his family's perpetual aim.

Upon assuming the lordship of Tír Conaill, Manus immediately began establishing overlordship in all areas where O'Donnell lords traditionally claimed suzerainty. Between 1537 and 1540, he asserted power over such lords as O'Hara

²⁸² O'Donnell, *Life of Colum Cille*, 17.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 56-7.

²⁸⁴ *ibid*, 98, 105.

Reagh and O’Gara in Connaught and Maguire in Fermanagh.²⁸⁵ Manus’ agreement with Tadhg O’Connor Sligo in 1539 illustrates that O’Donnell expected some degree of control over his sublords’ territory, a share of their finances through the payment of tribute, and military aid from them.²⁸⁶ Therefore, his aim was to enrich Tír Conaill at the expense of Connaught, both to ensure support at home and to boost his military power. That he was successful in compelling O’Connor to do this in 1539 indicates that Manus was quite a successful leader early in his rule. The lords of Connaught only accepted O’Donnell overlordship when they had little choice, and did not accept it in principle. By enforcing this Manus illustrated that he intended to rule as a traditional Irish lord. This was to cause some problems for his relationship with the English crown, as Manus did not alter his expansionist policy following the Kingship Act of 1541.

In the spring of 1542, O’Donnell wrote to Henry VIII asking to be created earl of Sligo, an ambition which St Leger had encouraged.²⁸⁷ This request signified willingness to seek the king’s approval and take an English title. Nevertheless, Henry was angry that Manus had refused to accept the earldom of Tír Conaill instead, given that he had promised in his 1541 submission to accept whatever title he was granted.²⁸⁸ Another reason for the king’s irritation, Christopher Maginn asserts, was that Henry himself was heir to the lordship of Connaught, and was not

²⁸⁵ *AFM*, v, 1443; *AU*, iii, 623, 625; *ALC*, ii, 315.

²⁸⁶ Maura Carney, ed., ‘Agreement between O’Domhnaill and Tadhg O’Conchobhair Sligo concerning Sligo Castle (23 June 1539)’, *IHS*, iii (1942-3), 285-6, 290.

²⁸⁷ Manus O’Donnell to Henry VIII, 22 April 1542, *CSP*, I, (1509-73), 62.

²⁸⁸ For Henry’s angry response, see King Henry VIII to Manus O’Donnell, 2 June 1542, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 385.

willing to recognise alternative claims there.²⁸⁹ However, since Manus had striven to re-establish O'Donnell power there since 1538, and because this authority came with the benefits outlined above, he was keen to have his authority in the area recognised. Robert Hunter has argued the breach between Manus and the crown over this issue was significant enough to cause surrender and regrant negotiations in Tír Conaill to break down irretrievably.²⁹⁰ What is certain is that Henry's rebuff did nothing to restrain the expansionist activity of O'Donnell, who decided to continue exercising overlordship in both the western province and in Ulster in the traditional way. In 1542, he forced a number of lords in Northern Connaught, such as McDonough of Ballymote, to pay tribute before compelling Shane Maguire of Fermanagh to acknowledge his overlordship too.²⁹¹ O'Donnell also sought control of MacQuillin's lordship in the Route, which lay upon the River Bann²⁹² The Bann was known for its rich fishing, which may have been one reason that Manus was attracted to the idea of holding sway there. In 1542, he attacked MacQuillin, which prompted Lord Deputy St Leger to send troops to the lord of the Route's aid on the basis that this originally English family were loyal subjects under siege.²⁹³

Though O'Donnell was pursuing local supremacy rather than deliberately challenging English authority, he found himself regarded as the crown's enemy.

²⁸⁹ Christopher Maginn, *William Cecil, Ireland, and the Tudor State*, (Oxford, 2012), 16.

²⁹⁰ Robert J. Hunter, 'The End of O'Donnell Power' in William Nolan et al, eds, *Donegal, History and Society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 229-30.

²⁹¹ *AConn*, 721. For Maguire, see *ALC*, ii, 341-2, where Shane agreed to assist Manus militarily and pay half Fermanagh's *eric* to him. The *eric* was the blood-price imposed upon those who committed murder. See Nicholls, *Gaelic Ireland*, 24.

²⁹² The western edge of MacQuillin's territory overlooked the Bann. This can be seen in Map 3 on page viii of this survey. The Bann is to the top left of the picture and can be traced into Lough Neagh, which lies marginally to the south-east of the point at which the sea splits MacQuillin's territory from that of O'Kane of Coleraine..

²⁹³ *AFM*, v, 1469-71; The Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland to Henry VIII, 12 July 1542, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (15381546), 399.

Accordingly, St Leger soon took measures aimed at preventing Gaelic lords seeking to subdue their neighbours in this way. In the 1543 Parliament, Manus was told to keep to Tír Conaill and refrain from exacting ‘tribute...or service from any inferior captains’; measures which St Leger deemed necessary because reform could not advance while O’Neill and O’Donnell had ‘all the capitaynes of the northe hanginge on their slevis’.²⁹⁴ Manus then professed willingness to obey these policies because the deputy had pledged to defend him against attacks upon his lordship, as well as upholding his claims over Inishowen and Cinel Moen. By 1544, however, O’Donnell had broken his promise and was again attacking MacQuillin, seizing his fort on the Loughlan Islands in the Route.²⁹⁵ In the meantime, Manus had received scant protection from O’Neill and so saw little reason to adhere to his promises regarding expansionist policies. As it happened, O’Donnell’s external activities quietened after this period, principally because he was preoccupied with the local challenge of Calvagh O’Donnell. Nonetheless, it is evident that contention between the crown and the O’Donnell family over their expansionist policies surfaced almost as soon as the Kingship Act was erected. That this did not cause relations between the Tudors and Manus O’Donnell to falter irredeemably was down to the fact that the English found it politically convenient not to make too much of an issue out of it. This was because the crown’s policy was still to work with useful lords in Ulster in order to reform the province. This matter would reignite during the subsequent reigns of Hugh McManus and Hugh Roe O’Donnell over Tír Conaill, and with

²⁹⁴ ‘Earl of Tyrone and Lord Magonius O’Donnell’, 14 July 1543, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 205-6; Anthony St Leger to Henry VIII, 18 July 1543, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 478.

²⁹⁵ *AConn*, 735.

everincreasing intensity. As for Manus, he also had to deal with the interference of some officials in the structures and hierarchy of Tír Conaill itself.

Crown interference in Tír Conaill during the reign of Manus O'Donnell Within

the lordship of Tír Conaill, an O'Donnell lord's ability to hold sway was traditionally dependent upon the support offered by other families there, such as the O'Boyles, O'Gallaghers and O'Dochertys.²⁹⁶ The likes of O'Docherty and the three MacSweeney lords of Fanad, Banagh and Doe supplied military power, and Aine Ni Duibhne has recently argued that MacSweeney assistance was particularly critical in cementing the strong political and financial position that the O'Donnells were in at the beginning of the sixteenth century.²⁹⁷ This remained important after 1541 as aid from external sources, excepting Scottish mercenaries, continued to be irregular. The involvement of sublords such as O'Boyle and O'Gallagher on 'political councils' held by O'Donnell lords during the sixteenth century is one indicator of the continuing importance of these families as supporters of their overlords.²⁹⁸ Lords and sublords also acted as legitimisers for each other by participating in inauguration ceremonies for new leaders, and O'Donnell leaders both nominated O'Docherty lords and inaugurated the MacSweeney Fanads, for example.²⁹⁹ The main internal threat to the position of an O'Donnell lord tended to come from

²⁹⁶ Darren McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell and the Nine Years War*, (Dublin, 2005), 23. See also chapter one, pages 43-48, of this study for a fuller discussion of why the assistance of Tír Conaill's sublords was critical in enabling the O'Donnells to retain their local power.

²⁹⁷ McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 29, on O'Docherty military assistance. On MacSweenys, see Aine Ni Dhuibhne, 'The story of MacSweeney Fanad', in David Finnegan et al, eds. *The Flight of the Earls*, (Derry, 2010), 118. See Gerald A. Hayes-McCoy, *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland, 1565-1603*, 2nd edition, (Dublin, 1996), 6, 13-14 and Simms, *From kings to warlords*, 122, for the origins of the presence of the MacSweenys and other Scottish island mercenary families in Tír Conaill from the thirteenth century onwards.

²⁹⁸ Simms, 'Late Medieval Donegal', 188.

²⁹⁹ Elizabeth FitzPatrick, 'Parley sites of O'Neill and O Domhnaill in late sixteenth century Ireland', in David Edwards, ed. *Regions and rulers in Ireland, 1100-1650: essays for Kenneth Nicholls*, (Dublin, 2004), 214; Simms, 'Late Medieval Donegal', 188, 191; Simms, *From kings to warlords*, 32.

challengers from other branches of the family. When such a situation arose lords expected the support of their sublords, though this was by no means guaranteed. O'Donnell lords also expected any prospective external ally, such as the English crown, to support them against any internal contenders who might emerge within Tír Conaill. This assistance included helping the lord to retain power over his lands and castles within the lordship, such as those in Tírhugh in southern Tír Conaill and others in Cinel Moen in eastern Tír Conaill.³⁰⁰ Conversely, those who tried to take these into their own power or gift represented a threat to the power of the incumbent lord.

From the outset of his rule in Tír Conaill, Manus was not without opponents, despite his local strength and success. In 1537, before his father's death, Manus and his O'Gallagher allies had been confronted in battle by Hugh Boy O'Donnell and the sons of O'Boyle and the wars between the O'Gallaghers and O'Boyles were still ongoing in 1540.³⁰¹ More startlingly, Manus' brothers John of Lurg, Donough and Egnéchan opposed him, as requested by O'Donnell's son, Calvagh.³⁰² Manus managed to suppress this threat, but this illustrates the difficulties lords could have when they were opposed by internal enemies.³⁰³ O'Donnell's solution was to seek external assistance in his local wars, just as his father had done. One consequence of this was his decision to cultivate relations with Henry VIII. As has been shown, this resulted in Manus' submission to Henry in August 1541, wherein he was promised crown assistance against any enemies who attacked his lands.

³⁰⁰ McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, 20. For more on the lands held by the O'Donnells, see chapter one, pages 41-42.

³⁰¹ *AFM*, v, 1437, 1457.

³⁰² *AU*, iii, 631, *AFM*, v, 1459.

³⁰³ *AConn*, 715; *AFM*, v, 1459. See the genealogical table of this thesis on page xiv for a visual representation of the relations between these men.

The English rarely lived up to these pledges, even in the early 1540s. As has been alluded to, Manus was given scant redress when his brother attacked his lands in late 1541.³⁰⁴ Crown officials were similarly slow to respond when Lifford Castle was seized by followers of O'Donnell's rebellious son, Hugh McManus O'Donnell, in 1543.¹⁴⁵ This was intolerable to Manus because Lifford was strategically very important, and he had in fact built the castle in 1527. It was located in the disputed territory of Cinel Moen, across the River Finn from the O'Neill stronghold at Strabane. Consequently, O'Donnell leaders always preferred to ensure that dissident branches of the family did not take power there, lest they align with the O'Neills to cause trouble in Tír Conaill. This could allow an O'Neill leader to gain a foothold in Cinel Moen, which was to be avoided at all costs. Though Manus eventually reclaimed the castle successfully, this had been achieved without help from Dublin on this occasion.³⁰⁵ It is likely that the inconsistent nature of English assistance helped to shape his decision to look to Scotland for aid and intrigue with France between 1543 and 1545, although St Leger did send troops to enable Manus to retake Lifford from Hugh McManus once more in May 1544.³⁰⁶ All that said O'Donnell was prepared to accept some level of intervention in Tír Conaill's affairs when the crown's support for him was evident. For instance he willingly released his brothers Egnéchan and Donough from captivity in 1543, at St Leger's request, following his favourable arbitration in Manus' disputes with O'Neill over Inishowen

³⁰⁴ Manus O'Donnell to Henry VIII, 27 April 1542, *LP Hen. VIII*, xvii, (1542), 140-1. 145 *AConn*, 731.

³⁰⁵ *AFM*, v, 1481. See *ALC*, ii, 341 and *AFM*, v, 1479 for more local unrest in Tír Conaill around this time.

³⁰⁶ On French intrigues, see p 74 above. On aid to re-take Lifford, see The Lord Justice and Council of Ireland to Anthony St Leger, 24 March 1544, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part ii, (1538-1546), 491-2.

and Cinel Moen.³⁰⁷ However it is evident that, while English officials were not yet actively undermining the authority of O'Donnell, effective crown support for Manus in his local battles was intermittent. The first real attempts to shape the lordship's political hierarchy in a manner pleasing to English officialdom were soon to follow.

At the end of the 1540s, Manus again found himself short of English support in protecting his power in Tír Conaill. His ally in Dublin, St Leger, had departed the scene and his replacement, Edward Bellingham, came to covet friendship with Calvagh O'Donnell. Calvagh approached the new deputy because he needed aid against both the MacDonalds of Antrim and his father, Manus, who was winning the battle for control of Tír Conaill.³⁰⁸ Bellingham was persuaded that Calvagh's friendly overtures signified willingness to further reform and assist in repelling the Scots. The deputy's partiality manifested itself in the award of Lifford Castle, the Lagan and Tirrebressell to Calvagh in 1549.³⁰⁹ Again, this meant that a dissident O'Donnell was gaining power in Cinel Moen. Even if this merely reflected the fractured reality of politics in Tír Conaill, Bellingham was now claiming powers of patronage in a place where the ruler had never finally surrendered the lordship's lands to the crown. This was also contradictory to Manus' interests because, at the very least, it gave Calvagh equal status within Tír Conaill by granting him power in

³⁰⁷ The Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland to the Council of England, 5 June 1543, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii part ii, (1538-1546), 470. On the matter of Egnechan and Donough, see *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 206; Anthony St Leger to King Henry VIII, 18 July 1543, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part 2, (1538-1546), 481.

³⁰⁸ Calvagh O'Donnell to Lord Deputy Edward Bellingham, 4 January 1549, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 98. See also *AFM*, v, 1505, which details Manus' defeat of Calvagh's forces at Strath-bo-Fiach in 1548.

³⁰⁹ 'Magonius O'Donnell and his sons', 8 July 1549, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I (1515-74), 220. Calvagh's son, Con, was also given the lands of the tanist of Tír Conaill.

the eastern areas of the lordship. As John Silke has argued, Bellingham's decision effectively 'partitioned' the lordship, and certainly hinted at an effort to dilute Manus' power.³¹⁰

It has already been recognised that Manus and other Ulster lords were involved in intrigues with the French throughout 1549 and early 1550.³¹¹ One reason for this, alluded to above, was a general concern that the harsh policy towards the O'Mores and O'Connors in the midlands might be replicated throughout Ireland.¹⁵³ But it is probable that Manus' involvement was also partially shaped by the meddling of Bellingham within Tír Conaill itself. The deputy had bolstered Calvagh, whose new-found strength was reflected by his kidnap of Hugh McManus O'Donnell, in opposition to Manus.³¹² Calvagh's actions seem to dispel the idea, put forward by Ciaran Brady, that Bellingham's decisions were successful in temporarily halting fighting in Tír Conaill, or at least that they were much more than minimally effective.³¹³ Certainly, the deputy's interference in Tír Conaill played a role in driving Manus towards the French, while the appointment of a friendly deputy in St Leger in July 1550 was aimed squarely at ending such intrigues.³¹⁴ It was hoped this would rectify the damage done by Bellingham's policies towards

³¹⁰ John J. Silke, 'O'Donnell [O Domhnaill], Sir Niall Garbh (1568/9-1626), *ODNB*, online, (2004), paragraph 1 of 6, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20558>, accessed 19 May 2014].

³¹¹ See p 75-76 above. 153

See p 75 above.

³¹² Manus O'Donnell to the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland, 4 March 1550, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 107.

³¹³ Brady, *Chief governors*, 49.

³¹⁴ 'Remembrances for Yrelande', July 1550, SP 61/2 f.131.

O'Donnell, and this worked in the short term, as St Leger reported in January 1551 that O'Donnell was expected in Dublin soon, with Calvagh already there.³¹⁵

In effect, though, the policy of the Dublin government turned from that of actively undermining Manus O'Donnell to tacitly preferring the prospect of a Calvagh-led Tír Conaill. The efforts of another new deputy, Sir James Crofts, to bring peace to Tír Conaill in late 1551 did not halt the fighting there and soon Thomas Cusack pushed the notion that Manus was the destabilising influence in the lordship, citing his wars against both his father and his son.³¹⁶ There is no evidence that English officials within Ireland directly supported Calvagh's attempts to seize Tír Conaill in the mid-1550s. Nevertheless, Cusack's stance possibly helps to explain why Dublin was slow to react when the younger O'Donnell overthrew his father with the assistance of James MacDonald and the fourth earl of Argyll in 1555.³¹⁷ Certainly, there was never an attempt made to rescue or reinstate Manus as lord of Tír Conaill, and he had clearly fallen out of favour in official circles. This time, as so often previously, Manus went without the defence against his local enemies that he had been repeatedly promised. Nonetheless, it should be observed that the crown had largely avoided interfering directly in Tír Conaill's local politics by this time, with the exception of Bellingham's efforts in 1549. For some decades after this, the default English policy in the north-west was to try to work with whoever had gained power in Tír Conaill to reform the lordship.

³¹⁵ Lord Deputy Anthony St Leger to Secretary William Cecil, 19 January 1551, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 110.

³¹⁶ Crofts' mission met with only temporary success despite the confidence of Cusack at the time of the event, see Thomas Cusack, Chancellor of Ireland, to the Earl of Warwick, 27 September 1551, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 116-7. On Cusack's argument about Manus' troublemaking, see 'Booke by Sir Thomas Cusake: the state of Ireland', 8 May 1552, SP 61/4 f.143v.

³¹⁷ 'Report that agents of Lord James M'Donnell of the Isles of Scotland are offering aid to the Calough O'Donnell', 24 April 1555, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 133; *AFM*, v, 154. On Argyll, see Dawson, *Politics of religion*, 21.

It was only in the mid-1560s that English officials once again tried to influence the shape of Tír Conaill's political hierarchy. In this instance, Lord Deputy Henry Sidney bolstered Calvagh O'Donnell in opposition to his provincial rival, Shane O'Neill. Once again, therefore, the English policy was to uphold O'Donnell power in Tír Conaill, at least to some extent. However, in attempting to unite the O'Donnells against Shane, Sidney also strengthened other men in Tír Conaill in relation to Calvagh. On this occasion, the Lord Deputy granted Castle Finn, Belleek and Bundrowes to Hugh McManus O'Donnell, giving Calvagh's biggest rival a foothold in northern Connaught as well as eastern Tír Conaill.³¹⁸ Like Bellingham in 1549, Sidney was in effect partitioning the lordship between the various powers there and acting as overlord of the territory in claiming the power to dispense with these lands. Unlike Manus O'Donnell, however, Calvagh's situation meant that he was in no position to complain about the deputy's efforts to please these sublords. In fact, if anything, Calvagh had hoped that the crown would intervene sooner and had worked for that outcome. Like Manus, Calvagh favoured English influence within his lordship if it tended to boost his own position. By 1566, his trials of the past few years had made him grateful for any arrangement which offered the prospect of support from the crown against Shane O'Neill, who had also vied for the favour of Elizabeth I. The following section discusses Calvagh's experiences of English rule between 1555 and 1566.

³¹⁸ 'The O'Donnells', 20 October 1566, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 375. Castle Finn was on the River Finn, to the west of Castle Lifford. See map 2 on page vii of this study.

The crown, O'Donnell and O'Neill dynamic during the lordship of Calvagh O'Donnell

It has already been stressed that new O'Donnell lords most often followed a policy of seeking friendship with the crown in order to win its support in their local wars. However, upon his effective assumption of the lordship of Tír Conaill in 1555, Calvagh O'Donnell found himself subject to a queen in Mary Tudor who disapproved of his actions in overthrowing his father and who was concerned about his close links with Scottish islanders. Though historians such as William Palmer and Ciaran Brady have for various reasons suggested that Ireland was unimportant to Mary, she was keen to keep Ulster under control lest unstable elements there seek to take advantage of events elsewhere in Europe.³¹⁹ In particular, her relations with France were deteriorating, as Mary had in 1553 positioned England on Spain's side in the ongoing Franco-Spanish war by marrying the emperor's son, Philip.³²⁰ Meanwhile, France's alliance with Scotland had recently been reaffirmed by the betrothal of Mary, Queen of Scots, to the Dauphin Francis, and reinforced in 1554 when Mary of Guise became Scottish regent. With Guise governing Scotland in French interests, Mary Tudor feared efforts to extend French influence into England and Ireland.³²¹ Similar concerns were prevalent in the minds of English officials throughout the period 1555-66, and they were thus often minded to support those Irishmen who promised to drive French and Scottish influences away from the

³¹⁹ Palmer suggests Ireland was unimportant to Mary because English officials had temporarily succeeded in pacifying the country, while Brady argues that Mary was unable to pursue her favoured Irish policies as she lacked support amongst her court, see William Palmer, *The Problem of Ireland in Tudor Foreign Policy, 1485-1603*, (Woodbridge, 1994), 74, and Brady, *Chief governors*, 54-6.

³²⁰ Geoffrey Elton, *England under the Tudors*, 2ND edition, (London, 1974), 215.

³²¹ David M. Loades, *The reign of Mary Tudor: politics, government, and religion in England, 1553-58*, 2nd edition, (London, 1981), 309.

island.

Within that context, this section discusses relations between the crown and Calvagh O'Donnell during his rule in Tír Conaill, with a particular focus on the dynamic between Calvagh, Shane O'Neill and the English. It is argued that Calvagh experienced favour while the English thought that he could help achieve their aim of pacifying Ulster. However following his kidnap by Shane O'Neill in 1561,

O'Donnell was effectively abandoned by his former allies because some English officials now believed that the lord of Tyrone was a more useful friend. It is also contended that the treaty signed between O'Donnell and Sidney in 1566 does not signify continuity in an O'Donnell pro-English stance. Rather, Calvagh was too weak to find local allies who would help him regain power over Tír Conaill. The English offered the sole route to this, compelling him to ignore how he had been treated by the Dublin government over the previous few years. Still, Elizabeth did eventually renew her support for the O'Donnells against the O'Neills in their ongoing feud, though Lord Deputy Henry Sidney pursued this policy whilst trying again to formalise the obligations which Tír Conaill lords were bound to fulfil towards the crown.

Early in his rule, Calvagh was viewed as a particular obstacle to some of Mary's preferred policies. In spring 1556, the queen took measures aimed at ending the continual warfare in Ireland, prohibiting Irishmen from recruiting Scottish mercenaries or entering marriage alliances with Scottish families to obtain military

assistance.³²² Alongside this, Sussex was to gather loyal Irish lords and drive away Scots already in Ulster.³²³ In the light of these plans, Mary was concerned about Calvagh's links with Scottish islanders like James MacDonald of Islay, whose assistance had been critical when O'Donnell had seized power in Tír Conaill.³²⁴ Accordingly, the queen attempted to ascertain whether Mary of Guise was practicing with France and helping James MacDonald cause trouble in Ireland.³²⁵ Though some concern was espoused about the fact that Manus had been overthrown, it was clear that Mary's principal fear was that MacDonald was interfering in Ireland on France's behalf, with Calvagh O'Donnell amongst those Irishmen helping this faction.³²⁶

Calvagh's actions, therefore, contributed to renewed English desperation to drive the Scottish presence from Ulster, at least in the short-term.

By late 1557, this dynamic had changed and Calvagh found himself in favour with the English. This was, as so often, the result of an English desire to subdue an O'Neill. The MacDonalds had allied with Shane O'Neill, who was regarded as such a menace that the Irish Council declared an intention to make 'sharp warre' on him in October that year.¹⁶⁹ Now Calvagh was thought loyal and amongst those expected to join a hosting for the 'resistance of foreign invasion yf any shulde

³²² Hiram Morgan, 'The end of Gaelic Ulster: a thematic interpretation of events between 1534 and 1610', *IHS*, 26 (1988), 17. Steven Ellis notes that because Irishmen were reliant on Scottish weaponry and fighting forces this was ignored, especially in Ulster. See *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 249-50.

³²³ Instructions to Sir Thomas Fitzwalters, the earl of Sussex, 3 June 1556, *APCI*, (1556-1571), 2-3.

³²⁴ 'Instructions to Sir Thomas Challoner, sent to the Dowager of Scotland in Februarie 1556', February 1556, *CSPSco*, i, (1547-1563), 196.

³²⁵ 'Instructions to Sir Thomas Challoner, sent to the Dowager of Scotland in Februarie 1556', February 1556, *CSPSco*, i, (1547-1563), 196. Mary believed that James MacDonald could only have had access to the weaponry he brought to Ireland through Mary of Guise, see the manuscript version of Challoner's instructions for more detail at SP 51/1/27.

³²⁶ 'Instructions to Sir Thomas Challoner, sent to the Dowager of Scotland in Februarie 1556', February 1556, SP 51/1/27. 169 Brady, *Chief governors*, 96-7; for Council declaration, see the Irish Council to Thomas Fitzwalter, earl of Sussex, 21 October 1557, *APCI*, (1556-1571), 43.

chance' in the panic following the English loss of Calais to France in January 1558.³²⁷ O'Donnell's new-found standing was reflected by Mary's declaration that he could expect to attain 'a degree of nobility' should he assist Sussex in the north.³²⁸ Of course, Calvagh would have been pleased to obtain an English title and recognition of his rule in Tír Conaill. This was especially true because his rival for the lordship, Hugh McManus O'Donnell, was now aligned with O'Neill, and these two had attacked Calvagh in 1557, though he successfully defeated them on this occasion.¹⁷² His need for security against these foes made O'Donnell a potential English ally and, consequently, his stock with Dublin rose. In time, a mutual desire to eradicate O'Neill facilitated closer alliance between the two parties.

In November 1558, Mary Tudor died and was replaced on the throne by her half-sister, Elizabeth. Despite the change in regime, the principal focus of English officials in the early years of the new queen's reign remained thwarting the intentions of France in her sphere of influence. Indeed, as Jane Dawson argues, this became more pressing if anything, since the French had legal justification for an invasion of England in support of Mary Stewart's claims there because Elizabeth was adjudged an illegitimate ruler under canon law.³²⁹ Furthermore, the queen's secretary, William

³²⁷ The Irish Council to Thomas Fitzwalter, earl of Sussex, 27 May 1558, *APCI*, (1556-1571), 54-5; On Calais, see Loades, *Mary Tudor*, 320. The Lord Justice, Henry Sidney, was convinced that Irish malcontents would aid any French or Scottish invasion, see The Lord Justice and Irish Council to the Privy Council, 8 February 1558, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 141.

³²⁸ Queen Mary Tudor to Calvagh O'Donnell, 12 March 1558, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 143. See also Thomas Fitzwalter, earl of Sussex to Lord Justice Henry Sidney, undated, BL Lansdowne 159, f. 85v and Sidney's reply to Sussex, 9 March 1557, f. 87v, for an earlier exchange between Sussex and Sidney on whether O'Donnell should be ennobled (the latter wanted to wait until English law was current in Ulster, lest O'Donnell be made too powerful). 172 *AFM*, v, 1551, 1555-7.

³²⁹ Jane E. A. Dawson, 'William Cecil and the British dimension of early Elizabethan foreign policy', *History*, (1989), 201-2. 174 Stephen Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the court of Elizabeth I*, (London, 2008), 92.

Cecil, was aware that the reversion to Protestantism in England which followed Elizabeth's accession would prompt papal opposition, meaning France and its Scottish allies would seek to cause her problems in England and 'Romish' Ireland.¹⁷⁴ Cecil's solution to this was to court friendship with the Lords of the Congregation in Scotland, who both wanted rid of their French 'oppressors' and supported the Protestant faith that he believed in.³³⁰

In February 1559, Elizabeth accepted Scotland into her protection to stymie French efforts to unite Scotland 'to the Crowne of France perpetually' and the Scots nobility pledged to aid her against her enemies.³³¹ However, the queen was slow to cement this alliance, prompting William Maitland of Lethington and others to emphasise the threat that Mary Stewart's claims to the English and Irish thrones posed to Tudor's rule.³³² These concerns encouraged Elizabeth to finalise the agreement to aid the Scots in the Treaty of Berwick of 1560, which included provision for the use of the fifth earl of Argyll's forces in the pacification of Ulster.³³³ This reversed the longstanding English policy of seeking to expel Scots from the north and Elizabeth's commitment to this was evidenced by her favour for James MacDonald's suit to become a liegeman of hers in Ireland.³³⁴ The English peace with France which was finalised alongside the Treaty of Berwick saw the latter agree not to invade England, Scotland or Ireland.³³⁵ Believing that foreign

³³⁰ Ibid, 105, 108.

³³¹ 'Articles between the Duke of Norfolk and the Lord James of Scotland', 27 February 1559, Samuel Haynes, ed. *Collection of State Papers, left by William Cecil, Lord Burghley*, I, (London, 1740), 253-4.

³³² 'Instructions of the Scottish nobles to the Laird of Lethington', November 1559, *CSPSco*, i, (1547-1563), 270-1.

³³³ 'Articles agreed upon at Berwick', 27 February 1560, *CSPF Elizabeth*, ii, (1559-1560), 413-15.

³³⁴ Dawson, *Politics of Religion*, 1-2; on MacDonald, see 'The Earl of Sussex's instructions', 17 July 1559, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 287-8.

³³⁵ Cecil and Wotton to Queen Elizabeth, 8 July 1560, *CSPF Elizabeth*, iii, (1560-1561), 179-82.

influence was now expelled from Ireland, the Dublin government focused on reducing the island to obedience. Within Ulster, this led to efforts to bring together a coalition against Shane O'Neill, now identified as the main obstacle to the crown's objectives in the north.

In the early 1560s, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Earl of Sussex, argued that Ireland could be reformed only when the continuing domination of the Butler and Geraldine factions was broken.³³⁶ Echoing St Leger, he suggested that one way to do this was to patronise lesser Irish lords to win their undivided support for English rule by illustrating the benefits which friendship with the monarchy could bring.³³⁷ Though the crown had hitherto failed to display the ability or willingness to patronise native Irish lords on a consistent basis, Elizabeth was certainly willing to work with friendly Irishmen and, in May 1560, instructed her deputy to make new grants to Irishmen who were prepared to surrender their lands to her.³³⁸ Thus, she returned to St Leger's policy of surrender and regrant. Within Ulster, this was accompanied by efforts to befriend Calvagh O'Donnell and the MacDonalds throughout 1560 and early 1561.

Sussex meant to weaken the Geraldine faction in Ulster through the extirpation of Shane O'Neill, as the lords of Tyrone had long been members of that alliance. To this end, he coveted O'Donnell's friendship as he was 'a man of great power' in Ulster, whose sway over O'Boyle, O'Gallagher, O'Docherty and the

³³⁶ 'The opinion of the earl of Sussex, touching the reformation of Ireland', 11 September 1560, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 300-4.

³³⁷ 'The opinion of the earl of Sussex, touching the reformation of Ireland', 11 September 1560, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 300-4.

³³⁸ 'Queen Elizabeth's instructions to the earl of Sussex', May 1560, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 293.

MacSweeneys was thought likely to ensure their support too.³³⁹ These men held lands along Ulster's coasts and could potentially help prevent foreign intrusions into Ulster by sea. Just as significantly, Sussex looked to bring the MacDonalds into his faction, and they were keen because of the prospect of being rewarded with recognition of their claims to lands in Antrim.³⁴⁰ They also hoped to extend their influence within Ulster and could have benefited most from Shane's demise. Argyll was also expected to assist in this enterprise and Maitland of Lethington reported that the fifth earl thought he could ensure that his O'Donnell and MacDonald dependents assisted Sussex.³⁴¹ Argyll's principal motives in this were to cement his hold over the mercenary trade between Ireland and Scotland, while occupying the MacDonalds and MacLeans in Ireland would enable the earl to limit the expansionism of those two clans in the Western Isles.³⁴² Elizabeth approved of Sussex's plans and, in August 1560, granted him permission to assault Shane O'Neill in order to pacify Ulster.³⁴³

O'Donnell's local situation meant he was euphoric at the prospect of this alliance, since he was by now under severe pressure from both external and internal sources. This weakness highlighted a flaw in the thinking behind Sussex's desire for an alliance with Calvagh. As Ciaran Brady has asserted, O'Donnell was 'more

³³⁹ 'The opinion of the earl of Sussex, touching the reformation of Ireland', *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 300-4.

³⁴⁰ Ciaran Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, (Dundalk, 1996), 49; 'Queen Elizabeth's instructions to the earl of Sussex', May 1560, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 292. On MacDonalds' motives, see Dawson, *Politics of religion*, 127.

³⁴¹ William Maitland of Lethington to William Cecil, 10 April 1560, *CSPSco*, i, (1547-1563), 353-4.

³⁴² Dawson, *Politics of religion*, 110, 121. Dawson observed that Argyll had already compelled the MacDonalds and MacLeans to obtain his permission before entering contracts to provide mercenaries in Ireland.

³⁴³ Queen Elizabeth to Lord Lieutenant Sussex, 15 August 1560, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 161. Elizabeth supported this because Shane had long behaved 'rebelliously', as when Matthew, baron of Dungannon, was murdered in 1558. Matthew was Elizabeth's preferred candidate for the Tyrone lordship. See Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 35. 189 Brady, *Chief governors*, 267. 190 *AFM*, v, 1569.

insecure in his territory' than other Ulster lords and had little control over his sublords, who would not automatically follow their overlord into an English alliance.¹⁸⁹ Calvagh's position had worsened when Shane O'Neill became O'Neill in 1559 and looked to subjugate Tír Conaill with the aid of Hugh McManus O'Donnell.¹⁹⁰ Some respite had come in the form of military aid from Argyll, which Calvagh had obtained through his marriage alliance with the earl's mother-in-law, Catherine MacLean, in 1560.³⁴⁴ Consequently, as a member of Argyll's affinity, Calvagh was happy to align with Sussex. Furthermore, when Sussex offered the earldom of Tír Conaill to Calvagh in early 1561 in return for his support he was pleased to accept this arrangement as it promised to boost his local power. In reacting in this way, Calvagh behaved just like other lords such as the Fitzpatricks of Upper Ossory, who had aligned with the English to obtain such benefits.³⁴⁵ Moreover, if the alliance was successful O'Neill would be eliminated and Tyrone weakened, while Hugh O'Donnell would pose less of a threat to Calvagh in Tír Conaill. All these factors meant O'Donnell was eager to align himself with Sussex on this occasion. Evidence that this faction could achieve its objectives had arrived in early May 1561, when Shane was attacked by both Sorley Boy MacDonald and one of Calvagh's sons, but unfortunately for O'Donnell and Sussex their plans were soon shattered.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Dawson, *Politics of religion*, 105. On the marriage alliance terms, see J. MacKechnie, ed., 'Treaty between Argyll and O'Donnell', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, vii, (1951), 100-1.

³⁴⁵ 'Instructions to Sussex', 22 May 1561, Cal. *Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 309-11; 'Instructions given by the earl of Sussex to William Hutchison', 27 April 1561, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 170. On the Fitzpatricks, see David Edwards, 'The Macgiollapadraig (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory, 1532-1641', in Padraig G. Lane and William Nolan, eds., *Laois: history and society* (Dublin, 1999), 336-8.

³⁴⁶ Lord Justice William Fitzwilliam to William Cecil, 4 May 1561, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 171.

In late May 1561, Shane O'Neill kidnapped O'Donnell and his wife. O'Neill struck while Calvagh's fighting men were in the west of the lordship attacking Caffar O'Donnell, who was an ally of Calvagh's rival, Hugh McManus. Following this Shane asserted himself over lords throughout Ulster, including Maguire of Fermanagh and Magennis of Iveagh.³⁴⁷ In the face of O'Neill's dominance, Elizabeth was advised to implore Sorley Boy, O'Reilly of Breifne and O'Donnell's son, Con O'Donnell, to 'persist in their fidelity', while Sussex attempted to rescue Calvagh throughout 1561 and 1562.³⁴⁸ But the deputy's travails proved fruitless as he was unable to force Shane to release O'Donnell, and O'Neill set about subjugating Tír Conaill which was leaderless and unable to oppose him.³⁴⁹

In a bid to calm the Ulster situation, the English opened peace negotiations with Shane. Although the fifth earl of Argyll, for one, hoped Elizabeth would attempt to secure O'Donnell's release, the English instead became friendlier with O'Neill and less willing to upset him by pressing this point.³⁵⁰ Shane was granted rule over the Route, Coleraine, Clandeboy and other lordships in the north and north-east of Ulster in an indenture of March 1562, as he successfully persuaded the queen that he could pacify the province on her behalf.³⁵¹ Meanwhile, commissioners were to ascertain whether O'Donnell was a lawful prisoner of O'Neill's, in which case Calvagh would have to pay a ransom based upon the value of the lands and

³⁴⁷ Ernest Hamilton, *Elizabethan Ulster* (London, 1919), 14; Sir Henry Radecliff to William Cecil, 20 June 1561, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 174.

³⁴⁸ Lord Lieutenant Sussex and the Irish Council to Queen Elizabeth, 16 July 1561, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 175.

³⁴⁹ Lord Lieutenant Sussex and the Irish Council to Queen Elizabeth, 31 July 1561, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 177; 'Memoranda of additional articles by the earl of Sussex', 10 April 1562, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 191.

³⁵⁰ Archibald Campbell, 5th earl of Argyll, to William Cecil, 12 February 1562, *CSPSco*, I, (1547-1563), 603-4.

³⁵¹ 'Articles of covenants to be made and indented between the Queen and Shane O'Neill', 20 March 1562, SP 63/5 f.112v.

goods he had agreed to forfeit in return for his freedom.³⁵² In part, this course of action was necessary because English forces had been unable to secure Calvagh's release, but he must have had little faith in the value of his friendship to the crown at this point. That said, the English certainly anticipated that Shane would ultimately release Calvagh, and Cecil pondered whether O'Donnell 'should be ayded by the Quene to recover the possessions and obedyence of his country'.³⁵³ Meanwhile, Elizabeth planned to ennoble Calvagh and others, just as her father Henry had done with the earls of Thomond and Clanricard.²⁰¹ In practical terms, however, the English were doing little to prevent Shane imposing his will upon lords throughout Ulster.

The English evidently expected peace to follow the agreement with Shane, since it was thought a fit time to further reform. Councils were to be established in Munster, Connaught, and at Armagh or Newry in Ulster to give people a 'taste of the fruits of peace and good order' and encourage them to accept the common law.³⁵⁴ Lords were expected to assist in this and Sussex was instructed to obtain their 'consent to ye establishing of the said Counsellis'.³⁵⁵ The Lord Lieutenant also pressed for the building of walled towns at Knockfergus and Lough Foyle in order to encourage civility by keeping the surrounding areas in obedience, and wanted surrender and regrant deals with O'Donnell and others to follow this.³⁵⁶ Thus, the only immediate change in Ulster policy was support for O'Neill, but he had no

³⁵² 'Articles of covenants to be made and indented between the Queen and Shane O'Neill', 20 March 1562, SP 63/5 f.121v.

³⁵³ 'Memorial of matters for Ireland', 22 April 1562, SP 63/5 f.233. 201

'Instructions for the earl of Sussex'. 4 July 1562, SP 63/6 f.96v.

³⁵⁴ 'Instructions given by the Queen to the earl of Sussex, 4 July 1562, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 331-332.

³⁵⁵ 'Instructions for the earl of Sussex'. 4 July 1562, SP 63/6 f.100v-101.

³⁵⁶ 'Report of the earl of Sussex', 1562, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 333-4.

intention of obeying the crown's order to release Calvagh, as his behaviour soon made obvious.

In August 1562 Shane attacked Calvagh's son, Con O'Donnell, seizing 20,000 cattle from Tír Conaill and the prospect of losing further wealth forced him to sue for peace in September.³⁵⁷ O'Neill and Con agreed that Calvagh was to remain imprisoned until his death and Con was installed as lord of Tír Conaill.³⁵⁸

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McGettigan suggests that Con's failure to request English assistance to secure O'Donnell's release prior to this was in fact attributable to a desire to obtain Tír Conaill for himself.³⁵⁹ Nevertheless, while O'Neill had recognised Con as lord there, he had no interest in living under Shane's rule. Con now complained to Elizabeth that O'Neill had demanded Lifford Castle in exchange for Calvagh's release, but was dishonest and would not let him go.³⁶⁰ If O'Neill obtained the castle, Con lamented, all Tír Conaill would be subjugated, with Shane becoming more powerful than any of his predecessors and liable to overcome Connaught and defeat the Scots in Clandeboyne.³⁶¹ It was certainly true that possession of Lifford Castle would have given O'Neill a foothold from which to assert himself in Tír Conaill on a permanent basis. Furthermore, Lifford lay in the disputed territory of Cinel Moen and, since he was effectively acting as lord of Tír Conaill at this time,

³⁵⁷ Lord Lieutenant Sussex to Queen Elizabeth, 27 August 1562, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 202; Con O'Donnell to Queen Elizabeth, 30 September 1562, SP 63/7 f.70.

³⁵⁸ Lord Lieutenant Sussex to Queen Elizabeth, 29 September 1562, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 205.

³⁵⁹ McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, 33.

³⁶⁰ Con O'Donnell to Queen Elizabeth, 30 September 1562, SP 63/7 f.70-70v.

³⁶¹ Con O'Donnell to Queen Elizabeth, 30 September 1562, SP 63/7 f.70-70v.

Con was not keen to grant away this power. It would damage any chance he might have of throwing off

O'Neill's rule and would mean giving up some of the most fertile and productive lands in the territory to a man he considered an enemy. Con preferred to seek English aid to vanquish this prospect.

In furthering his concerns, Con found that he had a supporter in Sussex, who urged Elizabeth to aid the younger O'Donnell in October 1562 on the grounds that he was 'moche disposed...to civilitie' and keen to have the queen's wage to let others know he had her favour.³⁶² Furthermore, the Council emphasised that it was important Tír Conaill did not fall under Shane's power; otherwise English forces would have to be doubled in order to defeat him.³⁶³ Though Elizabeth remained reticent to practically intervene on Con's behalf, Sussex repeatedly pressed the point and, in December, commended the young O'Donnell's steadfast loyalty in the face of 'continual great losses'.³⁶⁴ Thus, Sussex's assessment of the threat which Shane posed to Tír Conaill was largely in tune with Con's. Of course, Con's adherence to the deputy was founded in self-interest. He lacked alternative allies as many within Tír Conaill favoured Hugh McManus and did not have the aid of Calvagh's ally, Argyll. Thus, Con's hope lay in Sussex and his ability to defeat O'Neill. Unfortunately for Con, Sussex's favour for O'Donnell lords was becoming a marginal view in Dublin. Instead, Shane O'Neill was emerging as more central to

³⁶² Lord Lieutenant Sussex to Queen Elizabeth, 1 October 1562, SP 63/7 f.72.

³⁶³ Lord Lieutenant Sussex and the Irish Council to the Privy Council, 26 October 1562, SP 63/7 f.105v-106.

³⁶⁴ Lord Lieutenant Sussex to the Privy Council, 28 December 1562, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 211.

English policy in Ulster and became the favourite of many government officials until late 1565.

A recurring feature of English thinking throughout the sixteenth century was that reform was doomed unless the Scottish presence was expelled from Ireland. Despite the Anglo-Scottish peace of 1560, Elizabeth remained fearful in the mid-1560s that Mary Stewart would follow pro-French policies due to the influence of her Guise relatives.³⁶⁵ Amongst other rumours, the idea that Mary would enter into a marriage alliance with the King of Sweden in return for aid in Ireland was floated.³⁶⁶ In this climate, the English were again becoming suspicious of the MacDonalds of Antrim, viewing them as partial towards Mary.²¹⁵ Since Shane O'Neill had recently proven able to make Ulstermen submit to his will and promised to subdue Elizabeth's foes, a belief spread that he was the most likely to vanquish the Scots from Ulster and in 1563 she again tried to forge good relations with him.³⁶⁷ This policy resulted in the effective abandonment of the O'Donnells and the MacDonalds, whose friendship had been coveted in 1560 and 1561. Following Elizabeth's lead, some Dublin politicians became staunch allies of Shane, and were disinterested in helping the O'Donnells in their disputes with him.

One politician who favoured O'Neill was Thomas Cusack, newly returned to a prominent position in the Irish government, who hoped that overt support might stay Shane from foreign plots. This was pertinent because, in early 1563, O'Neill was reportedly intriguing with Bishop Quadra, a Spanish agent, whose awareness of

³⁶⁵ Palmer, *Problem of Ireland*, 79-80.

³⁶⁶ The Viscount de Gruz to Queen Elizabeth, 24 September 1561, *CSPF Elizabeth*, IV, (1561-2), 321. 215 Hill, *Fire and Sword*, 64-5, 73.

³⁶⁷ 'Shane O'Neill's peace with Thomas Cusack', 8 November 1563, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 362. On Elizabeth's view, see Nicholas Canny, *The Elizabethan conquest of Ireland: a pattern established, 1565-76*, (Hassocks, 1976), 38.

Shane's grievances indicates that there was contact of some kind.³⁶⁸ The treaty concluded between Shane and Cusack in September 1563 illustrated the latter's partiality towards O'Neill. The O'Donnells were now to pay everything they had been compelled to in their various submissions to Shane, who was also pardoned for the murder of the young baron of Dungannon, Brian O'Neill.³⁶⁹ In essence, Shane was released from all obligations to Elizabeth agreed in their 1562 treaty.³⁷⁰

Cusack's arbitration was met with approval in England where officials were 'well pleased' to hear that the controversies between O'Neill and O'Donnell had been settled and were ready to grant Shane the earldom of Tyrone.³⁷¹ This support for O'Neill was a severe blow to the O'Donnells and others in Ulster who had been subdued by him. This was appreciated by Sussex, who argued that loyal Irishmen would lose faith in the crown's willingness to preserve their interests if this continued.²²¹ Another dissenter was Captain William Piers, based at Carrickfergus, who argued that Calvagh O'Donnell should be restored to power in Tír Conaill and afforded English military support against Shane.³⁷² Piers argued that this would see Ulster reduced to obedience 'within fyve yeares or lesse' but, like Sussex, the captain was then ignored.³⁷³ There is little doubt that those who had been overawed by Shane in recent years would have been dismayed to see him receive such favour

³⁶⁸ Shane requested 800 Spaniards to assist him against the English. See Bishop Quadra to King Philip II of Spain, *CSPSp*, xiv, (1558-1567), 298.

³⁶⁹ 'The peace made between Gerald, Earl of Kildare, Thomas Cusack and Shane O'Neill', 11 September 1563, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 352-4.

³⁷⁰ Hamilton, *Elizabethan Ulster*, 21.

³⁷¹ 'A memorial for instruction of Sir Thomas Cusack', 20 October 1563, SP 63/9 f.72v-73. 221 Brady, *Chief governors*, 100.

³⁷² 'A paper by Captain William Piers of Knockfergus', 1563, SP 63/9 f.180v-181.

³⁷³ 'A paper by Captain William Piers of Knockfergus', 1563, SP 63/9 f.180. 224 Dawson, *Politics of religion*, 130-1.

from government officials. However, English policymakers had concerns other than the restoration of O'Donnell and others within Ulster.

This situation confronted Calvagh upon his eventual release from captivity in 1564, when he found that his support from Dublin was limited. The earl of Argyll had secured O'Donnell's liberty by offering O'Neill money, military aid, and Lifford Castle in return.²²⁴ However, Calvagh's men refused to surrender Lifford to Shane, prompting him to support Hugh McManus O'Donnell's claims in Tír Conaill as well as seizing Donegal Castle and kidnapping Con O'Donnell.³⁷⁴ This left Shane in a strong position, given that he had now captured the O'Donnell's chief house in the south of Tír Conaill. In his efforts to improve his position, Calvagh O'Donnell tried to obtain assistance from the Dublin government to rescue Con, but was denied help and barred from going to England, with O'Neill merely asked to 'use Con O'Donnell well'.³⁷⁵ Indeed, prominent officials continued to favour Shane, with Cusack judging O'Neill meritorious for allowing O'Donnell more time to pay the ransom for his release and justified in kidnapping Con O'Donnell when these terms were not met.²²⁷ There was little appreciation of how intolerable it would be for an O'Donnell leader to allow O'Neill to have castles in Cinel Moen, such as Lifford. This would give Shane a foothold from which to continue harassing O'Donnell. Furthermore,

Calvagh needed to find his feet in order to try and re-establish himself as lord of Tír

³⁷⁴ Hamilton, *Elizabethan Ulster*, 25; Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 55.

³⁷⁵ 'Sir Thomas Cusack's advice to the Lord Justice Arnold', 13 June 1564, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 238. 227 Sir Thomas Cusack to Lord Robert Dudley, 9 June 1564, SP 63/11 f.7.

Conaill and to do this would require riches. Given that Cinel Moen was very fertile, Calvagh needed power there to boost his chances of obtaining military support in his efforts to become predominant in Tír Conaill again. Nonetheless, Cusack's concern was that these events again illustrated Shane's ability to make all his neighbours obey him.³⁷⁶ The new Lord Justice Nicholas Arnold, who had taken charge when Sussex was called back to England, was similarly in favour of prioritising O'Neill's attempts to attack the MacDonalds over assisting O'Donnell.³⁷⁷

The favour of Dublin politicians for Shane manifested itself in other ways. Cusack insisted that O'Neill should be created an earl before O'Donnell because Shane was much more capable of causing trouble in the Pale if he was unhappy.²³⁰ The implication here was that it was necessitous that everything was done to mollify O'Neill. O'Donnell's weakness meant that he was not as useful as Shane to these English-Irish politicians, but Calvagh's friendlessness in his lordship made an English alliance more desirous than ever for him. Indeed, his unpopularity was stressed by Cusack, who stated that Tír Conaill's people disliked paying a perpetual tribute to the earl of Argyll as a condition of O'Donnell's marriage to Catherine MacLean in 1560.³⁷⁸ However, as Katharine Simms has observed, the people of Tír Conaill had 'resented' paying any kind of tribute for military aid since the O'Donnells had inaugurated this practice.³⁷⁹ Given this truism, Cusack was likely over-egging O'Donnell's local unpopularity and general weakness to ensure that

³⁷⁶ Sir Thomas Cusack to Lord Robert Dudley, 9 June 1564, SP 63/11 f.7v.

³⁷⁷ Lord Justice e Nicholas Arnold and the Irish Council to Shane O'Neill, 22 August 1564, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 245. 230 Sir Thomas Cusack to William Cecil, 17 April 1564, SP 63/10 f.115v. Cusack evidently believed that Elizabeth intended to make Calvagh an earl first.

³⁷⁸ Sir Thomas Cusack to Lord Robert Dudley, 9 June 1564, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 237-8.

³⁷⁹ Katharine Simms, 'Warfare in the medieval Gaelic lordships', *Irish Sword*, 12, (1975-6), 115.

Shane continued to be favoured instead. Regardless, this illuminates the disdain with which Calvagh was treated by those in power in Dublin at this time. He was in a bad situation, though this did improve in time because confidence in Shane was waning in London.

Elizabeth eventually learned of O'Donnell's poor treatment at the Dublin government's hands and ordered a re-assessment of his variances with Shane, lambasting the Council's favouritism towards him.³⁸⁰ Calvagh himself also wrote to Elizabeth, informing her that 4,500 people had died of starvation in Tír Conaill due to O'Neill's raids. O'Donnell also stressed that Shane had reacted angrily when Calvagh stated that he would only remain on friendly terms so long as O'Neill was loyal to the queen.³⁸¹ Having set up a case against Shane, Calvagh attempted to state his own worth as a crown ally by arguing that, had he always been at liberty, he would have ensured Ulster remained constant to Elizabeth and her deputy.³⁸² In reality, however, O'Donnell was too weak to compel others within Ulster to do anything and he still lacked any support from the Dublin government, which prompted him to flee to London.

In early November Calvagh wrote again to Elizabeth, stressing that he was impoverished as no Irishman would 'trust him one meal's meat' because the Council favoured O'Neill.³⁸³ However, O'Donnell's trump card may have been his suggestion that he would be compelled to seek aid from France or Spain if Elizabeth

³⁸⁰ Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Justice and Council, 15 July 1564, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 240.

³⁸¹ Calvagh O'Donnell to Queen Elizabeth, 29 October 1564, SP 63/11 f.166v-167.

³⁸² Calvagh O'Donnell to Queen Elizabeth, 29 October 1564, SP 63/11 f.167v.

³⁸³ Calvagh O'Donnell to Queen Elizabeth, 29 October 1564, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 247.

would not support him.³⁸⁴ The English were concerned whenever any Irishman raised the prospect of foreign invasion and the queen now reasserted her order to Arnold that the disputes between Calvagh and Shane be settled impartially.³⁸⁵ O'Donnell was given financial aid in the meantime as Elizabeth was 'not without compassion for him', particularly as he had been aiding her against Shane at the time of the kidnap.³⁸⁶ Though Calvagh's fortunes looked more promising, the English still wanted O'Neill's friendship in the hope that he would capture and deliver James and Sorley Boy MacDonald to Elizabeth's possession as promised.³⁸⁷ Thus, while not wishing to see O'Donnell in abject poverty, Elizabeth was as yet unwilling to support him fully as a priority case.

Shane eventually fell out of favour completely because, by late 1565, some English-Irish politicians had begun to question both his usefulness and his loyalty to Elizabeth. For instance, Lord Justice William Fitzwilliam reported that Shane had 'sent an old priest to the Queen of Scots' seeking aid and he was later accused of seeking assistance from the earl of Argyll.³⁸⁸ To some officials, this suggested that O'Neill could not really be trusted to remove Scottish influence from Ulster. Not even his earlier defeat of the MacDonalds in May 1565, or his claims that he held their 'towns and castles' on Elizabeth's behalf, quelled these suspicions.³⁸⁹ As Hiram Morgan has argued, O'Neill's aim in acting against the MacDonalds was to

³⁸⁴ Calvagh O'Donnell to Queen Elizabeth, 2 November 1564, SP 63/11 f.173.

³⁸⁵ Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Justice Arnold, 3 December 1564, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 248.

³⁸⁶ Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Justice Arnold, 3 December 1564, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 248; SP 63/11 f.194. O'Donnell himself felt entitled to aid for this reason.

³⁸⁷ Privy Council to the Lord Justice Arnold, 22 June 1565, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 263.

³⁸⁸ Sir William Fitzwilliam to Sir William Cecil, 13 July 1565, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 266. On Argyll, see Sir William Randolph to Sir William Cecil, 19 November 1565, *CSPSco*, II, (1563-1569), 240.

³⁸⁹ Shane O'Neill to the Privy Council, 25 August 1565, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 270-1. 243
Morgan, 'End of Gaelic Ulster', 15-16.

be rewarded with a feudal title which would secure his position in Tyrone.²⁴³

Instead, however, Elizabeth instructed the newly-installed deputy, Henry Sidney, to ask why

O'Neill had attacked the Scots without 'advising the governor of his intention'.³⁹⁰

She also viewed Shane's occupation of former MacDonald strongholds warily, believing that he behaved 'as though the countries...were his own' rather than hers.³⁹¹ Her feelings were in tune with those of Sidney, who followed Sussex in believing that O'Neill was the obstacle to peace in Ulster and that only force would reform him.³⁹² As yet, Elizabeth had only gone so far as to instruct Sidney to support

O'Donnell on his return to Ireland, so that 'he be not provoked, to...seke help out of Scotland' or elsewhere.³⁹³ This suggests that Calvagh's threat to target Spanish or French aid if he continued to be neglected remained in her thoughts. Alongside this, though, Sidney was to look to restore O'Donnell to Tír Conaill whenever it could be done cheaply and without war, as Elizabeth was determined that the lordship should be free of Shane's commandment.³⁹⁴ Thus, finally, O'Donnell was coming back into favour with the English, wholly because they were now wearying of Shane and planning his eclipse.

O'Neill's actions ensured that Elizabeth was eventually bound to act against him, as he continued to terrorise Tír Conaill, seized lands in Connaught, and was

³⁹⁰ Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Henry Sidney, 12 November 1565, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 279.

³⁹¹ Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Henry Sidney, 12 November 1565, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 279.

³⁹² 'Sir Henry Sydney's articles for the publick affairs of Ireland', 20 May 1565, SP 63/13 f.110.

³⁹³ 'A particular instruction given by Queen Elizabeth to Sir Henry Sydney', 9 July 1565, SP 63/14 f.44v.

³⁹⁴ 'A particular instruction given by Queen Elizabeth to Sir Henry Sydney', 9 July 1565, SP 63/14 f.44v.

suspected of alliance with Desmond against the crown.³⁹⁵ Elizabeth's ire was further raised with new rumours emerging that O'Neill had 'made a sure bond' with Mary Stewart, and Henry Killigrew was sent to Scotland in June 1566 to complain about Mary's 'secret aid' for Shane.³⁹⁶ O'Neill, meanwhile, also solicited aid from Charles IX of France in return for becoming his subject.³⁹⁷ These things convinced Elizabeth that Shane could not be relied upon to drive her enemies from Ireland since he was, in fact, practising with many of them. Enraged, the queen instructed Sidney to devise means by which the 'contemptuous traitor' O'Neill would be 'utterly extirpated'.³⁹⁸ Soon, Sir Francis Knollys recommended deploying naval power in the Irish Sea and securing an alliance with Argyll, which would prevent O'Neill obtaining Scottish aid when the English attacked him.²⁵³ Plans to create O'Donnell earl of Tír Conaill and strengthen him in opposition to Shane were also resurrected, as Knollys believed this would convince 'suspicious yrish men' that there was no intent to conquer Ireland, but only to punish one disordered subject in O'Neill.³⁹⁹ This marked a return to the 1561 policy of defeating Shane with the assistance of Argyll and O'Donnell. The queen accepted these proposals after Sidney suggested, in June 1566, that she might lose Ireland 'as her sister lost Calais' if O'Neill were not subdued.⁴⁰⁰ Responding, Elizabeth sent 1,000 men to Ireland under Colonel Edward

³⁹⁵ Lord Deputy Henry Sidney to the Privy Council, 30 May 1566, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 302. On Connaught and Desmond, see Guzman de Silva, Spanish ambassador in England, to King Philip II of Spain, 4 May 1566, *CSPSp*, xiv, (1558-1567), 547.

³⁹⁶ Sir Nicholas Bagenal to the Earl of Leicester, February 1566, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 289; 'Instructions to Henry Killigrew', 13-15 June 1566, *CSPSco*, II, (1563-1569), 286-288.

³⁹⁷ Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 60.

³⁹⁸ Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Henry Sidney, 28 March 1566, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 293-4. 253
Sir Francis Knollys to Sir William Cecil, 29 May 1566, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 302.

³⁹⁹ Sir Francis Knollys to Sir William Cecil, 29 May 1566, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 302. Knollys' rationale is spelled out fully in the manuscript at SP 63/17 f.203.

⁴⁰⁰ Lord Deputy Henry Sidney to Sir William Cecil, 9 June 1566, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 304.

Randolph in the summer of 1566 to defeat O'Neill and see O'Donnell 'surely established' in Tír Conaill once more.⁴⁰¹ Calvagh welcomed this, and the English were able to persuade Argyll not to aid Shane, despite the earl's reservations about Elizabeth's recent treatment of him.⁴⁰² These developments opened the way for Sidney to launch his campaign against O'Neill.

When Sidney's force entered Tír Conaill in October 1566 it was initially doubtful whether sublords there would support Calvagh's reinstatement, but eventually Hugh McManus, Hugh Duff O'Donnell, O'Gallagher, O'Boyle, and MacSweeny Banagh all submitted and swore to obey O'Donnell because they too feared subjugation by O'Neill.⁴⁰³ This gave Calvagh a following in south-western, eastern and central Tír Conaill where these sublords held sway. Following this, Sidney proceeded to bind Calvagh to Elizabeth via treaty. Some of the terms which O'Donnell agreed to were fairly similar to those which had been extracted from Manus O'Donnell previously. For instance, Calvagh agreed that he would banish the queen's enemies from Tír Conaill and was to attend Parliament or hostings when summoned by the deputy.⁴⁰⁴ Therefore, he was to be included in the political elite, just as it had once been intended Manus should be. But now Calvagh was expected, in return for English protection, to allow Elizabeth the power to build castles and

⁴⁰¹ Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Henry Sidney, 15 June 1566, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 304-5.

⁴⁰² Argyll had been annoyed that his aid in pacifying Ulster had never been utilised and by the lack of concrete assistance which Elizabeth had offered to the earl and his allies in the Chase-about Raid of 1565, despite her own disapproval of the marriage of Mary, Queen of Scots, and Henry, Lord Darnley. On this, see Dawson, *Politics of religion*, 111-2, 124-7, 142.

Consequently, Argyll entertained the idea of assisting Shane O'Neill in Ulster (see Lord Deputy Sydney to Cecil, 24 June 1566, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 306), but ultimately accepted Elizabeth's assurances that he had her favour (offered for instance in Queen Elizabeth to Sir Thomas Randolph, 13 May 1566, BL Lansdowne, 9 f.53) and agreed to assist against Shane (see Sir Thomas Randolph to Cecil, *CSPSco*, II, 13 May 1566, (1563-1569), 278). Argyll also believed Elizabeth was more likely than O'Neill to reinstate the earl's dependents, the O'Donnells and MacDonalds, to their Irish lands. On this, see Jane Dawson, 'Archibald Campbell, fifth earl of Argyll (1538-1573), magnate and protestant reformer', *ODNB*, online edition (January 2008), paragraph 8 of 24, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4470>, accessed 29 March 2014].

⁴⁰³ Lord Deputy Sidney to the Privy Council, 12 November 1566, SP 63/19 f.87-89v.

⁴⁰⁴ 'Calough O'Donnell', 20 October 1566, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 373-4.

send troops to Tír Conaill whenever necessary.⁴⁰⁵ The English began using this power immediately by erecting a garrison at Derry under Colonel Randolph, which was to wage war upon O'Neill. Calvagh was expected to pay Randolph 40 marks a week and supply to help sustain the troops there.⁴⁰⁶ Previously, Manus had been told to cease taking exactions from his neighbours. Now Calvagh was to go one step further and agree to cease taking coyne and livery from Tír Conaill's people too, though there was some attempt to off-set this by allowing him to collect a year's rent from O'Connor Sligo in return.⁴⁰⁷ In sum, these measures indicated that the English now intended to have a significant level of military and financial control over Tír Conaill, and that Calvagh was expected to pay towards his own defence. This was to become a theme in the dealings of the crown with O'Donnell lords thereafter. In 1566, Calvagh accepted all this because it suggested the English were at last committed to protecting him against O'Neill. It is also possible that O'Donnell believed he could ignore the reforms he did not like, as his father had earlier agreed to social and economic changes which were not ultimately enforced.

Hiram Morgan has argued that this treaty between Calvagh and Sidney established a relationship between suzerain and vassal, rather than a surrender and regrant agreement.²⁶³ Certainly Sidney in effect claimed rights of overlordship over Calvagh and powers which were normally in the preserve of O'Donnell lords, including the right to grant land and legislate for Tír Conaill's defence. However, even surrender and regrant implied that Irish lords owed their positions to grants

⁴⁰⁵ 'Calough O'Donnell', 20 October 1566, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 373-4.

⁴⁰⁶ 'Treaty between the Lord Deputy and Calvart O'Donnell', 20 October 1566, *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, I, 495-6.

⁴⁰⁷ 'Calough O'Donnell' and 'O'Connor Sligo', 20-24 October 1566, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 373-4, 376. 263 Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 121.

from the crown as their overlord, so Sidney was merely attempting to enforce reform measures that earlier agreements had implied would be adopted eventually.

Furthermore, it should be observed that this agreement did indicate that the crown was still minded to utilise the help of friendly Irishmen in order to further reform in Ulster. This was a policy which was not jettisoned in the north-west until some decades later. In any event, the immediate practical effect of these decrees on the relationship between O'Donnell and the crown, as when Edward Bellingham and others had attempted to assert authority in Tír Conaill, was limited. The most profound outcome was in fact to lift an O'Donnell, in Calvagh, back into power and help him re-establish his lost authority at home. This perhaps explains why Tír Conaill does not fit the pattern, suggested by Steven Ellis, whereby Irish lords had by

1564 come to believe that no matter what Elizabeth said she was set on 'military conquest and expropriation of Irish land'.⁴⁰⁸ Calvagh was very keen reach to an arrangement with the crown because, if anything, it was Shane O'Neill who had come closest to conquering Tír Conaill and seizing its lands.

As suggested above, the immediate impact of the treaty between Sidney and Calvagh was limited and it is probable that O'Donnell was banking on being able to ignore its terms. Certainly he very quickly failed to live up to his promises to sustain the English troops who were sent to help him against O'Neill. This led Captain Thomas Wilsford to complain in November 1566 that English forces had to 'praye uppon the enemye' to prevent starvation and that O'Donnell and his friends

⁴⁰⁸ Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 282.

were ‘as yll as Shane or worse...one is a friendlye enemye, the other an open foe’.⁴⁰⁹

This may have been in part because a weakened Calvagh had trouble compelling his sublords to contribute to the levy for English forces. Nonetheless, the 1566 treaties did not lead to Tír Conaill’s various powers becoming dutiful crown vassals as they merely promised what they thought would lead to aid against O’Neill. Ultimately, O’Donnell was to enjoy his restoration to the lordship of Tír Conaill for only a few months as he died after falling from his horse in late 1566.⁴¹⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that both Manus and Calvagh O’Donnell were willing to work with the English crown when this seemed to offer the prospect of solidifying their hold over the lordship of Tír Conaill and to protect them against their provincial rivals in Tyrone. It is however quite wrong to imply, as some historians have, that there was a firm and consistently good relationship between these two leaders and the crown.⁴¹¹ The principal requirement O’Donnell lords had of potential allies was that no challenge was made against their power within Tír Conaill itself and, usually, that some form of support was offered against the O’Neills. The family also expected to be free to pursue its traditional expansionist policies, though both lords displayed at least token willingness to listen to alternative means of defending and enriching themselves. This was evident during the 1540s, when Manus readily attended Parliament and agreed in principle to cease raiding his neighbours because

⁴⁰⁹ Captain Thomas Wilsford to William Cecil, 15 November 1566, SP 63/19 f.98.

⁴¹⁰ Allestor McConneill to Captain William Piers, 10 December 1566, insert in Lord Deputy Sidney to Cecil, 19 December 1566, *CSPi*, I, (1509-73), 321.

⁴¹¹ For instance, Hiram Morgan suggests that the O’Donnells were a staunch crown ally for most of the century. See *Tyrone’s Rebellion*, 113.

St Leger was supportive towards O'Donnell in his disputes with O'Neill and others. However, Manus' repeated foreign intrigues suggest he was never entirely satisfied with English treatment of him. One critical reason for this was that the English often failed to defend him against his local enemies, as promised, though it must be acknowledged that deputies were hamstrung in this regard due to the scant number of troops available to them.⁴¹²

Furthermore, officials had begun to interfere intermittently in Tír Conaill's internal politics by, for example, supporting the claims of Calvagh O'Donnell against Manus. Consequently, O'Donnell had little motivation to complete his side of the various bargains he made with English officials. Accordingly he sometimes sought external aid in upholding his local power and even temporarily befriended Conn

Bacach O'Neill in 1549 as they conducted a joint attempt to obtain such assistance. This was, of course, not without precedent as the two had been at the forefront of the Geraldine League in the late 1530s. Therefore, even relatively soon after the Kingship Act of 1541, O'Donnell and O'Neill leaders were prepared to work together to obtain leverage in their dealings with the crown. Manus also defied English demands by continuing to follow an expansionist policy. For Englishmen, such decrees had to be obeyed if reform was to proceed as they envisaged. Thus, bad faith on both sides and differences of opinion as to the shape change should take meant relations between Manus and the crown were only sporadically cordial.

⁴¹² Ciaran Brady observed that there were only 500 English soldiers in Ireland in the mid-1550s in 'Court, castle and country: the framework of government in Tudor Ireland' in Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie, eds., *Natives and newcomers: the making of Irish colonial society, 1534-1641*, (Dublin, 1986), 32.

Calvagh O'Donnell also found that English support could fluctuate wildly depending on the personnel and aims of the Dublin government, and the current whims of English monarchs. Calvagh's time as O'Donnell was characterised by weakness and he relied heavily on English favour to retain power in Tír Conaill. This assistance was forthcoming during the deputyships of Sussex and, after 1565, Sidney as both disliked Shane O'Neill and believed him to be an obstacle to peace in Ulster. By contrast, Shane prospered between 1563 and 1565 when Thomas Cusack and Nicholas Arnold held sway in Dublin and focused upon expelling the MacDonalds from Ulster with O'Neill's help. This pattern reflects the assertions of Alexander Richey that English officials supported O'Donnell lords when doing so helped further the crown's policy, but neglected relations with the lords of Tír Conaill otherwise. Nevertheless, this indicates that the English continued to pursue the reform of Ulster by aligning with whichever regional power was deemed most likely to help achieve this at a particular time. Unfortunately for Calvagh, he was unable to defend himself against attacks from Tyrone when he was out of favour with the crown. Sidney was ultimately to restore Calvagh to power in Tír Conaill in 1566, and he submitted to Elizabeth, though this was not a pro-English gesture. Rather his weakness meant an English alliance was his only means of regaining the lordship. Unlike his relatively popular father, Manus, Calvagh lacked local support and few in Tír Conaill wanted him in power. In this case, the English bolstered O'Donnell's position, but he had been treated as anything but a valuable ally in the years leading up to that point.

All this said, it must also be acknowledged that the example of Tír Conaill does not support the arguments of those such as Brendan Bradshaw who suggest that

English officials abandoned conciliatory policies relatively early after 1541.

Initiatives continued to be put forward which aimed at bringing certain Irish lords into the political elite, though these were inconsistently applied and fell in and out of favour with the crown. The lords of Tír Conaill were included in these schemes when they were deemed likely to help the English achieve their aims, but were not always considered crucial crown allies. As the next chapter shall discuss, Calvagh's successor, Hugh McManus O'Donnell, experienced similar uncertainty in his dealings with the crown meaning that he too was, at best, a sometime English ally.

Chapter Three: The lordship of Hugh McManus O'Donnell, 1566-92

The years between 1566 and 1592 were a time of upheaval in Ulster. English policy there became more inconsistent, often leading to great uncertainty for Hugh McManus O'Donnell in Tír Conaill. Lordly co-operation in furthering reform in the north was still intermittently sought by prominent officials like Lord Deputies Henry Sidney and John Perrot.⁴¹³ At other times, however, the crown sent external representatives to enforce change within the province which interfered with the internal politics of every lordship. One tactic associated with this was the increasing employment of English garrisons, which were unpopular with Irishmen, in overseeing reform.⁴¹⁴ Efforts to control Connaught and Ulster were expanded, and surrender and regrant agreements were made with sublords in order to undermine the power of provincial overlords.⁴¹⁵ Christopher Maginn has argued that, after 1567, many Irish lords stopped supporting surrender and regrant since it threatened their interests in this way.⁴¹⁶ There is truth in this, as English policy towards Tír Conaill certainly became more interventionist and was sometimes slanted towards boosting O'Donnell's challengers against him. Nonetheless, it is wrong to suggest that every lord abandoned the policy completely and never again considered it beneficial. Hugh McManus was often unhappy with English rule but remained willing to befriend Elizabeth and commit to introducing reform into Tír Conaill long after 1567. This was because Hugh's local adversaries remained the biggest threat to his power for most of the period. To some extent, Elizabeth still sought to work with the

⁴¹³ Ciaran Brady, *The chief governors: the rise and fall of reform government in Tudor Ireland, 1536-1588*, (Cambridge, 1994), 265, 269.

⁴¹⁴ Derek Hirst, *Dominion: England and its island neighbours, 1500-1707*, (Oxford, 2012), 60, 83.

⁴¹⁵ *ibid.*, 83. See also Christopher Maginn, "'Surrender and regrant' in the historiography of sixteenth century Ireland", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 38, (2007), 965.

⁴¹⁶ Maginn, 'Surrender and regrant', 974.

lords of Tír Conaill, whilst those in power in Tyrone sought to subdue the O'Donnells completely.

Another nascent policy was the imposition of English settlements in Ulster which, it was theorised, would show native Irishmen how to be 'civilised' through example. This concerned even lords who were not yet directly affected by it such as Hugh McManus, and steps were taken to placate him when settlers arrived in northeast Ulster in the early 1570s. Hugh's desire to reduce the prospect of settlement in

Tír Conaill was another reason why the crown's friendship remained attractive to him. However, many Englishmen involved in such projects were vehement that only settlements would see English norms extended throughout Ireland. For instance, Sir Thomas Smith believed they would ensure the destruction of native Irish political and social customs, while their replacement with English practices would civilise the island.⁴¹⁷ This implied that lords could be accommodated in the new system, albeit with reduced status. But Nicholas Canny has argued that, in practice, New English officials sent to Ireland were disinterested in reforming the island. Instead, they preferred to treat Ireland as a colony and seek dominance over crown patronage and Irish lands.⁴¹⁸

Though Hugh was upset about the settlements which had been erected in the north-east in the 1570s, Tír Conaill was not subject to an official policy of colonisation in the sixteenth century. While some avaricious officials sought to

⁴¹⁷ David Beers Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, (Ithaca, 1966), 10, 124.

⁴¹⁸ Nicholas Canny, 'Dominant minorities: English settlers in Ireland and Virginia, 1550-1650', in A. C. Hepburn, ed. *Historical Studies 12: Minorities in History*, (London, 1978), 62.

enrich themselves there from the mid-1580s onwards, the government in London did not place permanent settlers in the lordship and continued to seek an accommodation with the O'Donnell lords. Therefore, while there were efforts to introduce English planters into some parts of Ireland, this was not generally applied throughout the island. Accordingly, while the lords of Tír Conaill were becoming alienated from the crown by the late-1580s, this cannot be said to be the result of colonialist policies pursued by the English. Instead, it is more accurate to posit that attempts to co-opt the family into a reformed polity went badly wrong. This was because those men sent into the north to ensure reform took hold went on to over-extort from the lordship, much to the chagrin of the locals. Furthermore, the hostility of Hugh McManus to these officials was ensured by the fact that they supported his local rivals against him.

Some historians have recognised that colonial thinking played little role in English policymaking in this period, though for varying reasons. For instance, Ciaran Brady recently argued that many officials in the 1570s and 1580s were influenced by commentators of the 1520s and 1530s, rather than foreshadowing later colonialists like Edmund Spenser.⁴¹⁹ Therefore they still believed that the conciliatory policies which had brought England 'from feudal anarchy...to peace and prosperity' recently should work the same effect in Ireland.⁴²⁰ Others, such as Raymond Gillespie, Steven Ellis and Allan Macinnes suggest that no colonial policy was pursued in Ireland. The reasons given for this are that it was not a conscious

⁴¹⁹ Ciaran Brady, 'From policy to power: the evolution of Tudor reform strategies in sixteenth century Ireland', in Brian Mac Cuarta, ed, *Re-shaping 1550-1700; colonisation and its consequences: essays presented to Nicholas Canny* (Dublin, 2011), 25.

⁴²⁰ *ibid*, 26-8.

policy choice or that the English did not see themselves as colonisers because their own monarchs ruled over the island.⁴²¹

The arguments surrounding the existence or otherwise of an English colonial policy tend to focus on English thinking, but have little to say regarding how Irishmen perceived events or the experiences of individual lordships on the ground. No systematic or intentional policy of colonisation was followed in Tír Conaill in the sixteenth century. However, this does not mean that there was no effort to undermine the local power of the O'Donnell lords. Accordingly, this chapter examines the policies of the crown and its representatives towards Tír Conaill in an effort to understand the course of crown-O'Donnell relations during Hugh McManus' reign as lord there. It is suggested that he had a more mixed experience of crown rule than is sometimes suggested. He saw others suffer from aggressive plantation schemes and expressed concern about English control in north-eastern Ulster. Encroachments into Connaught were just as worrying to Hugh, since he regarded it as his rightful territory. He was often perceived to be an obstacle to certain English policies, and was unhappy with crown interference in his affairs inside and outside Tír Conaill, especially from the late 1580s onwards. Thus, it is a grave mistake to assume that Hugh was a crown loyalist, even though his local situation meant it was sometimes convenient for him to befriend Elizabeth.¹⁰ Like his predecessors, Hugh was also of use to English officials at certain times.

⁴²¹ See Raymond Gillespie, *The transformation of the Irish economy, 1550-1700*, (Dundalk, 1991), 19-20, where it is argued that no conscious colonial policy was pursued in Ireland; see Steven G. Ellis, 'Crown, community, and government in the English

From the crown's perspective, it was imperative that Irishmen behave in a loyal fashion. Those who were regarded as doing so normally accepted English demands in a few key matters. One was willingness to pay rent to the crown, latterly

territories, 1450-1575', *History*, lxxi (1986), 198 and Allan I. Macinnes, 'Making the plantations British, 1603-38', in Steven G. Ellis and Rainard Esser, eds, *Frontiers and the writing of history, 1500-1850*, (Hannover-Laatzon, 2006), 97, where the writers stress that the English saw Ireland as their own kingdom to inhabit.

10 S. J. Connolly observes that Henry Sidney, for example, ignored the 'expediency' which motivated men like Hugh McManus to appear loyal. See *Contested Island, Ireland: 1460-1630*, (Oxford, 2007), 151.

in the form of the newly-erected composition rents.⁴²² Composition was

implemented by the crown in Connaught and Munster in the 1570s to help establish

provincial presidential systems. S. J. Connolly has written that this came to be

viewed by some Irishmen as merely another form of tribute paid to a superior

power.⁴²³ This chapter touches upon attempts to implement similar policies in Tír

Conaill, suggesting that

O'Donnell had little incentive to permanently pay rents, since officials often failed to

perform their part of this bargain by defending him from local threats. Indeed, by the

end of the period, the crown's representatives in Ulster were actively undermining

Hugh's position, making friendship with the English ever more unattractive to him.

Loyalty also continued to entail assisting crown schemes to expel the Scots

from Ulster. Irish lords still found these demands difficult to comply with. They

needed men for local wars, while the MacDonalds of Antrim and Dunyveg were a

political force in Ulster and aimed to extend their power throughout the province.⁴²⁴

⁴²² Brady, 'From policy to power', 35.

⁴²³ Bernadette Cunningham, 'The Composition of Connacht in the lordships of Clanricard and Thomond, 1577-1641', *IHS*, 24 (1984), 1, 13; Connolly, *Contested Island*, 224.

⁴²⁴ Ciaran Brady, 'The decline of the Irish kingdom', in Mark Greengrass, ed. *Conquest and Coalescence: the shaping of the state in early modern Europe*, (London, 1991), 102-3; James Michael Hill, *Fire and Sword: Sorley Boy MacDonnell and the rise of the Clan Ian Mor, 1538-1590*, (London, 1993), 26-7, 34. See also chapter one, pages 52-54, for more on the rise of the MacDonalds in Ulster.

The English were, however, beginning to realise that the crown's failure to defend loyal lords left them with no means of defence other than Scottish forces.⁴²⁵ Now officials aimed to send sustained aid to O'Donnell and others, and the acceptance of this became another symbol of allegiance to Elizabeth. Problems arose when Hugh McManus used these forces in ways which damaged English interests, prompting complaints from those whose jobs he made more difficult. Moreover, English soldiers were as destructive as Scotsmen were, and failed to expel them from Ulster. Consequently, O'Donnell continued hiring Scottish soldiers to repel avaricious English forces and his enemy Turlough Luineach O'Neill, lord of Tyrone. Though local concerns caused Hugh McManus to take this course, it was perceived as disloyal behaviour by the English.

Discussion of the intermittent efforts to enact these policies in Tír Conaill helps correct imbalances in the portraits of Hugh McManus within the existing historiography. There is general acceptance that crown-O'Donnell relations had broken down to some degree by the end of Hugh's rule. However, Hiram Morgan suggests that before this O'Donnell was a 'faithful servant' of Elizabeth's, displayed by his defeat of Shane O'Neill in 1567 and later rejection of alliances with Turlough Luineach O'Neill and the earl of Desmond against the English.⁴²⁶ This assessment ignores the fact that O'Donnell's primary motivation was to seek local predominance through English aid rather than to display allegiance to Elizabeth. Hugh was far

⁴²⁵ Brady, 'Decline of the Irish kingdom', 106.

⁴²⁶ Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion: the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland*, (Woodbridge, 1993), 121. 16
Ciaran Brady, ed. *A Viceroy's vindication?, Sir Henry Sidney's Memoir of service in Ireland, 1556-1578*, (Cork, 2002), 30. 17
Ernest Hamilton, *Elizabethan Ulster*, (London, 1919), 34.

from servile and officials were often uncertain of his loyalty. More recently, while acknowledging O'Donnell's selfish motives, Ciaran Brady has asserted that Hugh had 'a firm and lasting relationship' with three-time Deputy, Henry Sidney, 'from the beginning'.¹⁶ In fact, as Ernest Hamilton suggested many years ago, Hugh had 'little love' for Sidney initially, in part because the English did not help O'Donnell defend Tír Conaill from Shane O'Neill in early 1567.¹⁷ Moreover, Sidney and others often supported the lordship's other powers against Hugh, which dissatisfied him greatly. Ultimately O'Donnell's loyalty, as with his predecessors, depended on the English pursuing policies that suited him. Thus the violent Grey de Wilton, deputy between 1580 and 1582, was an acceptable ally while he helped Hugh against Turlough O'Neill. But O'Donnell's faith in the crown was damaged when, as Hiram Morgan and Darren McGettigan have observed, English sheriffs plundered Tír Conaill in the 1580s.⁴²⁷

A further English policy which was unpalatable to Hugh was the crown's desire to extend its power into northern Connaught at his expense. As R. J. Hunter argues, the newly-created Presidency of Connaught and repeated English efforts to win power over O'Connor Sligo and others threatened traditional O'Donnell claims of overlordship there from the 1560s onwards.⁴²⁸ Hugh attempted to resist this when powerful enough, and the English viewed that as disloyal. This has been largely ignored by historians who are intent on discussing his usefulness to the crown within

⁴²⁷ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 113, 122-3; Darren McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell and the Nine Years War*, (Dublin, 2005), 41-2.

⁴²⁸ R. J. Hunter, 'The End of O'Donnell power', in William Nolan, et al, eds. *Donegal: history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 230.

an Ulster context. To be fair, Elizabeth herself sometimes overlooked Hugh's attempts to extend his power into northern Connaught for this reason. Nevertheless, while this issue sometimes lay dormant before the 1590s, it is of importance in explaining why the crown and O'Donnell lords were never wholly at peace. In truth, both joint crown-O'Donnell efforts against the O'Neills and Hugh McManus' attempts to assert his power in northern Connaught were infrequent. However, the tension over the latter issue has hitherto been downplayed, which has prevented historians reaching a full appreciation of crown-O'Donnell relations during Hugh's lordship.

This chapter aims to redress such deficiencies by discussing all these issues. In doing so the evolution of crown policy and O'Donnell reactions during the period 1566-1592 in three important areas is touched upon. Examined in turn are English efforts to rule Connaught between the 1560s and 1580s, the triangular relationship between the O'Neills, the O'Donnells and the English within Ulster over the whole period, and crown encroachments into Tír Conaill itself. It is argued that Hugh always felt some disquiet about general English policy in Ulster and Connaught and suspicion about efforts to support his inferiors against him. For most of his rule as lord of Tír Conaill, this was offset by his continuing ability to obtain English aid on occasion and because his lordship had never fallen under English control. By the end of his rule, relations were very fragile since these things no longer held true. Although these points of contention are highlighted, it is important to observe another salient fact. Though the English were more forcefully pressing for acknowledgement of Elizabeth's sovereignty by the end of the period, there was no

suggestion that O'Donnell power should be overthrown. Indeed, English officials such as William Fitzwilliam continued to choose their own contenders for power in Tír Conaill from within the O'Donnell family. As yet, the crown's stance remained that the lords of Tír Conaill should accept only some reduction of their power, rather than its obliteration.

Connaught

From the late 1560s onwards, Elizabeth's increasing desire to control Connaught sometimes impinged upon Hugh McManus' claims to overlordship there. Though it was never the paramount issue in determining relations, there was frequently friction over power in the western province. As has been observed, the lords in northern Connaught would attempt to deny O'Donnell's claims there whenever they saw a chance to do so.⁴²⁹ Accordingly, in early 1568, Donald O'Connor was granted recognition as lord of Sligo, which theoretically freed him from O'Donnell's power.⁴³⁰ Donald was understandably pleased, as Mary O'Dowd has argued, at the prospect of aid in this struggle.⁴³¹ But Hugh McManus had signified his determination to assert his family's traditional claims in Connaught by raiding Sligo and Ballymote in October 1567, and informed the Lords Justices that he had no intention of ceding control there.⁴³² As Hiram Morgan argued, O'Donnell benefited

⁴²⁹ This has also been mentioned in chapter one, pages 49-50.

⁴³⁰ Nicholas P. Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: a pattern established, 1565-1576*, (Hassocks, 1976), 48; 'Indenture between Queen Elizabeth and Sir Donald O'Conchuyr, alias O'Connor Sligo', 20 January 1568, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 378.

⁴³¹ Mary O'Dowd, 'Gaelic economy and society', in Raymond Gillespie and Ciaran Brady, eds., *Natives and Newcomers: the making of Irish colonial society, 1534-1641*, (Dublin, 1986), 134-5.

⁴³² Lord Justice William Fitzwilliam to William Cecil, 31 October 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 348; Hugh McManus O'Donnell to the Lords Justices, 14 November 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 349; Hugh McManus O'Donnell to the Lords Justices, 26 March 1568, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 374.

economically from power in Sligo and intended to continue doing so.⁴³³ For their part, the Irish Council insisted that Hugh ought to behave as a ‘good subiecte’ by seeking legal confirmation of his rights in the western province at the Dublin government’s hands.⁴³⁴ Nevertheless the drift of the crown’s policy in Connaught was indicated by Elizabeth’s appointment of her own legal arbiters there in July 1569.⁴³⁵ Some lands were also passing into new hands, with Patrick Cusack granted leases to abbeys and castles in Sligo, Ballymote and O’Connor Roe’s country in November 1569.⁴³⁶ These initiatives undermined Hugh’s assertions of overlordship in northern Connaught by claiming legal authority and powers of patronage for the crown. Furthermore, this served as an indication of the levels of interference likely should Tír Conaill ever fall under English influence.

O’Donnell’s early dealings with President Fitton indicated that co-existence would be difficult. In July 1571, O’Donnell demanded the right to speak for O’Connor at Dublin, and stated that Fitton had no right to stop Donald joining Hugh’s hosting when summoned.⁴³⁷ Thus, a squabble was underway over who had the right to military service from lords in Connaught. O’Donnell had no intention of ceasing his activities there, and reportedly assisted the rebellious sons of

⁴³³ Morgan, *Tyrone’s Rebellion*, 122. By Elizabeth’s time, O’Donnell claimed 360 marks a year in rent from O’Connor Sligo. See W.F. T. Butler, *Gleanings from Irish history*, (London, 1925), 208.

⁴³⁴ Lord Justice Weston and Council to Hugh McManus O’Donnell, 14 April 1568, SP 63/24 f. 27.

⁴³⁵ ‘Commission to Hugh Brady, Bishop of Meath, and others, to act as justices and commissioners in the province of Connaught’, Fiants, Elizabeth’, 24 July 1569, *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 11th report, (Dublin, 1877), 212.

⁴³⁶ ‘Grant to Patrick Cusack, of lands in the countries of McDermod and others’, 30 November 1569, ‘Fiants, Elizabeth’, *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 11th report, 217.

⁴³⁷ Hugh McManus O’Donnell to Sir Edward Fitton, president of ‘High Connacht’, 13 July 1571, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 53.

MacWilliam of Mayo in September that year.⁴³⁸ Therefore, the establishment of English officials whose sole purpose was to bring Connaught under crown control ensured friction between these men and O'Donnell, who opposed their aims. Contrarily, officials in Ulster still saw Hugh as a sometime valuable ally against O'Neill, which was one reason O'Donnell was never wholly alienated from the crown. Though the Presidency of Connaught had fallen into abeyance by 1574, Hugh's respite was short-lived.⁴³⁹ From 1575 onwards the returning deputy, Sidney, aimed at restoring the Presidency system, enforcing legal change, shiring Ireland and seizing revenues for Elizabeth then in 'usurpers' hands.⁴⁴⁰ To ease this process, sublords would receive grants of their lands in return for switching their allegiance from overlords to Elizabeth.⁴⁴¹ This included challenging O'Donnell's rights in Connaught, which again became a point of contention in the late 1570s.

In 1578, Elizabeth demanded that English law be established in Connaught with the new President, Nicholas Malbie, to punish those who prevented its spread.⁴⁴² As Darren McGettigan has observed, this was allied with efforts to encourage lords there to reject O'Donnell's claims of hegemony and, at Malbie's suggestion, O'Connor Sligo offered to submit to Elizabeth in return for assistance against Hugh McManus.⁴⁴³ Notably, O'Connor complained that similar aid promised in 1567 had never materialised, and explained that he had never paid rent to the crown for this reason.⁴⁴⁴ As always, O'Connor was willing to consider aligning with the crown

⁴³⁸ Lord Justice Fitzwilliam to the Privy Council, 29 September 1571, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 82-3.

⁴³⁹ See Hirst, *Dominion*, 94, for details of the reasons for the Presidency of Connaught's collapse.

⁴⁴⁰ 'Sir Henry Sidney's plot (or proposal) for the administration of Ireland' (copy), 1575, BL Cotton Titus B/XIII, f. 208v; see also the letter from the Deputy's advisor to the same effect, Edmund Tremayne to the Lord Deputy Sidney, 24 January 1576, SP 63/55, f.13.

⁴⁴¹ Edmund Tremayne to the Lord Deputy Sidney, 24 January 1576, SP 63/55, f.13.

⁴⁴² 'Instructions to the new Governor of Connaught, Nicholas Malbie' (copy), 1578, BL Add MS, 4786, f.4.

⁴⁴³ McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 36; 'Notes to be resolved, for Connaught', 1576, SP 63/56, f.186v.

⁴⁴⁴ 'Notes to be resolved, for Connaught', 1576, SP 63/56, f.186v.

now if it might mean he could have assistance in rejecting O'Donnell's overlordship. This implies that in recent times O'Donnell had been able to enforce his will in northern Connaught in the absence of alternative authorities, which partially helps to explain his amicable relations with the English in the mid-1570s. Certainly, his continuing influence there was inferred by Sidney's recognition in 1576 that Hugh's assistance would help O'Connor expel the Scots from Connaught.⁴⁴⁵

By the late 1570s, though, English officials meant to settle the controversy over Sligo in Elizabeth's favour. Even if Lord Justice William Drury decided that O'Donnell was entitled to the 360 marks annual rent that he claimed from O'Connor, Hugh would be expected to pay more to Elizabeth to make up for this.⁴⁴⁶ In practice, O'Donnell ignored efforts to bring him to the negotiating table and attacked and subdued Sligo with a 'great gunne' obtained from the Scottish Isles.⁴⁴⁷ By this means, Hugh was seeking to compel O'Connor to align with him and reject English rule. Consequently, some English officials identified Hugh as an impediment to crown's effort to subdue Connaught. In September 1579 Nicholas Malbie lobbied for 300 foot and 100 horse to be placed at Coleraine and in Connaught to 'keep O'Donnell in obedience'.⁴⁴⁸ As Governor of Connaught, Malbie's principal concern was to pacify the province and O'Donnell's raids made this difficult. For Hugh's part, he was determined to exert overlordship in Connaught if possible. Caught in the middle were the likes of O'Connor Sligo, who would align with whichever party

⁴⁴⁵ Lord Deputy Sidney to the Privy Council, 27 April 1576, *Cal Carew MSS*, II, (1575-1588), 49.

⁴⁴⁶ The Privy Council to the Lord Justice Drury, 8 April 1579, in James Hogan and N. McNeill O'Farrell, eds. *The Walsingham Letter-Book, or Register of Ireland, May 1578 to December 1579*, (Dublin, 1959), 64-5.

⁴⁴⁷ Patrick Cullen to Sir Nicholas Bagenal, 14 November 1579, in Hogan and O'Farrell, eds. *Walsingham Letter-Book*, 224-225.

⁴⁴⁸ 'Sir Nicholas Malby's Plot: 'an opinion touching the government of Ireland, foreign invasion only excepted', 26 November 1579, *Cal Carew MSS*, II, (1575-1588), 483.

was in the ascendancy in the hope of having a quiet life.

There was continuing acrimony between O'Donnell and English officials based in Connaught as the 1580s opened. In May 1580, Henry Malbie secured submissions from MacWilliam of Mayo and O'Rourke, but complained that O'Donnell had thwarted a similar outcome with O'Connor Sligo.⁴⁴⁹ Henry accounted the wars between O'Donnell and O'Connor the only barrier to a peaceful Connaught, with Hugh to blame as he refused to 'seek his right' by English law.⁴⁵⁰ Of course, O'Donnell was aware that doing so would most likely result in a rejection of his claims in Connaught and so sought to assert his power in the traditional way. O'Donnell's Scottish links also brought renewed scrutiny as he was accused of sending Scottish forces to aid O'Rourke in Leitrim, in a climate where Nicholas Malbie proclaimed that Agnes Campbell, Finola MacDonald and Sorley Boy MacDonald aimed to make 'a new Scotland of Ulster'.⁴⁵¹ Hugh's aim was to preserve his own influence in Connaught. Nevertheless, he was cast as a nuisance who prevented the establishment of English legal practices there and the expulsion of the Scots from that province. Brendan Kane has argued that the then-current rebellion of the earl of Desmond was motivated by the loss of privileges and status rather than opposition to 'civility', and this explains O'Donnell's actions in Connaught too.⁴⁵² However, Nicholas Malbie seized upon this as occasion to enter

⁴⁴⁹ Sir Henry Malbie to the Earl of Leicester, 10 May 1580, *Cal Carew MSS*, II, (1575-1588), 253.

⁴⁵⁰ Sir Henry Malbie to the Earl of Leicester, 10 May 1580, *Cal Carew MSS*, II, (1575-1588), 253.

⁴⁵¹ Lord Deputy Grey and the Irish Council to the Privy Council, 14 August 1580, SP 63/75, f. 88, Sir Nicholas Malbie to Sir Francis Walsingham, 17 August 1580, SP 63/75, f. 125v.

⁴⁵² Brendan Kane, *The Politics and Culture of Honour in Britain and Ireland, 1541-1641*, (Cambridge, 2010), 41.

Tír Conaill and cause Hugh to dissolve his army and submit, before attacking O'Rourke's lordship.⁴⁵³

The Governor also warned Secretary Francis Walsingham in September that Elizabeth would lose Ireland if 'the sword be not used sharply' against such men.⁴⁵⁴ Malbie was probably overstating the threat these lords posed in order to obtain forces against them, but he certainly saw O'Donnell as an enemy. The governor's attack upon Tír Conaill had also shown Hugh McManus that powerful officials in Connaught would not only seek to stop him interfering there but would strike at his lordship too. In the longer-term, his uncertain standing with these officials caused Hugh to seek means of defending himself from their incursions.

Another area of controversy in the early 1580s was O'Donnell's use of English forces in Connaught. These had been granted to Hugh to enable him to fend off the attacks of Turlough O'Neill of Tyrone in Ulster. However Malbie angrily reported in December 1582 that, having secured a good peace with O'Neill, O'Donnell turned the English troops on Sligo where he sought to take 'blacke rente from Oconor'.⁴⁵⁶ Malbie's message was clear: lords should only use English forces in accordance with English aims. In the short-term, O'Donnell escaped censure by convincing the Lord Justices that O'Neill would 'overthrowe' him if the soldiers were removed, and won praise for seeking only English aid.⁴⁵⁵ For the Lord Justices, preventing O'Neill becoming too powerful was then a higher priority than

⁴⁵³ Sir Nicholas Malbie to Sir Francis Walsingham, 17 August 1580, SP 63/75, f. 122.

⁴⁵⁴ Sir Nicholas Malbie to Sir Francis Walsingham, 7 September 1580, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 249. 46
Sir Nicholas Malbie to Cecil, 3 December 1582, SP 63/98, f. 18v.

⁴⁵⁵ Lords Justices to Francis Walsingham, 20 December 1582, SP 63/98, f. 125-125v.

O'Donnell's activities elsewhere. Therefore, some forty years after the crown initially insisted that lords should not interfere in their neighbours' territories, officials continued to ignore that ruling when convenient.

By 1584, Malbie had been replaced as governor of Connaught by Richard Bingham, whose power alarmed Hugh McManus. Bingham himself reported that year that O'Donnell was encouraging O'Connor Sligo to regain Ballymote Castle from English forces because their presence there suggested that Tír Conaill would soon fall under English control.⁴⁵⁶ Hugh's concern was not misguided as Bingham hoped to gain permission to erect 'garrison places nearer to Odonell'.⁴⁵⁷ It is apparent, therefore, that the policies of the Presidents of Connaught concerned O'Donnell. He relied upon his power over that province to supply him with a proportion of the wealth which enabled him to uphold his local power. For their part, English officials in Connaught resented Hugh's incursions into the western province to further his claims there. They were also annoyed that he would not use legal channels to pursue them, because this was expected of loyal subjects. This did not yet result in a breakdown in crown-O'Donnell relations because Connaught was only one theatre of the Irish political scene, and both parties still prioritised their sometime-alliance against Turlough O'Neill of Tyrone.

After 1584 reports of O'Donnell activity in Connaught died away, principally because the English had begun to erect officials within Tír Conaill itself and Hugh

⁴⁵⁶ Sir Richard Bingham to Francis Walsingham, 21 December 1584, SP 63/ 113, f. 69v.

⁴⁵⁷ Sir Richard Bingham to Francis Walsingham, 21 December 1584, SP 63/ 113, f. 69v.

became preoccupied with this. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that the issue of Connaught, which had first become a point of contention during the reign of Manus O'Donnell, was now causing periodic strife between Hugh McManus O'Donnell and some English officials. This was to increase in intensity during the reign of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, principally because he was not seen as a useful counterweight to the power of the ruling O'Neill in Ulster. This had followed a change of heart in government circles about both Hugh McManus and Turlough O'Neill, which had consequences for the crown's attitude towards O'Donnell claims in Connaught and elsewhere for the rest of the century.⁴⁵⁸

O'Donnell, the O'Neills and the crown: an altered dynamic

As highlighted in the previous chapter, O'Donnell lords often sought an alliance with the crown against the most powerful O'Neill in Tyrone, which often suited Tudor monarchs as well. By the late 1580s this was no longer the norm as the dynamic had changed, with the English having revised their view of the competing O'Neills with consequences for relations with O'Donnell. However when Calvagh O'Donnell died in late 1566, these attitudinal changes remained some way off. The new lord of Tír Conaill, Hugh McManus O'Donnell, who coveted English friendship, abandoned his alliance with Shane O'Neill immediately, submitting to Elizabeth and promising to aid her against him.⁴⁵⁹⁴⁶⁰ O'Donnell also agreed, as Calvagh had in October 1566, to pay an annual rent to the crown and feed the English garrison at Derry.⁴⁶¹ Though Hugh had his own reasons for pursuing friendship with the crown, these pledges

⁴⁵⁸ See chapter four, 205-217, for more on English reactions to Hugh Roe O'Donnell's claims towards Connaught up to 1602.

⁴⁵⁹ Ciaran Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, (Dundalk, 1996), 62; Lord Deputy Sidney to the Privy Council, 18 January 1567, SP 63/20, f.

⁴⁶⁰ v.

⁴⁶¹ Lord Deputy Sidney to the Privy Council, 18 January 1567, SP 63/20, f. 34v.

were taken as evidence of his loyalty and the new deputy, Henry Sidney, thought his recent attack on Tyrone showed that O'Donnell was 'very conformable'.⁴⁶²

Nevertheless, while his relationship with Sidney started positively, Hugh fell under English suspicion in April 1567 because he failed to victual the Derry garrison as promised, amid fears that he would ally with Shane to 'betraye the English force'.⁴⁶³ These concerns were based on O'Donnell's earlier friendship with O'Neill, but the situation had changed. Shane, as ever, sought to seize power in Tír Conaill, and now represented a direct threat to Hugh's interests. Other factors explain O'Donnell's reticence to cement the English alliance.

Even prior to the break-down in Hugh's relations with the crown in the late 1580s, the English had helped him preserve his local power only intermittently. For instance, he had required assistance against Shane O'Neill, who continued to assault Tír Conaill throughout early 1567. Writing to the Dublin government in April, Hugh requested money to hire soldiers and ships to enable him to regain Donegal Castle and protect other strongholds from O'Neill.⁴⁶⁴ Shane went on to obtain Ballyshannon and Belleek Castles in return for releasing Con O'Donnell, a rival of O'Donnell's who proved a thorn in his side in the struggle for supremacy in Tír Conaill.⁵⁶ This gave Shane a foothold in southern Tír Conaill and northern Connaught from which to undermine O'Donnell's authority. Even though the crown

⁴⁶² Lord Deputy Sidney to the Privy Council, 18 January 1567, SP 63/20, f. 34v.

⁴⁶³ Extract of a letter from the Privy Council to Lord Deputy Sidney, 3 April 1567, SP 63/20, f.124.

⁴⁶⁴ O'Donnell to Lord Deputy Sidney, 28 April 1567, *CSPi*, I, (1509-73), 331. 56
Thomas Lancaster to Cecil, 29 May 1567, SP 63/20, f. 199v.

was desperate to subdue O'Neill, Hugh McManus received little practical English assistance against his local

enemies in 1567. Instead, tacit support was given to O'Donnell's plan of seeking Scottish aid against Shane via marriage alliance with Agnes Campbell, the widow of James MacDonald of Dunyveg.⁴⁶⁵ With O'Neill's extirpation then the crown's main concern, distaste for the use of Scottish mercenaries was temporarily set aside by officials.⁴⁶⁶ However, there was little reason for Hugh to feed the Derry garrison given the lack of direct aid the crown had afforded him against O'Neill. Indeed, O'Donnell's victory over Shane at the Battle of Fearsat Mor in late May 1567 was achieved only with the support of sublords in Tír Conaill, such as the MacSweenys, O'Dochertys and dissident O'Donnells, who also feared O'Neill's rule.⁴⁶⁷ This showed Hugh that the crown could be unreliable, and subsequent English policies hardened this belief. O'Neill, meanwhile, was killed in early June by the MacDonalds of Antrim, with whom he foolishly sought an alliance after his defeat by O'Donnell.⁴⁶⁸

Following the death of Shane in June 1567, English policy again centred on expelling Scots from Ireland and 'civilising' the island while it was at peace. Various measures were thought necessary and those who accepted them were deemed loyal. The Dublin government and others argued that the introduction of English law throughout Ireland was necessary, since it would suppress raiding and

⁴⁶⁵ O'Donnell to Lord Deputy Sidney, 28 April 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 331. Agnes was interested in this as she sought revenge on Shane for James' murder.

⁴⁶⁶ Privy Council to the Lord Deputy Sidney, 12 May 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 332.

⁴⁶⁷ *ALC*, ii, 393-4; *AFM*, v, 1611-1613; Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 63.

⁴⁶⁸ Sir William Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 10 June 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 335.

the allegedly lenient Gaelic Brehon law did not.⁴⁶⁹ To rid Ulster of Scots, meanwhile, Sidney favoured planting English people there, and Francis Knollys envisaged the establishment of ‘havon townes’ as far west as Lough Foyle near Tír Conaill overseen by a new provincial president in Humphrey Gilbert.⁴⁷⁰ This scheme was not fully executed, but Nicholas Canny argues that some candidates for settlement did arrive in Ulster and it was expected 4000 more Devonshire men would follow them.⁶³ The plans were abandoned because, some sources suggest, Ulstermen quickly displayed hostility to them. According to a report of the Spanish ambassador in England, Guzman de Silva, even O’Donnell and O’Neill had joined in opposition to the division of Shane O’Neill’s former lands amongst settlers.⁴⁷¹ This grouping was forged by mutual interest. Turlough’s interest in retaining all Tyrone is obvious. Meanwhile, it was far from clear to O’Donnell that he would be left in peace to rule over Tír Conaill, as Elizabeth had voiced support for Con O’Donnell’s claims to land there.⁴⁷² The crown might well pursue other policies which tended to erode Hugh’s local power.

The main alternative to formal English settlements was military garrisoning and Sidney was instructed to consider suitable places for these in Ulster in May 1568.⁴⁷³ The proposed sites show that control in the north-west remained more

⁴⁶⁹ Lord Chancellor and the Privy Council of Ireland to Queen Elizabeth, 28 June 1567, SP 63/21, f. 80-80v; ‘A plotte conceaued for the gouernment of the Realme of Irelande’, 1567-1568, BL Add MSS, 48015, f. 290. Irish exactions were also to be targeted and issues surrounding this are discussed alongside other primarily economic factors in chapter five, see especially 277-283 of this study.

⁴⁷⁰ On Sidney, see Lord Deputy Sidney to Cecil, 4 March 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 327. For Knollys, see ‘Mr Vice-Chamberlain Knollys’ opinion not to allow the name of O’Neill to Turlough Lynagh’, 7 July 1567, SP 63/21, f. 129. 63 Canny, *Elizabethan conquest of Ireland*, 72-3.

⁴⁷¹ Guzman de Silva, the Spanish ambassador in England, to King Philip II of Spain, 1 May 1568, *CSPSp*, XV, (1568-1579), 26-7. They had been allied as early as November 1567, see Cuconnaght Maguire to the Lords Justices, 2 November 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 349.

⁴⁷² The next section on English interference within Tír Conaill discusses this fully.

⁴⁷³ ‘Instructions to Sir Henry Sidney’, 1 May 1568, SP 63/24, f. 86v; see also Lord Deputy Sidney to Cecil, 12 November 1568, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 393-4.

important in English thinking at this juncture than J. Michael Hill allows.⁴⁷⁴

Garrisoning Tír Conaill at Ballyshannon, Assaroe or Lough Foyle was deemed necessary to stem the flow of Scots into Connaught.⁴⁷⁵ Lough Foyle was also thought a convenient base from which to attack Tír Conaill if necessary, and one plan suggested that O'Donnell could contribute £600 a year to help maintain a garrison of 100 horse and 300 foot there.⁴⁷⁶ These schemes and the justifications for them suggest that some English officials believed Hugh McManus was not a loyalist who would enact reform without supervision or, perhaps, compulsion. For his part, O'Donnell remained willing to befriend the crown, but its policies were making his position difficult.

One result of the uncertainty between 1567 and 1569 was that O'Donnell intermittently entertained the idea of aligning with the new lord of Tyrone, Turlough O'Neill. Hugh went so far as to grant territory in Cinel Moen in eastern Tír Conaill to O'Neill in 1567-8. This move caused the owner of the lands, Con O'Donnell, to seek assistance from the Irish Council to recover the territory.⁴⁷⁷ There were potentially three reasons why Hugh McManus took this course of action. It is possible that O'Neill had compelled O'Donnell to give up the lands in Cinel Moen, which the two families had long squabbled over.⁴⁷⁸ Alternatively, Hugh McManus may have given up the land voluntarily, as a way of cementing an alignment with

⁴⁷⁴ Hill, *Fire and Sword*, 121. Hill argues that because the focus was on expelling the Scots, the crown needed friends in the north-east rather than the north-west and so had less need to appease O'Donnell than before.

⁴⁷⁵ 'Notes touching the propriety of places garrisons at Ballyshannon, Belleek, Asherow', 1568, SP 63/26 f.171. It was asserted that it was lawful for Elizabeth to seize Ballyshannon and Belleek as records at Dublin showed they were hers.

⁴⁷⁶ 'Notes touching the propriety of places garrisons at Ballyshannon, Belleek, Asherow', 1568, SP 63/26 f.171; A plotte conceaued for the gouernment of the Realme of Irelande', 1567-1568, BL Add MSS, 48015, f. 285.

⁴⁷⁷ Con O'Donnell to the Lords Justices, 26 November 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 350.

⁴⁷⁸ See chapter one, pages 50-52, for more on the reasons and motivations of the O'Donnells and the O'Neills in this squabble over Cinel Moen.

O'Neill. As Turlough would not then have needed to pander to Con O'Donnell in order to gain a foothold in Cinel Moen, this could also have the convenient side effect of neutering his challenge within Tír Conaill too. Whatever the case, the prospective alliance of the two provincial overlords quickly collapsed on this occasion. In the summer of 1568, O'Donnell and O'Neill engaged in tit-for-tat attacks on each other and, in November, Hugh was labelled a 'very good subiect' by the English adventurer Sir Peter Carew for having chased O'Neill 'into his own castell' and seized men and horses.⁴⁷⁹ This rendered O'Neill too weak to 'annoye others' and made it difficult for him to maintain his Scottish mercenaries.⁴⁸⁰ Hugh's readiness to attack Tyrone meant he was now accounted loyal, and it is possible he did this partially because he knew it would ensure his transgressions in Connaught and elsewhere were forgiven. Moreover, despite his grievances about certain English policies, O'Donnell was always willing to befriend the crown against O'Neill, who remained Hugh's principal enemy. Nonetheless, a fledgling English policy inaugurated in the summer of 1569 created amongst Ulstermen a renewed suspicion regarding the crown's aims in the north.

The intent of Henry Sidney towards Gaelic Irish lands emerged during the parliament of 1569 when Shane O'Neill was attainted for rebellion, and Elizabeth was named rightful owner of his old lands and those of his rebellious allies.⁴⁸¹ Sidney stressed that O'Donnell and others who had assisted the queen against Shane

⁴⁷⁹ Thomas Lancaster, Archbishop of Armagh, to Queen Elizabeth, 15 June 1568, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 379, Lord Justice Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 18 July 1568, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 383; Sir Peter Carew to the Privy Council, 2 November 1568, SP 63/26, f. 56.

⁴⁸⁰ Sir Peter Carew to the Privy Council, 2 November 1568, SP 63/26, f. 56-56v.

⁴⁸¹ Ciaran Brady, 'The attainder of Shane O'Neill, Sir Henry Sidney and the problems of Tudor state-building in Ireland' in Ciaran Brady and Jane H. Ohlmeyer, eds. *British interventions in early modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2004), 28. 75 Brady, *Chief governors*, 130.

would be unaffected by these changes.⁷⁵ However Ciaran Brady has argued Sidney sought to claim that all Ireland had always ultimately belonged to the crown and that rebel lands could be seized anytime.⁴⁸² Now many Irish lords were on edge, expecting the crown to declare them rebels upon any pretext in order to take their holdings.⁷⁷

Indeed, Sidney's stated aim was to 'intitle' Elizabeth to all Ulster for her to 'plant and dispose the same' for economic gain and security purposes.⁴⁸³ Perhaps this was intended to frighten previously 'loyal' lordships into accepting English reforms for fear of being declared forfeit. Nevertheless O'Donnell had little reason to trust in English promises because they had already interfered in Tír Conaill's politics by supporting Con O'Donnell's claims there. Consequently, although Sidney did not claim Tír Conaill for Elizabeth in 1569, O'Donnell felt insecure and again sought solace in alliance with O'Neill.

O'Donnell's discontent also resulted in his forging closer links with the MacDonalds of Antrim and Dunyveg in the late 1560s, which became another point of contention with the crown.⁴⁸⁴ Hugh was lambasted in early 1568 for seeking Scots aid against the queen's 'peaceable and mercyfull government' and likened to Shane O'Neill by Lord Justice Weston, who warned of the consequences of rebellious behaviour.⁴⁸⁵ Still, Hugh needed military support in his local wars in the absence of English assistance. He was also unsure about the general drift of English policy and

⁴⁸² Brady, 'Attainder of Shane O'Neill', 32, 42. 77
Ibid, 45.

⁴⁸³ 'Sidney's justification for the attainder of Shane O'Neill' (copy), 1569, BL Add MSS 4801, f. 124v.

⁴⁸⁴ The Queen's disquiet about the Scots presence in the north was made evident in her letter to the Lords Justices on 24 December 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 355.

⁴⁸⁵ Lord Justice Weston and Council to Hugh McManus O'Donnell, 14 April 1568, SP 63/24 f. 27-27v; *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 374.

what it might mean for Tír Conaill. Accordingly, in summer 1569 he married Finola MacDonald, the daughter of James MacDonald of Dunyveg and Agnes Campbell, the sister of the earl of Argyll. Meanwhile Turlough O'Neill married Agnes, now a widower following MacDonald's death.⁴⁸⁶ Behind this arrangement was Archibald Campbell, the fifth earl of Argyll, who was angry that his offer to pacify Ireland if Elizabeth would help reinstate Mary Stewart to the Scottish throne had been ignored.⁴⁸⁷ Hugh gratefully received his wife's dowry of 1000 mercenaries in the light of his need for aid against Con O'Donnell, who now had support from both the crown and Turlough O'Neill.⁴⁸⁸

The English were unsympathetic to O'Donnell's local needs, viewing his marriage to Finola as obstructive to Elizabeth's aim of expelling the Scots from Ulster.⁴⁸⁹ Furthermore, a letter from a John Smyth to Lord Treasurer Winchester in June 1569 accused O'Donnell of allowing Scots to invade Connaught via Tír Conaill.⁴⁹⁰ Smyth, who had befriended Con O'Donnell, exaggerated Hugh's disloyalty to secure continued English support for Con. Nevertheless, this was certainly viewed as a problem since Cecil had already considered garrisoning Tír Conaill to prevent that route into Connaught being utilised by Scots. Indeed, the

⁴⁸⁶ The intent of the northern lords to do this marked them in the eyes of Dublin officials out as potentially worse than Shane O'Neill, see Lords Justices and Council to the Queen, 27 November 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 350. For details of the marriages, see Jane E. A. Dawson, *The politics of religion in the age of Mary, Queen of Scots: the Earl of Argyll and the struggle for Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2002), 203.

⁴⁸⁷ Dawson, *Politics of religion*, 193, 201, 203; Argyll, Huntly and others to Queen Elizabeth, 24 August 1568, *CSPSco*, II, (1563-1569), 488. Stephen Alford notes that Elizabeth's secretary, William Cecil, opposed releasing Mary for fear that she would join with Rome, France and Spain against England, see Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the court of Elizabeth I*, (London, 2008), 154.

⁴⁸⁸ Colm Lennon, *Sixteenth-century Ireland: the incomplete conquest*, (Dublin 1994), 276; *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 415. For evidence of Con's alignment with O'Neill, see Lord of Louth to the Lord Chancellor and the Privy Council, 29 August 1569, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 418.

⁴⁸⁹ Lennon, *Sixteenth century Ireland*, 276.

⁴⁹⁰ John Smyth of the Ards, to Lord Treasurer Winchester, June 1569, SP 63/28 f. 30v. 86. See also chapter one, pages 52-54, for more on the rise of the MacDonalds.

MacDonalds had been pursuing an expansionist policy for some time.⁸⁶ The foothold in the north-west offered by Hugh's marriage to Finola gave the MacDonalds the opportunity to expand into the western province too. Accordingly, the English thoroughly disapproved of O'Donnell's marriage. The result of this was that crown-O'Donnell relations were unstable, as Hugh's actions continued to make life difficult for the crown and its officials. For his part, O'Donnell probably believed that allowing the Scots into Connaught would keep English officials busy and prevent them enacting their plans to settle planters in Ulster.

English alarm about the situation in Ulster deepened with reports in the summer of 1569 that Turlough O'Neill was seeking a national confederacy, including O'Donnell and Maguire in Ulster, Sir Edmund Butler in the midlands and James Fitzmaurice in Munster.⁴⁹¹ These men were driven, Anthony McCormack has observed, by their fear that the arrival of English land-grabbers like Sir Peter Carew signified plans for a wider conquest of Ireland.⁴⁹² Only those immediately threatened, like the Desmonds in the south-west and Sir Edmund Butler in the Pale, actually went into rebellion in 1569. Nonetheless, William Cecil remained concerned that the Pale would be unable to defend itself if attacked by Ulstermen and lords from the midlands simultaneously, particularly as the alliance had been seeking foreign assistance.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ Patrick Cullen to Terence Danyell, dean of Armagh, his master, 24 August 1569, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 417; Thomas Flemyng to the Lord Chancellor, 29 August 1569, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 418.

⁴⁹² Anthony M. McCormack, *The Earldom of Desmond, 1463-1583: the decline and crisis of a feudal lordship* (Dublin, 2005), 116-7.

⁴⁹³ William Cecil to Nicholas White, 7 September 1569, BL Lansdowne MSS 102, f. 149.

By 1569, Anglo-Spanish relations were faltering, as Elizabeth resented Philip II's efforts to exclude her from the Netherlands, a vitally important trading partner of England.⁴⁹⁴ As France was riven by its own religious civil war, Philip was now also viewed by many as the principal defender of the Catholic faith against 'heretical' Elizabeth.⁴⁹⁵ Consequently, Spain became the focal point for those Irishmen seeking external aid against the English. By 1569 Philip, hitherto reticent to antagonise Elizabeth, was seeking revenge for the seizure of ships carrying Spanish money to the Netherlands in late 1568.⁴⁹⁶ He also began supporting those pressing for the release of Mary, Queen of Scots, then imprisoned in England, and listened to appeals for aid from the earl of Desmond and rebellious English Catholics like Northumberland and Westmoreland in 1569.⁴⁹⁷⁴⁹⁸ However the Spanish king principally used threats of intervention in Ireland to force Elizabeth to agree peace on terms favourable to him.⁴⁹⁹ For their part, the would-be rebels were most likely trying to boost their own leverage ahead of potential negotiations with the queen. There was certainly no reason for them to have much hope that the Spanish king would send practical aid, as there was little precedent for this. Still, London officials took all these rumours seriously, with Philip being only one of 'many strang Princes' William Cecil believed was ready to forge alliances with Mary Stewart and place her

⁴⁹⁴ R. B. Wernham, *Before the Armada: the growth of English foreign policy, 1485-1588*, (London, 1966), 291-2.

⁴⁹⁵ Geoffrey Elton, *England under the Tudors*, 2nd edition, (London, 1974), 295-7.

⁴⁹⁶ Sigismondo di Cavalli, Venetian Ambassador to Spain, to the Signory, 7 June 1568, *CSPVNI*, VII, (1558-1580), 425; Wernham, *Before the Armada*, 297.

⁴⁹⁷ Elton, *England under the Tudors*, 291, 295. Mary had been overthrown and imprisoned by Scottish nobles who believed she was complicit in the murder of her husband, Lord Darnley. Escaping Lochleven Castle in early 1568, she went into exile in England but was ultimately jailed for the same crime there. See R. Marshall, *Scottish Queens, 1034-1715* (East Linton, 2003),

⁴⁹⁸ -7. See Andrew Skiddye to William Cecil, 20 June 1569, *Cal. Salisbury MSS*, I, (1306-1571), 413, for evidence of Desmond's requests, and Mary Ann Lyons, *Franco-Irish relations, 1500-1610: politics, migration and trade*, (Woodbridge, 1993), 134, on Philip and English Catholics.

⁴⁹⁹ Philip II of Spain to the Duke of Alba, 18 November 1569, *CSPSp*, XV, (1568-1579), 210.

on the English throne.⁵⁰⁰ As crown-sponsored settlement schemes had prompted the Ulster overlords to ally and seek foreign aid in the first place, they were now set aside with the aim of quietening the province once more.

In spite of this change in English policy, Hugh McManus continued to be linked with O'Neill during the early 1570s. In July 1570, Nicholas Malbie angrily reported that Hugh had pledged recently pledged allegiance to Lord Deputy Sidney, but had gone on to ally with Turlough Luineach.⁵⁰¹ It is notable here that the question of O'Donnell's loyalty was intimately bound up with displays of opposition to O'Neill. Nonetheless, though Hugh McManus stood accused of disloyal behaviour here, this was probably forced upon him by the local situation. As O'Neill's forces had murdered two of O'Donnell's MacSweeney allies that year, Hugh was most likely compelled to join with Turlough. Certainly there is no evidence of English support against this aggression.⁵⁰² It was not enough for the crown to cease pursuing policies inimical to Hugh's local interests. He needed help if he was to resist O'Neill's claims of provincial overlordship. However Malbie interpreted O'Donnell's alignment with Turlough as a choice made by a disloyal man rather than something which was forced upon him. Furthermore in 1571 a confidant of William

⁵⁰⁰ 'A Short Memoryall of the State of the Realme', 1569, Samuel Haynes, ed. *A Collection of State Papers Relating to Affairs in the reigns of King Henry VIII, Queen Mary, Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth From the Years 1542-1570, left by William Cecil, Lord Burghley*, (London, 1740), 581.

⁵⁰¹ Nicholas Malbie to Cecil, 8 April 1570, SP 63/30 f. 72.

⁵⁰² Nicholas Malbie to Cecil, 26 July 1570, SP 63/30 f. 160; *AFM*, V, 1637.

Cecil's named William Herle included O'Donnell among 'ardent Catholics' deemed to be opposed to Elizabeth.⁵⁰³ As it was, Hugh had little incentive to appear loyal, as the English were challenging his authority in Connaught, while simultaneously failing to defend him from O'Neill in Ulster.⁵⁰⁴ For Hugh McManus, it was imperative that Elizabeth should help him uphold these regional interests if he were to show allegiance to her.

One consequence of the growing English doubt regarding the loyalty of some of the Ulster lords was further attempts to establish settlements there. This was deemed necessary to prevent the incursions of Scots into the north, and lessen the chances of foreign invasion generally. One difference was that these were now pursued by private interests with the crown's blessing. For Nerys Patterson this was when New English adventurers seeking the 'final conquest' of Ireland began to effectively challenge Old English ideas about assimilating Irishmen into a reformed polity.⁵⁰⁵ Certainly parts of Ulster experienced plantation efforts in the early 1570s, though assimilative policies continued to be pursued everywhere outside the northeast of the province. The effects the settlement schemes had on O'Donnell's policy have been disputed. Hiram Morgan suggests that they pushed Hugh into closer alliance with O'Neill, but Colm Lennon argues that O'Donnell remained aligned with Elizabeth against Turlough down to the mid-1580s.⁵⁰⁶ The evidence calls for a more nuanced interpretation of events. Hugh was initially plunged into

⁵⁰³ 'Note of the confederates in Ireland, by William Herle', April 1571, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 15; David Jones Lewis, 'William Herle, political agent (d.1588/9)', *ODNB*, online, (2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37536?docPos=2>, paragraph 2 of 6, accessed 13/2/2014.

⁵⁰⁴ See 'Connaught' section between pages 124 and 131 of this chapter for more about this.

⁵⁰⁵ Nerys Patterson, 'Gaelic law and the Tudor conquest of Ireland: The social background of the sixteenth-century recensions of the Pseudo-historical prologue to the *Senchas Mar*', *IHS*, 27, (1991), 201.

⁵⁰⁶ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 23; Lennon, *Sixteenth Century Ireland*, 289.

real doubt about his standing with the English when the Smiths and Essex attempted to establish settlements in the north-east. This caused O'Donnell to align with other Ulster lords for a time, but this policy was also partially forced upon him. In the absence of

English support, Hugh was sometimes compelled to align with O'Neill. Eventually, the failure of the English settlements led to a realignment in the crown's strategy and O'Donnell reassumed his role as a useful ally against Turlough. The English then renewed efforts to reform Tír Conaill with O'Donnell's assistance. Even then, however, Hugh McManus was still let down by the crown in matters of defence on occasion.

As so often, English policy towards Ireland in the early 1570s was partially shaped by security concerns. A papal bull of 1570 had declared Elizabeth 'heretical and deposed' as Queen of England and Ireland, prompting her to extract promises from Mary Stewart in May that she would not encourage foreign invasion if released from captivity.⁵⁰⁷ This was amidst a climate where rumours abounded that the French king, Mary's Guise relatives and Philip of Spain would support Mary's English claims and seek to create unrest in England and Ireland.¹⁰³ These fears seemed justified with the uncovering of the Ridolfi Plot in 1571, wherein Spanish troops were to assault Ireland to divert English attention there while tumult was raised simultaneously in London.¹⁰⁴ Taking these threats seriously, Elizabeth now accepted Francis Walsingham's calls for an Anglo-French alliance aimed at

⁵⁰⁷ Hirst, *Dominion*, 86. On Mary, see 'Delivery of the Queen of Scots', 7 May 1570, *CSPSco*, III, (1569-1571), 163, and 'Articles delyvered to the Queen of Scotts by Sir William Cecill, Secretarie, and Sir Walter Myldmaye, Chancellor of the Exchequer', 5 October 1570, Haynes, ed. *A Collection of State Papers left by William Cecil, 1542-1570*, 613.

weakening the Guises and removing France from Spanish influence.¹⁰⁵ However, though the Treaty of Blois was signed by England and France in April 1572, London officials remained concerned about the intent of the Catholic royal family in France following the massacre of French Protestants on St Bartholomew's Day in August 1572.¹⁰⁶ The Guise faction gained power in France after this, which raised again the spectre of support for Mary Stewart.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the European situation was uncertain and Englishmen became more desperate to secure Ireland quickly.

The desire to remove external influences from Ireland reignited efforts to expel the Scots. Previously, local lords had been asked to assist in this with little success. Now, officials decided again that English settlements would best achieve this aim. From 1571, Clondeboyne in north-east Ulster was earmarked for settlement as Scots frequently landed there, while the lands had fallen to Elizabeth via Shane

103 On the French, see Sir Henry Norris to Queen Elizabeth, 3 August 1570, *CSPF*, Eliz, IX, (1569-1571), 303; Sir Henry Norris to Queen Elizabeth, 19 October 1570, *CSPF*, Eliz, IX, (1569-1571), 358. See also Alford, *Burghley*, 164. In February 1570, Francis Walsingham, then an English ambassador in France, was persuaded that the plan was wholly the Guises', not the French king's. See Francis Walsingham to Cecil, 8 February 1570, BL Harleian MS 260, f. 7v- f.9. On Philip, see Guerau de Spes, Spanish ambassador in England, to Philip II, 12 February 1571, *CSPSp*, XV, (1568-1579), 293 and 'Intelligence from Spain', March 1570, *CSPF*, Eliz, IX, (1569-1571), 212. See also Sir Henry Norris to Queen Elizabeth, *CSPF*, Eliz, IX, (1569-1571), 3 January 1571, 387-388, wherein it was rumoured the Spanish king wanted to marry Mary to Don John of Austria.

104 'Document labelled in Zayas' hand, about the Ridolfi Plot', 1571, *CSPSp*, XV, (1568-1579), 343-4.

105 William Palmer, *The Problem of Ireland in Tudor Foreign Policy, 1485-1603*, (Woodbridge, 1994), 95-6.

106 *ibid*, 95-6; Frank Ardolino, "'In Paris? Mass, and Well Remembered!'" Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and the English Reaction to the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXI, (1990), 401.

107 Nathan Probasco, 'Queen Elizabeth's reaction to the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre', in Charles Beem, ed. *The Foreign Relations of Elizabeth I*, (New York, 2011), 83.

O'Neill's attainder in 1569.⁵⁰⁸ Irishmen were to be reassured that their conquest

would not follow the Scots' removal, and S. J. Connolly insists that this claim was

⁵⁰⁸ 'Enterprise to inhabit and fortify the country of Clondeboyne to the use of the crowne of England', 1571, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 106.

genuine as the intent was for settlers to ‘civilise’ Irishmen by example.⁵⁰⁹ However, as Robert Dunlop has asserted, efforts to reassure Irish lords failed utterly, and they united against the expedition of Thomas Smith junior, which landed in 1572.⁵¹⁰ The problem was that Smith had boasted in print that he would take all Ulster once successfully claimed the lands he had been awarded in the Great and Little Ards.⁵¹¹ Irish lords caught wind of this and also knew of Smith’s plans to grant Irish lands to English soldiers in return for defending them, and to remove Irish ‘churls’ from lordly rule.⁵¹² All these measures challenged the power of the lords over lands and people.

As knowledge of Smith’s intent was widely-known, it was naïve of him to imagine that O’Donnell would remain friendly towards the crown. Indeed, Lord Deputy William Fitzwilliam reported in March 1572 that Hugh was alarmed, and sought alliance with O’Neill and others.⁵¹³ Hugh’s evident foresight about what these changes could mean clashes with Tom Dunne’s argument that many only saw what English ‘revolution’ entailed once their lordships had been seized.⁵¹⁴ Though it is perhaps true that the full implications only became clear later, O’Donnell was

⁵⁰⁹ ‘Enterprise to inhabit and fortify the country of Clandeboy to the use of the crowne of England’, 1571, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 106; Connolly, *Contested Island*, 166. The English continued to resort to this line of persuasion in early 1573, despite its failure to win over Irishmen before this. See ‘Instructions for Mr Edward Tremain, sent to the Lord Deputy of Ireland by the Lord Treasurer’, June 1573, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 438.

⁵¹⁰ Robert Dunlop, ‘Sixteenth Century schemes for the plantation of Ulster’, *SHR*, 22, (1925), 120-1. Captain William Piers warned in January 1572 that Irishmen did not believe that only the expulsion of the Scots was meant. See Captain William Piers to Lord Justice Fitzwilliam, 3 January 1572, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 112-3.

⁵¹¹ ‘Commission to Sir Thomas Smith and his son, Thomas Smith, to possess and inhabit the Great and Little Ardes, 16 July 1572, ‘Fiants Elizabeth’, *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 12th report, (Dublin, 1880), 79; Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 14 March 1572, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 141.

⁵¹² Sir Thomas Smith and Thomas Smith, Esq., *A letter sent by I. B. Gentleman Vnto His Very Frende Maystet R C. Esquire Wherin is conteined a Large Discourse of the Peopling & Inhabiting the Cuntry Called the Ardes and other Adiacent in the North of Ireland*, (London, 1572).

⁵¹³ Smith, *Peopling & inhabiting the cuntry called the Ardes*; Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 14 March 1572, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 141..

⁵¹⁴ Tom J. Dunne, ‘The Gaelic Response to conquest and colonisation: the evidence of the poetry’, *Studia Hibernica*, 20, (1980), 16.

amongst those already seeking to prevent change reaching their lordships. This included aligning with O'Neill once again to encourage French plans to invade Ireland, while Turlough also began assisting Brian MacPhelim of Clondeboy in his efforts to remove Smith's nearby settlement.⁵¹⁵ Their submission to William Fitzwilliam late in 1572 can be explained by the fact that Smith's venture was floundering, so the immediate threat had passed.⁵¹⁶ O'Donnell was now drifting in and out of alliances with O'Neill and the crown depending on whichever party seemed like the biggest threat to his power in Tír Conaill at a given time.

Following Thomas Smith's failure, Elizabeth allowed Walter Devereaux, the first earl of Essex, to go into Ulster to further the settlement policy. Mindful of the alliance between those who had resisted Smith's forces, the Privy Council advised Lord Deputy William Fitzwilliam to make particular efforts to assure O'Donnell that his lands would be safe if he abandoned his alliance with Turlough O'Neill and Brian Michelin.⁵¹⁷ While Ernest Hamilton argued in 1919 that O'Donnell was not directly affected by Essex's plantation and therefore 'looked on with contemptuous indifference', Hugh was actually very concerned.⁵¹⁸ One reason for this, outlined by Nicholas Canny, was that Essex envisaged furthering the crown's authority throughout Ulster, even bringing Tír Conaill under the crown's jurisdiction.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁵ 'Abstract of the Lord Deputy of Ireland's letter of 25 September', 8 October 1572, SP 52/23, f. 205; Turlough Luineach O'Neill to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam and Council, 10 October 1572, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 229; Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Thomas Butler, earl of Ormond, 21 October 1572, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 235.

⁵¹⁶ Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam and the Irish Council to Queen Elizabeth, 7 December 1572, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 246.

⁵¹⁷ The Privy Council to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, August 1573, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 399. 118 Hamilton, *Elizabethan Ulster*, 65.

⁵¹⁸ Nicholas P. Canny, 'Taking sides in early modern Ireland: the case of Hugh O'Neill of Tyrone' in Vincent Carey and Ute Lotz-Heumann, eds. *Taking Sides? Colonial and confessional mentalities in early modern Ireland: essays in honour of Karl S. Bottigheimer*, (Dublin, 2003), 97.

Essex claimed political power and all kinds of revenue in the areas he had been awarded, and later proposed that English settlements be erected at Coleraine, the Ards and the Bann.⁵¹⁹ Thus, indifference to the earl's plans was not a chance lords could take.

Initially, Essex was suspicious of O'Donnell, suggesting in November 1573 that he pretended loyalty while protecting O'Neill's goods from English forces.¹²¹ For his part, Hugh McManus had his concerns about the earl's intent towards him. O'Donnell was careful to profess loyalty to Elizabeth, offering to help her obtain the Irish lands he conceded she was entitled to, but vehemently refused to aid Essex against Irishmen.⁵²⁰ In return, Hugh wanted a patent for Tír Conaill which granted it to him 'as amply' as it 'was granted by Henry VIII to his predecessors'.¹²³ This indicates how insecure Hugh McManus felt about his hold over Tír Conaill in the face of English expansion into Ulster. Furthermore, O'Donnell evidently believed displaying willingness to acknowledge Elizabeth as his sovereign might help him avoid the loss of his lordship. He also sought the reversal of those obligations placed on Calvagh O'Donnell in 1566 in favour of the easier terms granted to Manus O'Donnell in 1541. Therefore, although Ciaran Brady stresses their friendship, this indicates that Henry Sidney's innovations of 1566 were not to Hugh's liking.

⁵¹⁹ 'Offers of Walter Deveraux, earl of Essex, touching the inhabiting in the north of Ireland', 26 May 1573, SP 63/40, f. 152; 'Proposals by the earl of Essex for raising £5000 p.a. revenue from Ulster', October 1574, BL Add MS, 48015, f. 337-337b. 121 The Earl of Essex to Edward Waterhouse, who is going to the Privy Council in England, 2 November 1573, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 445-6.

⁵²⁰ Hugh McManus O'Donnell to the earl of Essex, 2 November 1573, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 713-4. 123 Hugh McManus O'Donnell to the earl of Essex, 2 November 1573, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 713-4.

O'Donnell would go on to assure Essex that Irishmen would pay larger rents to Elizabeth if she undertook the peopling of Ulster herself.⁵²¹ In actuality, Hugh was bargaining that the queen would be content with receiving rents, hoping this would avoid the establishment of a permanent English presence in Tír Conaill which might seize his lands from him. Given that English officials had also been established to O'Donnell's south, in Connaught, it may have seemed to Hugh that his territory would soon be subject to such policies. With Essex's settlement floundering as Smith's had before it, the earl and the crown were willing to befriend O'Donnell to allow them to concentrate on succeeding in north-east Ulster.

In early 1574, the Privy Council recommended that Elizabeth supported Essex's suggestion that O'Donnell be granted his lordship for life in return for civilising it, contributing rents, and expelling Scots and other foreign enemies.⁵²² The clock would not be wound back to 1541; some fiscal and political reform must take place. But as this offered him security of tenure, Hugh returned to the crown's affinity following this grant. Consequently English officials found O'Donnell and Hugh O'Neill, the Baron of Dungannon, who were now linked by marriage alliance, ready to assist against Turlough O'Neill and other enemies throughout 1574.⁵²³

Essex rewarded O'Donnell by pushing for a pension for his chief advisor, Owen

⁵²¹ The earl of Essex to Edward Waterhouse, who is going to the Privy Council in England, 2 November 1573, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 446.

⁵²² 'Instructions for John Norris and Edward Waterhouse by Walter Devereaux, Earl of Essex', 2 December 1573, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 447; 'Another note of business in the Council', 8 January 1574, SP 12/95, f. 15. Elizabeth went on to recognise O'Donnell as 'captain' of Tír Conaill, see Queen Elizabeth to Hugh McManus O'Donnell, 13 July 1574, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 477.

⁵²³ Sir Peter Carew to Edmund Tremayne, 6 February 1574, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 528; 'Memorial touching the service of the earl of Essex', 2 October 1574, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 681; Walter Devereaux, earl of Essex, to the Privy Council, 8 October 1574, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 682. On the marriage alliance, see Walter Devereux, earl of Essex to Cecil, Thomas Radcliffe, earl of Sussex, Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham, 14 June 1574, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 632.

MacToole O’Gallagher, and providing Hugh with support against Con O’Donnell and O’Neill in late 1574.⁵²⁴ Thus, having long experienced English indifference to his local struggles, Hugh suddenly felt surer of the crown’s backing.¹²⁸ This stemmed from the monarchy’s need for counterweights against O’Neill, but it must have brought Hugh considerable satisfaction. Initially, he had been as concerned as others about Essex’s intent, but his eventual support helped O’Donnell attain his strongest political position in some years. The result of this was that Hugh drifted into the crown’s orbit once more, and abandoned friendship with O’Neill’s faction.

In 1575 Sidney returned as deputy and pursued his favoured policy of establishing provincial presidents who would enforce reform and collect composition rents from lords.⁵²⁵ A willingness to pay this rent towards their own defence was to become the basis of future lands grants to Irish lords.⁵²⁶ Composition was soon introduced into Connaught and Munster, but attempts were made to inaugurate this initiative in Ulster in the 1570s too. Ciaran Brady argues that paying it came to denote loyalty to the crown.⁵²⁷ The idea of such a rent was not wholly new to Tír Conaill, since Sidney had extracted a promise from Calvagh O’Donnell to pay an annual rent into the exchequer in 1566.¹³² Neither was the idea of paying for their defence alien to Irish lords who garnered Scottish assistance by this means. Indeed, since he was again allied to the crown, Hugh McManus welcomed increased English

⁵²⁴ On O’Gallagher, see Walter Devereux, earl of Essex to Burghley, Thomas Radcliffe, earl of Sussex, Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham, 14 June 1574, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 633. On Essex’s aid for O’Donnell, see The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, 8 October 1574, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 682. 128 Hamilton, *Elizabethan Ulster*, 71, sees the author argue that Hugh was desperate for such aid.

⁵²⁵ ‘Whether the Quenes Ma[jes]tie be to be counselled to governe Irelande after the Irishe manner...or to reduce it...to the englishe governmente’, 1571, BL Add MSS 48015, f. 276b.

⁵²⁶ ‘Instructions to Henry Sidney, Lord Deputy of Ireland’, 2 August 1575, *Cal Carew MSS*, II, (1575-1588), 19.

⁵²⁷ Cunningham, ‘Composition of Connacht’, 1; Brady, ‘From policy to power’, 35. 132

‘Calough O’Donnell’, 20 October 1566, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-74), 373-4.

assistance and Essex stressed in February 1575 that O'Donnell's only concern was that Elizabeth would not prove a constant ally.⁵²⁸ Consequently, that same year

Henry Sidney found Hugh ready to pay rents to be free of 'the exactions of others'.⁵²⁹ This ultimately resulted in O'Donnell agreeing to pay 200 marks a year in rent in June 1576 and utilising English forces to collect £1200 in arrears accumulated since 1566.⁵³⁰ O'Donnell then used these forces to fight off O'Neill, and both men were later praised for using these soldiers in place of Scots and subjecting themselves to Sidney's legal arbitration in a dispute.¹³⁶

To observers like Sidney, Hugh now appeared loyal because he displayed willingness to deploy English troops, forgo Scottish forces, contribute rents and accept English legal decrees. O'Donnell was certainly keen to explore whether reforms could make his local situation easier. He had not yet determined whether English military aid would be any more damaging to Tír Conaill than Scottish assistance could sometimes be and needed any help he could get against O'Neill. This latter issue remained O'Donnell's primary concern and explains why he befriended the crown in this period even though certain English policies must have alarmed him. For instance, the O'Donnell traditionally claimed overlordship over Maguire of Fermanagh, and so Hugh cannot have been pleased to see this status

⁵²⁸ Walter Devereux, earl of Essex's instructions given to Nicholas Malby to inform the Privy Council of his meaning', 3 February 1575, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 769; Walter Devereux, earl of Essex, to Queen Elizabeth, 31 March 1575, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 803.

⁵²⁹ Henry Sidney, Lord Deputy of Ireland, to the Lords of the Council in England, 15 December 1575, *Cal Carew MSS*, II, (1575-1588), 30.

⁵³⁰ Mr Francis Agard to Francis Walsingham, 15 June 1576, SP 63/55, f.169; Brady, 'A Viceroy's Vindication?', 46. 136 Lord Deputy Sidney to the Privy Council, 20 February 1578, SP 63/60, f.30v. Turlough's son had been killed by the O'Donnells.

awarded to O'Neill by Essex in June 1575.⁵³¹ This grant may simply have acknowledged the reality that Turlough was then in the ascendancy in Ulster. Nonetheless, O'Donnell would have wanted his own claims in Fermanagh to be recognised regardless, because there were economic benefits to be had from power there. Similarly, Essex's slaughter of Brian MacPhelim O'Neill in 1574 and of 500-600 Scots at Rathlin Island in July 1575 must have caused O'Donnell some disquiet.⁵³² But he swallowed any criticism he might have wished to voice because he needed English aid and pragmatically did whatever it took to obtain this. It was not long, however, before Hugh McManus was again the subject of English suspicion as to his allegiance to the crown.

By the end of the 1570s, O'Donnell had once again joined others in standing accused of seeking external aid. This was the result of a climate of fear in England and amongst crown officials in Ireland about foreign invasion. Persistent rumours of Spanish, French and papal plans to overthrow Elizabeth and place Mary Stewart on the English throne re-ignited from 1577 onwards.⁵³³ Spain and France primarily used this as a threat to prevent Elizabeth aiding Dutch Protestants and French Huguenots respectively, but English officials had to take the rumours seriously.⁵³⁴ Meanwhile, Irish malcontents like Desmond and the Ulster lords were thought to be encouraging Desmond's cousin, James Fitzmaurice, to invade Ireland with foreign

⁵³¹ 'Articles of peace concluded between Walter Devereux, earl of Essex, and Turlough Luineach', 27 June 1575, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 877. See also chapter one, pages 51-52, for the attractions of power over Maguire.

⁵³² Essex refers to Brian's execution in Walter Devereux, earl of Essex, to Cecil, 3 December 1574, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 726; on Rathlin, see Walter Devereux, earl of Essex, to Queen Elizabeth, 31 July 1575, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 908-10.

⁵³³ President Drury to Walsingham, 14 April 1577, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 112; Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, King of Spain, 12 April 1578, *CSPSp*, XV, (1568-1579), 574; Poulet to the Secretaries, 12 February 1578, *CSPF, Eliz*, XII, (1577-8), 494.

⁵³⁴ Lyons, *Franco-Irish relations*, 141.

aid from early 1578 onwards.⁵³⁵⁵³⁶ O'Donnell's involvement can be explained by two things. Firstly, he was subject to a measure of compulsion, as O'Neill had recently been running roughshod over Tír Conaill.⁵³⁷ However, he was also annoyed at the crown's recent efforts to extend its control into Connaught at his expense, as well as the lack of support he had been offered against a resurgent Con O'Donnell.⁵³⁸ By 1579 Secretary Walsingham also believed that the French Catholic Esme Stewart would encourage his cousin James VI of Scotland to take part in invasion efforts too.⁵³⁹ Concern about Esme's sway over James and the Frenchman's links with the Guises in France continued as long as he remained in Scotland.⁵⁴⁰ William Cecil's response to this perceived Catholic threat was to suggest that Elizabeth buy James VI's favour to ensure he made a marriage favourable to English interests.⁵⁴¹ Clearly English policymakers felt particularly vulnerable to foreign invasion and the Ulster lords were amongst those thought ready to assist such a scheme.

Elizabeth's worst fears were realised in August 1579 when Sir John and Sir James of Desmond, later joined by the earl, went into rebellion.⁵⁴² Reports from

⁵³⁵ Philip Sega, Bishop of Ripa, Nuncio in Spain, to Ptolomy Galli, Cardinal of Como, 5 January 1578, *CSPRome*, II, (1572-

⁵³⁶), 362, Patrick O'Hely, Bishop of Mayo, to Ptolomy Galli, Cardinal of Como, 31 March 1578, *CSPRome*, II, (1572-1577), 396; Lyons, *Franco-Irish relations*, 153.

⁵³⁷ See page 152 below for more on O'Neill's attack on Inishowen and the aims behind it.

⁵³⁸ Contention over northern Connaught in the late 1570s has been discussed above. For evidence that O'Donnell was unhappy about a lack of support against Con O'Donnell, see Hugh McManus O'Donnell to Lord Deputy Sidney, 1 September 1577, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 120.

⁵³⁹ Walsingham to Cobham, 30 December 1579, *CSPF, Eliz.*, XIV, (1579-1580), 110.

⁵⁴⁰ Huntingdon to Thomas Randolph, 5 February 1581, *CSPSco*, V, (1574-1581), 612.

⁵⁴¹ 'For the Queenes Most Excellent Majestie, by Cecil', 28 January 1579, William Murdin, ed. *Collection of state papers relating to affairs in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, left by William Cecil*, (1571-1596), (London, 1759), 341.

⁵⁴² Lord Justice and Earl of Kildare to the Privy Council, 3 August 1579, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 178; Earl of Ormond to Francis Walsingham, 14 October 1579, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 191.

Ulster in October suggested that friars there were promising that Spanish and Portuguese support would arrive to help the Ulster lords if they joined the rebellion.⁵⁴³ Enrique Garcia Hernan has argued that Turlough O'Neill and Hugh McManus now promised to take Philip II as their sovereign in return for aid against English 'heretics'.¹⁴⁹ Of course, this was not a particularly new tactic, with participants in the Silken Thomas revolt and the Geraldine League having sought foreign aid on this basis in the 1530s.⁵⁴⁴ However, this does indicate that Hugh McManus was not a steadfast crown loyalist. He in fact had several reasons to join others in seeking external assistance in 1579. In part, he had been compelled to align with Turlough Luineach, who had destroyed corn and houses in Inishowen in that year, compelling O'Docherty to buy peace.⁵⁴⁵ Con O'Donnell, O'Neill, and others had also demanded that Hugh join their faction 'against Englisshe menn'.⁵⁴⁶ O'Donnell stated that he needed aid if he were to abandon this group, and lambasted the failure of officials to punish O'Neill for his disobedience.⁵⁴⁷ Certainly, the destruction in the fertile lands of Inishowen deprived O'Donnell of a good deal of wealth which might have enabled him to resist O'Neill. Furthermore, Hugh's position was weak as he had been unable to display good lordship by defending the lands of O'Docherty from these aggressors. In turn, the crown had again failed in its role as Hugh McManus' protective overlord, and this meant he had to align with the

⁵⁴³ Some of the Council of Ireland to the Privy Council, 2 October 1579, Hogan and O'Farrell, eds. *Walsingham Letter-Book, 1578-9*, 193; on Spain/Portugal, see Edward Waterhouse to Walsingham, 24 July 1579, SP 63/67, f. 106. ¹⁴⁹ Enrique Garcia Hernan, *Ireland and Spain in the reign of Philip II*, (Dublin, 2009), 105, 117.

⁵⁴⁴ Micheál ó Siochru, 'Foreign Involvement in the revolt of Silken Thomas', *PRIA*, (1997), 57. See Alison Cathcart, 'James V, king of Scotland - and Ireland?' in Seán Duffy, ed, *The World of the Gallowglass: kings, warriors and warlords in Ireland and Scotland, 1200-1600*, (Dublin, 2007), and chapter two, 65-67, of this work for details of the Geraldine League's efforts to obtain external aid.

⁵⁴⁵ Hugh McManus O'Donnell to the Lord Deputy Drury, 1579, SP 63/66, f. 170.

⁵⁴⁶ Hugh McManus O'Donnell to the Lord Deputy Drury, 1579, SP 63/66, f. 170.

⁵⁴⁷ Hugh McManus O'Donnell to the Lord Deputy Drury, 1579; SP 63/66, f. 170v; Patrick Cullen to Sir Nicholas Bagenal, 14 November 1579, in Hogan and O'Farrell, eds. *Walsingham Letter-Book*, 223.

more powerful O'Neill faction. Indeed, later that year, Hugh's isolation could have been total as his ally Dungannon, motivated by desire to succeed a dying O'Neill, aligned with him until it became clear that his health was improving.⁵⁴⁸

Consequently, O'Donnell had had to hedge his bets and show willingness to join in any rebellion because he lacked the support to resist the will of O'Neill and others.

It is not impossible that Hugh McManus was also attracted to the idea of a new monarch, in Philip II, who might protect him and respect his claims to overlordship in northern Connaught and elsewhere. That said there was little reason for the Irishmen to imagine that Philip would send any practical aid, far less maintain a permanent presence in Ireland. There was nothing to suggest that the Spanish king desired this level of influence on the island. It is more plausible, therefore, that O'Donnell joined in these intrigues in the hope of utilising the English fear of foreign invasion to force Elizabeth to send aid to him and to stop challenging his claims in the north-west. These factors probably explain why Hugh also was amongst those reportedly supporting the rebellion of Viscount Baltinglass in the Pale in the summer of 1580.⁵⁴⁹ The perception of Irish unity could persuade foreign rulers to consider sending aid and, in turn, cause Elizabeth to cave in to Irish demands to prevent invasion. Indeed, since Philip II had actually sent aid to James Fitzmaurice of Munster in late 1579, the queen feared that the Spanish king would resume his interference in Ireland when the conquest of Portugal was completed.⁵⁵⁰ However, in

⁵⁴⁸ David Finnegan, *Tyrone's rebellion: Hugh O'Neill and the outbreak of the Nine Years War*, (unpublished M.A. Thesis, NUI Galway, 2001), 17-18; Sir Nicholas Bagenal to the Privy Council, 25 November 1579, in Hogan and O'Farrell, eds. *Walsingham Letter-Book, 1578-9*, 238; Lord Justice Pelham to the Privy Council, 15 December 1579, in Hogan and O'Farrell, eds. *Walsingham Letter-Book, 1578-9*, 252.

⁵⁴⁹ Steven G. Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors, 1447-1603: English expansion and the end of Gaelic rule*, (London, 1998), 314.

⁵⁵⁰ "The heads of certain speeches delivered by Her Majesty unto the Ambassador of Spain", 10 July 1580, *CSPF, Eliz*, XIV, (1579-1580), 350.

1580, neither foreign aid nor English defence were to come O'Donnell's way, though he would soon find himself favoured by the new deputy, Grey de Wilton.

By the 1580s, there was still no universal agreement in government circles as to the best way to ensure reform took root in Ireland. Some officials, such as Henry Wallop, the Irish under-treasurer, urged the use of force against rebels followed by plantation of 'better in their places'. Meanwhile William Cecil's ally, Nicholas White, argued that only 'temperate government' had ever been successful in Ireland.⁵⁵¹ In practice, policy continued to be framed as local circumstances and the whims of officials dictated and Brendan Kane has observed that both plantation and surrender and regrant were pursued with these considerations in mind until late in the century.⁵⁵² So, while Grey de Wilton stated in 1581 that Ireland would be lost if force was not used against southern rebels, he was prepared to work with Hugh McManus O'Donnell in Ulster.⁵⁵³ By the end of this decade, however, Hugh was out of credit with English officials. Now government functionaries held Turlough O'Neill in higher regard than O'Donnell, which ultimately left him unable to resist encroachments into Tír Conaill.⁵⁵⁴ John Perrot, deputy between 1584 and 1588, pursued unpopular interventionist policies in the lordship and perceived O'Donnell and Hugh O'Neill of Dungannon as the real threats to peace in Ulster. Neither Perrot nor Elizabeth had sanctioned expropriation in Tír Conaill. Nevertheless, some

⁵⁵¹ Henry Wallop to Sir Francis Walsingham, 28 August 1581, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 317; Ronald H. Fritze, 'Sir Henry Wallop (c.1531-1599), administrator and member of Parliament', *ODNB*, online, (January 2008), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28580>, paragraph 5 of 13, accessed 13/2/2014. On White, see Sir Nicholas White, Master of the Rolls, to Cecil, 23 December 1581, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 336.

⁵⁵² Kane, *Politics and Culture of Honour*, 40. See also Brady *Chief Governors*, 114, where a similar point is made.

⁵⁵³ Lord Deputy Grey to Francis Walsingham, 24 April 1581, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 300.

⁵⁵⁴ Charles P. Meehan, *The Rise and Fall of the Irish Franciscans*, 5th ed. (Dublin, 1877), 11. By June 1591, Deputy Fitzwilliam summed up the views of many in terming O'Neill a 'dutiful old knight', see his letter to Cecil, 18 June 1591, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 398.

officials who were sent there to pursue reform were avaricious and seized control of the wealth and possessions of the lordship. This damaged relations between the O'Donnells and the crown, and was to continue to be an issue during the subsequent rule of Hugh Roe O'Donnell in the lordship.

Events in the European context helped O'Donnell finally obtain some support against Turlough O'Neill in 1581, as a consequence of English concern about invasion. In April Grey de Wilton argued that Ulster was the province most likely to be assailed and had decided that Turlough was not to be trusted.⁵⁵⁵⁵⁵⁶ Grey wanted Ulster allies against O'Neill, which led to O'Donnell returning to English favour. This was welcome to Hugh, particularly as Turlough had attacked Tír Conaill in July 1581, kidnapping O'Docherty and MacSweeny Doe and murdering Mulmurry MacSweeny Banagh, and members of the MacSweeny Fanad, O'Gallagher and O'Boyle families.⁵⁵⁷ In short, O'Neill had deprived O'Donnell of many of his principal allies in both the north and south of his lordship. The loss of the MacSweeneys was particularly important here, because they made up much of O'Donnell's military support. Without these men, it was very difficult for Hugh McManus to resist Turlough's attempts to overawe Tír Conaill in their ongoing struggle for supremacy in Ulster. Accordingly, Hugh McManus required support from wherever it could be obtained and was happy to align with Lord Deputy Grey de Wilton for that reason. Grey committed to helping O'Donnell against O'Neill and attempted to win Lifford and Strabane Castles for Hugh.⁵⁵⁸ Though Grey was

⁵⁵⁵ Lord Deputy Grey to Cecil, 6 April 1581, *Cal. MSS Salisbury*, II, (1572-1582), 384-5; Lord Deputy Grey to Cecil, 22 April

⁵⁵⁶ , Murdin, ed. *Collection of state papers relating to affairs in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, left by William Cecil*, (1571-1596), 348.

⁵⁵⁷ Nicholas Malbie and Edward Waterhouse to Francis Walsingham, 9 July 1581, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 309, *AFM*, v, 1769.

⁵⁵⁸ Lord Deputy Grey to the Queen, 10 August 1581, SP 63/85, f. 10.

unsuccessful, his efforts suggested that he was willing to help O'Donnell gain power over the important territory of Cinel Moen in eastern Tír Conaill. Further, he had tried to give O'Donnell a foothold in Tyrone by seizing Turlough's stronghold at Strabane. O'Neill's permanent base at that castle in western Tyrone had long been a headache for O'Donnell. From there, Turlough could easily raid Tír Conaill and lend support to Con O'Donnell's efforts against O'Donnell. Therefore, any ally who might help Hugh McManus counteract this threat was welcome.

As a consequence of Grey's willingness to aid O'Donnell, he readily made himself subject to the deputy's arbitration in his disputes with O'Neill and others. Furthermore, Hugh McManus later refused to ally with Turlough Luineach or keep Scots without crown consent.⁵⁵⁹ Hugh's willingness was probably due to confidence that Grey would find in his favour in the disputes, as crown-O'Donnell friendship was now mutually desired.⁵⁶⁰ For his part, Grey hoped effective support for Hugh would convince other crown loyalists to remain constant and discourage rebels from suppressing 'the trewe subiect'.⁵⁶¹ Ultimately, shared dislike of O'Neill was once again binding O'Donnell and an Irish deputy together albeit temporarily.

Crown-O'Donnell relations lasted only so long as they served Hugh's interests as well as those of English officials. O'Donnell soon had to take measures to remind the English of the support he had been promised against O'Neill in 1581. Once again lacking effective English aid, Tír Conaill was over-run by an O'Neill

⁵⁵⁹ Lord Deputy Grey to Cecil, 30 August 1581, Murdin, ed. *Collection of state papers relating to affairs in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, left by William Cecil*, (1571-1596), 358; Lord Deputy Grey to Queen Elizabeth, 10 August 1581, SP 63/85, f. 12; Secretary Geoffrey Fenton to Cecil, 14 September 1581, SP 63/85, f. 104.

⁵⁶⁰ Edward Waterhouse to Francis Walsingham, 17 July 1581, SP 63/84, f. 57-57v.

⁵⁶¹ Lord Deputy Grey to the Privy Council, 10 July 1581, SP 63/84, f. 29.

attack in 1582 which saw Mulmurry Oge MacSweeny Banagh and others slain, and Nicholas Malbie conceded that this left Hugh McManus ‘utterly undone’.⁵⁶²

Certainly, this again represented a loss of military backing for O’Donnell, and left him susceptible to further O’Neill attacks in Tír Conaill. That O’Donnell believed English support against Turlough had been inadequate was evident in his request to Malbie for 200 English soldiers, which was granted in September.⁵⁶³ This again indicated how inconstant English support for Hugh was against O’Neill in periods when the crown’s focus was elsewhere in Ireland. At best, O’Donnell could expect some temporary respite when English aid was forthcoming. It was in fact an alteration in the local situation which finally made O’Donnell’s situation brighter.

The death of Con O’Donnell in 1583 turned the Ulster situation on its head, bolstering O’Donnell’s chances of repelling the interference of Turlough Luineach in Tír Conaill. Hugh McManus’ position was strengthened further with the killing of Donough O’Donnell by Scots that year.⁵⁶⁴ Donough was also a son of Calvagh’s, and his death eliminated another contender for the lordship of Tír Conaill. So emboldened was Hugh McManus that he took advantage of this new situation by O’Donnell attacking Strabane in Tyrone and defeating Turlough O’Neill at Drumleene later that year.⁵⁶⁵ However, the English, often happy for Hugh McManus to make war on O’Neill to prevent him attacking the Pale, were keen on peace in Ulster that summer.⁵⁶⁶ Secretary Francis Walsingham, in particular, feared that

⁵⁶² *AFM*, v, 1789, Sir Nicholas Malbie to Francis Walsingham, 12 July 1582, SP 63/94, f. 50v.

⁵⁶³ Hugh McManus O’Donnell to Sir Nicholas Malbie, 24 June 1582, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 385, Sir Nicholas Malbie to Francis Walsingham, 10 September 1582, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 396.

⁵⁶⁴ *AFM*, v, 1811.

⁵⁶⁵ *AFM*, v, 1811, 1813.

⁵⁶⁶ Lord Justices to the Privy Council, 29 April 1583, SP 63/101, f. 118v.

Ulstermen would otherwise align with the English, French and Spanish Catholics behind the Throckmorton Plot, which envisaged an invasion of England in support of Mary Stewart.⁵⁶⁷ In this atmosphere, Hugh McManus' burning in Tyrone while he and O'Neill were under treaty met with the disapproval of commissioners sent to achieve peace in Ulster, while O'Neill's willingness to seek justice for this attack was commended.⁵⁶⁸ This was an early sign of shifting English attitudes towards the two Ulster overlords.

As yet Hugh McManus retained English favour as a consequence of his joining O'Neill and the baron of Dungannon in accepting a temporary peace in October 1583. This was attractive to O'Donnell because English forces were to punish any who broke the truce.⁵⁶⁹ Furthermore, Hugh later accepted English forces into Tír Conaill and pledged to help reduce the Scottish presence in Ulster. Lordly co-operation in this was still valued. This was particularly true because officials like Walsingham doubted James VI's sincerity when he promised to prevent Scotsmen invading Ireland. The Scottish king was also suspected of planning to ally with Philip II in this period.⁵⁷⁰ Consequently, O'Donnell's report to Perrot in August 1584 that O'Neill maintained 2000 or 3000 Scots and would soon rebel with Spanish

⁵⁶⁷ Francis Walsingham to the Lords Justices, 1 February 1583, SP 63/99, f. 89-89v; Alford, *Burghley*, 254-5; See also A. J. Loomie, 'Sir Francis Englefield (1522-1596), courtier and Roman Catholic exile', *ODNB*, online, (January 2013), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8811>, accessed 10/2/2014.

⁵⁶⁸ Lords Justices to the Privy Council, 14 June 1583, SP 63/102, f. 185-185v.

⁵⁶⁹ 'Orders taken by Her Majesty's Commissioners in Ulster between Terlogh Leynogh, O Donel, and the baron of Dungannon', 22 October 1583, in David Beers Quinn, ed. 'Calendar of the Irish Council Book, 1 March 1581 to 1 July 1586', *Amalecta Hibernica*, 24, (1967), 151.

⁵⁷⁰ On James' promises, see Robert Bowes to Walsingham, 9 July 1583, *CSPSco*, VI, (1581-1583), 528. On Walsingham's lack of trust in James, one example is evident in his letter to William Davison, 29 August 1584, *CSPSco*, VII, (1584-5), 303. On James and Philip II, see 'Declaration of Gerald Hay of Waterford, merchant, arrived from Spain', 21 August 1584, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 524.

aid was interpreted as a sign of loyalty on Hugh's part.⁵⁷¹ O'Donnell did in fact want certain Scots to be excluded from Ulster, stressing that McLean of Duart had lately attacked Tír Conaill. Hugh also intimated that his life would be a lot easier if he simply allowed these Scots to pass into Connaught.⁵⁷² This implicit threat was intended to convey O'Donnell's requirement for aid against Scottish aggressors, his readiness to expel such men and that the English needed the likes of McLean to be repelled just as much as Hugh did. This tactic was apparently successful, as Perrot sent 200 English footmen into Tír Conaill in September 1584 to defend O'Donnell at his own cost.⁵⁷³ Now Hugh could use these soldiers to fend off the likes of MacLean as well as Turlough Luineach O'Neill.

Darren McGettigan and Hiram Morgan have written that these troops and the 'composition settlement' were forced upon O'Donnell against his will.¹⁷⁹ It is more likely that Hugh, like Turlough O'Neill, welcomed the support of English troops as another way to try and preserve his local power.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, though Morgan has argued that Perrot's Ulster composition was partially intended to help Turlough fend off the ascendant faction of O'Donnell and Dungannon, such support was bound to bolster Hugh McManus too if he could utilise it effectively.⁵⁷⁴ Certainly, O'Donnell would have been giving an advantage to Turlough were he to refuse English aid when O'Neill accepted it. In fact, O'Donnell had previous positive experience of

⁵⁷¹ Lord Deputy Perrot to Queen Elizabeth, 7 August 1584, in Charles MacNeill, ed. 'The Perrot Papers: the letter-book of Lord Deputy Sir John Perrot between 9 July 1584 and 26 May 1586', *Analecta Hibernica*, 12, (1943). Perrot, Ormond, Lucas Dillon, Nicholas White, Edward Waterhouse to the Lords of the Council, 6 August 1584, MacNeill, ed. 'Perrot Papers', 5.

⁵⁷² Hugh McManus O'Donnell to Lord Deputy Perrot, 27 July 1584, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 520.

⁵⁷³ 'Agreement of Sir Hugh O'Donnell', 20 September 1584, SP 63/ 112.

¹⁷⁹ McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 37; Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 122. 180

Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 38.

⁵⁷⁴ *ibid*, 100.

using English troops and had not wanted to lose the service of the 200 men he had been granted to fend off O'Neill in 1582.⁵⁷⁵ As the policy seemed to serve Hugh's needs and he had not yet experienced extreme extortion at the hands of English soldiers, there is every reason to assume he was prepared to accept crown troops in 1584. In any event, O'Donnell's apparent loyalty in accepting the composition likely explains Perrot's early favour towards Hugh in his causes. Perrot had also persuaded himself by January 1585 that Irishmen now saw they had erred in hiring Scots forces that ravaged their lands on occasion.⁵⁷⁶ O'Donnell's apparent willingness to repel the likes of McLean cast Hugh in the role of loyal crown servant, at least for now.

Perrot initially continued to help O'Donnell locally, though this support did not last. In September 1584 the Lord Deputy upheld Anthony St Leger's decisions of the mid-1540s regarding custody of Inishowen and Cinel Moen, decreeing that Hugh need only pay rent for Inishowen when Turlough O'Neill defended it as promised.⁵⁷⁷ The acknowledgement of O'Donnell power in these contested territories in northern and eastern Tír Conaill was obviously welcome to Hugh McManus, because of the financial benefits which possession over them offered. What is less clear is how happy he would have been to accept that he should pay rent to O'Neill for Inishowen under any circumstances. The idea that O'Neill ought to defend it in return for rent suggests that he would have to maintain a presence there, which is the last thing O'Donnell would have wanted. Furthermore, Hugh McManus

⁵⁷⁵ Lord Justices to Francis Walsingham, 20 December 1582, SP 63/98, f. 125.

⁵⁷⁶ Lord Deputy Perrot to the High Court of Parliament, 17 January 1585, SP 63/114, f. 71.

⁵⁷⁷ 'Indenture made between Perrot and others of the Council and O'Neill and O'Donnell', 27 September 1584, Quinn, ed., 'Calendar of the Irish Council Book', 155.

was already maintaining English troops at his own expense and would probably have preferred to use these to defend Inishowen rather than allowing O'Neill to do so. Whatever the case, Perrot was more determined than his predecessors to see that acceptance of English legal arbitration, military aid, and other reform initiatives were actually enforced in Ulster. While O'Donnell retained favour with certain English officials by accepting some of these tenets between 1583 and 1585, his failure in other regards meant some were becoming more suspicious of his conduct. Perrot became particularly impatient with Hugh McManus over the issue of composition troops. Stressing that O'Donnell had accepted English forces into his lordship previously, Perrot angrily reported to Elizabeth in 1586 that Hugh had sanctioned MacSweeney attacks on these soldiers.⁵⁷⁸ The deputy compared Hugh unfavourably with the loyal O'Neill, and sought permission to scourge Tír Conaill 'for example's sake'.⁵⁷⁹ That Turlough Luineach was favoured more than before also made English officials less willing to allow O'Donnell to conduct his policies unchecked from the mid-1580s onwards.

The Dublin and London governments were also becoming set upon restraining the growing power of the new second earl of Tyrone, Hugh O'Neill.⁵⁸⁰ Accordingly, Perrot began seeking ways in which to deprive the earl of strong allies. Ultimately, the deputy had Hugh Roe O'Donnell, the son of Hugh McManus and Finola MacDonald, kidnapped in 1587. In doing this, Perrot's aim was to unleash a

⁵⁷⁸ Perrot to the Queen, 26 May 1586, McNeill, ed. 'Perrot Papers', 60.

⁵⁷⁹ Perrot to the Queen, 26 May 1586, McNeill, ed. 'Perrot Papers', 60; Irish Council to the Queen, 28 May 1586, McNeill, ed. 'Perrot Papers', 62.

⁵⁸⁰ 'Sir Francis Walsingham's opinion touching the division of lands between the Earl of Tyrone and Turlough Lynagh', April 1587, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 336.

succession struggle in Tír Conaill, so that O'Donnell would be unable to assist the earl from then on.⁵⁸¹ As is discussed in the next section, this plan succeeded. For his part, Tyrone was just as keen to ensure that no-one could challenge his predominance in his sphere of influence. This led him to hang his rival Hugh Gavelach O'Neill, the son of Shane O'Neill, in January 1590. This earned the earl a rebuke from the Irish Council who had ordered him not to do so.⁵⁸² When questioned about this, Tyrone argued that it was his duty to do justice 'upon thieves and murderers' such as Gavelach. However, this explanation did not appease the English and he was summoned to London, where he submitted to the queen upon detailed terms that same year.⁵⁸³⁵⁸⁴ The Privy Council also showed signs of siding with the earl's inferiors against him, ordering him to return Con MacShane O'Neill's followers and creaghts in September 1590.⁵⁸⁵ Nonetheless, efforts to placate Tyrone were also made. The English apparently stepped back from naming the earl's mortal enemy, Henry Bagenal, as Governor of Ulster in 1591. This was done in recognition of Tyrone's efforts to introduce legal reform into his lordship following his visit to London the year before.¹⁹² The earl's enmity with Bagenal was to endure, and ensured that Tyrone was willing to align with the other Ulster confederates in the mid-1590s. The decade before, his continuing alignment with Hugh McManus against Turlough

⁵⁸¹ Sir John Perrot to Queen Elizabeth, 26 September 1587, CP 16/28.

⁵⁸² Sir Nicholas White to Cecil, 29 January 1587, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 302.

⁵⁸³ 'The Earl of Tirone's answer to the Articles wherewith the Privy Council charge him', 19 March 1590, *CSPI*, IV, (August -September 1592), 319-321. For the terms of his submission, see 'Lord Tyrone's submission', 17 June 1590, *APC*, XIX, (1590), 239-43.

⁵⁸⁵ 'Meeting at Windsor, 23 September 1590', *APC*, XIX, (1590), 465. Con MacShane was another son of Shane O'Neill's. ¹⁹² The Privy Council to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 1591, *APC*, XXII, (1591-2), 106-7. Bagenal, for his part, was mortified that his enemy Tyrone had taken his sister, Mabel, in marriage.

O'Neill had played a part in O'Donnell's fall from grace in the eyes of English officials. This had also resulted in strenuous efforts to deprive O'Donnell of power in Tír Conaill.

Direct crown intervention into the lordship of Tír Conaill: from a trickle to a tide

The slow realignment in the crown's allegiances in Ulster was accompanied by an increase in direct intervention in the lordship of Tír Conaill. Of course, some effort to extend English influence into the north-west was not new. Alexander Richey argued in the late nineteenth century that, after Shane O'Neill's demise in 1567, the O'Donnells of Tír Conaill experienced the interventionist initiatives that others had faced. In fact, there had even been instances of English interference in the lordship's power struggles in the 1540s.⁵⁸⁶ Similarly, in the late 1560s, Hugh McManus O'Donnell was unhappy with crown policies which aimed at increasing Elizabeth's role in Tír Conaill's politics. Indeed, English aid for Con O'Donnell's claims there played some role in creating the fractious crown-O'Donnell relations which existed at that time. This led Hugh McManus to seek Scottish aid, which brought him into conflict with English officials who believed the expulsion of Scots would only be successful if all Ulstermen renounced such assistance. English support for Con O'Donnell was only halted because Hugh McManus often proved a useful ally against Turlough O'Neill, though admittedly this did slow the pace of Hugh McManus' alienation from the crown. Nonetheless sometimes he received minimal support compared to others considered English allies such as Black Tom of Ormond,

⁵⁸⁶ Alexander G. Richey, *Lectures on the history of Ireland from A.D. 1534 to the date of the plantation of Ulster*, (London, 1870), 401. See chapter two, 87-88, for details of English interference in Tír Conaill in the late 1540s.

who was Elizabeth's cousin and consequently always treated well.⁵⁸⁷ By the late 1580s, however, Hugh McManus could no longer rely on English assistance to uphold his power in Tír Conaill at all. Official interference in the lordship was now common and this fact is central to any explanation of the final disintegration of relations between Hugh McManus' branch of the O'Donnell family and the crown.

Having assumed the lordship of Tír Conaill in late 1566, Hugh McManus hoped for crown recognition of his power there, as this would legitimise his position against Con O'Donnell's challenge. This was necessary because local support for Hugh was lukewarm, even though Tír Conaill had united behind him against the hated Shane O'Neill. But Elizabeth's advisers were urging her to complete surrender and regrant agreements with sublords to wrest control over them from provincial overlords.⁵⁸⁸ Within Tír Conaill, this saw English financial aid extended to Con O'Donnell, who was also granted certain 'castells and landes' in the lordship. Hugh McManus was ordered to accept this by the Lord Deputy, Henry Sidney.⁵⁸⁹ O'Donnell reacted angrily to this attack on his power, regaining Donegal Castle and refusing to cede Belleek, Castle Finn and Lifford Castle to Con.⁵⁹⁰ In short, Hugh McManus then retained castles in southern Tír Conaill, northern Connaught and in Cinel Moen in eastern Tír Conaill. Therefore, he held sway in all those areas where O'Donnell rulers traditionally held power and was not minded to give this up. Hugh's defiance towards English arbitration which aimed to erode his local power

⁵⁸⁷ David Edwards, *The Ormond Lordship in County Kilkenny 1515-1642: The rise and fall of Butler feudal power*, (Dublin, 2003), 4, 7, 14, 17, 39, 185-6.

⁵⁸⁸ Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Sidney, 6 July 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 340-1; 335; 'A plotte conceaued for the gouernment of the Realme of Irelande', 1567-1568, BL Add MSS, 48015, f. 285v-286.

⁵⁸⁹ 'A note of the chieftest matters contained in the Lord Deputy's letters', 5 July 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 340; Sidney to Fitzwilliam, 1567, SP 63/21, f. 203.

⁵⁹⁰ Hugh McManus O'Donnell to the Lords Deputy Sidney, 7 October 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 348.

was a common response. Nonetheless, the Dublin government chastised him, informing him that he ‘should have sought remedy’ from them in these disputes, rather than assaulting ‘her majesty’s subjects’.⁵⁹¹ Therefore, O’Donnell was subject to disapproval because he would not subject himself to English legal arbitration. Given that there was no guarantee that his local power would be upheld by the government, Hugh had little incentive to accept that the crown had legal jurisdiction over him.

Sidney did manage to broker peace between O’Donnell and Con again in October 1567, with the latter installed as tanist of Tír Conaill.⁵⁹² The deputy, Morgan suggests, believed he had ensured harmony by not bestowing the whole lordship upon Con.⁵⁹³ However, as Brady has argued, Hugh was angry that his services against Shane O’Neill had not garnered English support.²⁰¹ Instead, Lord Justice Weston demanded in April 1568 that O’Donnell ‘gently’ give Con those castles he had been awarded. The government would later attempt to convince Hugh McManus that his overlordship in Tír Conaill was not under threat as there was no intent ‘to take anie mans right from him’.⁵⁹⁴ Nevertheless, O’Donnell thought his liberties were already under threat, because the English were claiming powers over patronage in Tír Conaill and supporting his main rival against him. Officials wanted to work with existing interests to reform Ulster, and viewed Hugh’s reticence to

⁵⁹¹ Desmond defied the crown in the 1560s, as Englishmen supported rival claimants to his earldom. See Nicholas P. Canny, ‘Irish, Scottish and Welsh responses to centralization, c. 1530-c.1640: a comparative perspective’, in A. Grant and K. Stringer, eds., *Uniting the Kingdom?: The making of British history* (London, 1995), 162. For Dublin’s chastisement of Hugh McManus, see The Lords Justices to Hugh McManus O’Donnell, 22 October 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 348.

⁵⁹² Lords Justices Weston and Fitzwilliam and the Irish Council to Queen Elizabeth, 30 October 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 348.

⁵⁹³ Morgan, *Tyrone’s Rebellion*, 25. 201

Brady, *Chief governors*, 129.

⁵⁹⁴ Lord Justice Weston and Council to O’Donnell, 14 April 1568, *CSPI*, I, (1509-73), 374; SP 63/24, f.28-28v.

accept English law unfavourably. O'Donnell's concerns about English intent also shaped his interest in allying with O'Neill, foreign powers and the MacDonalds in the late 1560s.

As it happened, the crown was ultimately unable to force Hugh McManus to bend to its will at this time. However, in the 1570s and early 1580s, the English continued to put the desire to have O'Donnell's aid against Turlough O'Neill before the need to subdue Tír Conaill. Consequently, the Earl of Essex sided with O'Donnell against O'Neill and Con O'Donnell in 1574, placing the latter in jail in Dublin Castle.⁵⁹⁵ Of course, Hugh McManus was happy to accept English aid whenever it removed his local rivals from the scene. English support was also particularly useful to Hugh in the early 1580s when, as McGettigan has observed, Con was reasserting his claims to Tír Conaill.²⁰⁴ At that juncture, Hugh McManus aligned with Lord Deputy Grey de Wilton against Turlough O'Neill because Grey was helping to uphold O'Donnell's power in Tír Conaill. Those who suggested supporting Con at this time, such as William Piers, were ignored by London on the grounds that O'Donnell was 'the best affected subiect of the North'.⁵⁹⁶ But by the late 1580s the English no longer viewed Turlough O'Neill as the enemy. This had important consequences for the way in which Hugh McManus' rule over Tír Conaill was viewed and the policies which the crown and its representatives followed there. One reason for this change in perspective was that the new deputy, John Perrot, lost patience with O'Donnell and no longer trusted him to further reform measures. For his part, Hugh was given reason to shrink from friendship with the English, given

⁵⁹⁵ Walter Deveraux, earl of Essex, to the Privy Council, 8 October 1574, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 682. 204 McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 37.

⁵⁹⁶ 'Articles by Capt. William Pers for the reformation of the North', 10 August 1581, SP 63/85, f. 16v.

that the crown's representatives began actively undermining his power within Tír Conaill. There were no longer any guarantees that the English would support Hugh against his local rivals.

Perrot's early successes in bringing the Ulster lords to be peaceable towards one another convinced him that Irishmen could easily be reformed and 'religion...ordre and civilitie' established throughout the island.⁵⁹⁷ Despite the Lord Deputy's confidence, this was not how it was to play out in the north. One reason for this has recently been outlined by S. J. Connolly, who argues that the deputy's policies in aiming to achieve reform, while nominally conciliatory, openly attacked the powers of regional elites.²⁰⁷ Few of Ireland's regional overlords were keen to give up their ancient rights and would resist any change which challenged them. A further factor was that the experience of lords elsewhere in Ireland had shown that reform was often accompanied by no small amount of violence, extortion and repression. Indeed, Vincent Carey has shown that the O'Mores and O'Connors in the Irish midlands rejected reforms only because they seemed to involve their relatives being executed on flimsy grounds.⁵⁹⁸ Their resistance, Carey notes, ended in their massacre at Mullaghmast in 1578, which made other Irishmen wary of meeting the same fate.⁵⁹⁹ Writing in 1584, meanwhile, Baron Delvin stressed that the English garrisons and towns placed in the midlands to further reform symbolised the extortion and murder of Irishmen by English soldiers.⁶⁰⁰ There was some

⁵⁹⁷ Lord Deputy Perrot to the High Court of Parliament, 17 January 1585, SP 63/114, f. 71. 207 Connolly, *Contested Island*, 214, 216.

⁵⁹⁸ Vincent P. Carey, 'John Derricke's Image of Ireland, Sir Henry Sidney and the massacre at Mullaghmast, 1578', *IHS*, 31, (1999), 311-2.

⁵⁹⁹ *ibid*, 321-2.

⁶⁰⁰ 'Baron Delvin's plot for the reformation of Ireland', 26 March 1584, SP 63/ 108, f. 142-142v, 144, 145-145v. 211 William Cecil to Nicholas White, 11 September 1582, BL Lansdowne MS 102, f. 205.

sympathy for such views at the English court, where even William Cecil believed that disorder was the result of the behaviour of ‘lewd captayns and their bandes’ as much as rebels.²¹¹ Thus, it was known that elite Irishmen would most likely resist reforms which challenged their local supremacy. It was also accepted that they would certainly retaliate were English forces to attempt to compel them to accept change by force, or to extort from their territories.

Regardless of such concerns, Perrot was determined to extend legal reform into the north. Tír Conaill saw its first sheriff introduced in 1585, when the Lord Deputy officially shired the lordship as County Donegal. Initially, Hugh McManus accepted the introduction of sheriffs into his lordship and probably hoped to manipulate the system in his favour since he had been on reasonable terms with the deputy.⁶⁰¹ Events were to show O’Donnell that this would not work. Perrot’s original nominee, Captain Hugh Mostian, extorted Tír Conaill’s people heavily while in the lordship to collect composition rents. Consequently, O’Donnell swiftly expelled the new official from his lordship with the Earl of Tyrone’s encouragement.⁶⁰² In short, Hugh McManus’ experience of legal reform was as negative as the process had been for those lords in the midlands who had resisted change. His local power had been undermined, and his control over the lordship’s wealth challenged. Many Irish elites, Connolly observes, came to despise sheriffs and their retinues as they claimed legal powers traditionally vested in lords and often helped inferior lords challenge their overlords.⁶⁰³ This was the experience of Hugh

⁶⁰¹ Sir Lucas Dillon to Cecil, 8 September 1585, SP 63/119, f. 71v.

⁶⁰² Sir John Perrot to Francis Walsingham, 12 May 1588, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 514; Morgan, *Tyrone’s rebellion*, 40, 122.

⁶⁰³ Connolly, *Contested Island*, 133-4.

McManus in the mid-1580s. In effect, the English sheriff had become a rival for power within the lordship. From his perspective, he had no choice but to reject this new functionary, lest his local power be eroded completely.

Perrot was furious with O'Donnell's actions and apparently decided Hugh represented a threat to the extension of reform into Ulster at this point. As outlined above, the deputy now believed that Turlough O'Neill was the loyal man in Ulster. Accordingly, the Perrot now wanted permission to attack Tír Conaill in order to punish O'Donnell for his failure to pay composition rents.⁶⁰⁴ Nevertheless, other officials had accepted that lords had genuine reasons for failing to pay these levies. For instance, Francis Walsingham had asserted in early 1586 that Irishmen could not 'perform that which they have undertaken'. In June, Henry Bagenal stressed that O'Donnell had to continue raiding his neighbours in order to ease the burden of the composition rent.⁶⁰⁵ The lords found it difficult to pay, Hiram Morgan has asserted, because one important difference between Scottish and English troops was that the latter had to be fed year-round, which made their upkeep far more onerous.⁶⁰⁶ Furthermore, Hugh's need to raid others to obtain their share of the rent suggests that English assistance in collecting it was not forthcoming, despite this being the main attraction of accepting composition soldiers into Tír Conaill in the first place. It was for these reasons that O'Donnell did not readily accept these new reforms.

⁶⁰⁴ Perrot to the Queen, 26 May 1586, McNeill, ed. 'Perrot Papers', 60, Irish Council to the Queen, 28 May 1586, McNeill, ed. 'Perrot Papers', 62.

⁶⁰⁵ Sir Francis Walsingham to Lord Deputy Perrot, February 1586, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 34-5; 'The information of Sir Henry Bagenal, touching her Majesty's service in the north of Ireland, delivered unto the Lord Treasurer Burghley', 7 June 1586, 72.

⁶⁰⁶ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 38.

It must be recognised that O'Donnell was willing to try and reach some sort of rental agreement, as indicated by his trip to Dublin in late June 1586 to renegotiate terms with Perrot.⁶⁰⁷ Hugh's agreed soldier intake of 200 soldiers was commuted into a fixed sum of 700 beeves per year, suggesting that he was prepared to pay rent.⁶⁰⁸ However, this had to be accompanied by a concerted effort on the part of English officials to uphold his local rights, and to ensure that soldiers did not extort more than had been agreed in any rental agreement. It is also possible that Hugh was encouraged to continue seeking some sort of arrangement with Perrot lest relations between the two fail completely. There had recently been illustrations elsewhere in Ireland of the consequences of allowing this to happen.

Following the attainder of the earl of Desmond in 1584, Perrot became resolved to plant English settlers in Munster and this became official policy upon Geoffrey Fenton's arrival in Ireland as secretary in November 1585.⁶⁰⁹ Fenton, it has been argued, was doing the bidding of William Cecil, who was particularly keen for plantation and land exploitation to take place in Ireland.⁶¹⁰ This gave the policy support at the highest levels in London. Eventually, as Robert Dunlop argued, Irishmen came to regard it as 'an attempt by hook and by crook to deprive them of their lands', and lords far from the south-west must have been aware of this.⁶¹¹ Similarly, the MacWilliam Burkes of Mayo were locked in a dispute with Richard

⁶⁰⁷ Henry Wallop to Cecil, 30 May 1586, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 63; 'Indenture between the Lord Deputy and Council and Sir Hugh O'Donnell for a yearly composition for Tirconnell', 10 July 1586, 102.

⁶⁰⁸ 'A breviat of certain orders and entries made in the government of the Right Honourable Sir John Perrot', 31 July 1586, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 108.

⁶⁰⁹ Robert Dunlop, 'The Plantation of Munster, 1584-1589', *EHR*, 3, (1888), 251, 255.

⁶¹⁰ Judith Barry, 'Sir Geoffrey Fenton and the office of secretary of state for Ireland, 1580-1608', *IHS*, XXXV, (2006), 152.

⁶¹¹ Dunlop, 'Plantation of Munster', 266.

Bingham, governor of Connaught. The Burkes' grievance rested upon attempts to destroy their family name and power, the use of martial law and the extortions of English soldiers.⁶¹² Though the Burkes managed to nominate their own choice of lord in 1589, they found that Bingham was sent to defeat them, so determined were the English that sheriffs should be placed in Mayo instead.⁶¹³⁶¹⁴ As Derek Hirst has suggested, O'Donnell was aware from these examples what the future may hold in terms of English policy and his own experiences were beginning to reinforce this impression.⁶¹⁵ Consequently, some understanding with whoever was deputy continued to be attractive in hopes that this would provide insulation from the worst excesses of officials such as Bingham. Hugh must also have realised that growing English power in Ulster, demonstrated by the crushing of Sorley Boy MacDonald's son in April 1586, made some sort of agreement desirable.⁶¹⁶ Thus, a compromise was reached between O'Donnell and Perrot at this juncture but the deputy's attitude towards the lord of Tír Conaill had changed. He now regarded Hugh as untrustworthy and rebellious, and this shaped Dublin's policy towards Tír Conaill thereafter.

Though these interventionist policies provoked resistance and made relations with Irishmen difficult, Englishmen pursued them in part because events in Europe in

⁶¹² Sir Richard Bingham to Cecil, 12 July 1586, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 102-3, 'A true discourse of the causes of the late rebellion of the Burkes'. 16 November 1586, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 198-203; John Garvey, Bishop of Kilmore, to Cecil, 10 May 1589, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 167.

⁶¹³ Privy Council to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 19 November 1589, *APC*, XVIII, (1589-1590), 229-230; 'Note of the speeches which passed at the conference which G. Comerford and Capt. William Bowen, sheriff of Mayo, held with the Burks of Mayo',

⁶¹⁴ March 1589, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 138; 'Instructions to the Commissioners repairing into Connaught', April 5, 1589, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 148.

⁶¹⁵ Hirst, *Dominion*, 116. See also Rory Rapple, 'Taking up office in Elizabethan Connacht: the case of Sir Richard Bingham', *EHR*, CXXIII, (2008), 299. Rapple argues that Bingham also pursued his own ends with the proceeds of composition, rather than the conciliatory policies Perrot and others preached.

⁶¹⁶ Adam Loftus, Archbishop of Dublin, to William Cecil, 26 April 1586, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 48.

the mid-1580s increased the need to subdue Ireland speedily. In late 1584, Philip II had joined the Guises, the Pope and others in the Catholic League, rumoured to be plotting invasion of England and Ireland throughout 1585.⁶¹⁷ In response, Elizabeth sought friendship with France, Navarre and Scotland and became the Protector of the Dutch Protestants against Philip by signing the Treaty of Nonsuch in 1585, which Simon Adams argues signified the commencement of open war with Spain.⁶¹⁸ Sir Francis Drake's attacks on Spain's Caribbean possessions made relations even frostier.⁶¹⁹ Spain retaliated by intriguing with those English Catholic conspirators, led by Anthony Babington, who plotted to kill Elizabeth and restore Mary Stewart to liberty throughout early 1586.⁶²⁰ This scheme was foiled, and the English queen cemented an alliance with James VI in May 1586, but rumours of likely French and Spanish attacks on Munster persisted.⁶²¹ Furthermore, throughout 1587 there were reports that James VI would break his amity with Elizabeth and assist Spanish efforts to seize England and Ireland on the promise of receiving the English crown afterwards.⁶²² In this climate, the queen was determined to continue in her efforts to reform Ireland and prevent any foreign invasion from landing there.

One measure taken to secure Ireland was the requirement that lords submit pledges for their fidelity. Soon, Hugh McManus was identified by Perrot as a

⁶¹⁷ M. J. Rodriguez-Salgado, 'The Anglo-Spanish War: the final episode in the Wars of the Roses?', in Simon Adams and M. J. Rodriguez-Salgado, eds. *England, Spain and the Gran Armada, 1585-1604: essays from the Anglo-Spanish conferences, London and Madrid, 1988*, (Edinburgh, 1991), 5; Thomas Rogers to Francis Walsingham, 11 August 1585, *CSPF, Eliz*, XIX, (August 1584-August 1585), 716.

⁶¹⁸ Francis Walsingham to Lord Deputy Perrot, 14 April 1585, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 560; Simon Adams, 'Elizabeth I and the sovereignty of the Netherlands, 1576-1585', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, XIV, (2004), 309-311.

⁶¹⁹ Adams, 'Elizabeth I and the sovereignty of the Netherlands', 309-311.

⁶²⁰ Alford, *Burghley*, 261. On the Irish aspect to this plot, see Rodriguez-Salgado, 'The Anglo-Spanish War', 12; Mary Stewart to Anthony Babington, 17 July 1586, *CSPSco*, VIII, (1585-1586), 528.

⁶²¹ The Privy Council to the Wardens of the East, West, and Middle Marches', May 1586, *APC*, XIV, (1586-7), 135; On Spanish designs in Ireland, see the Privy Council to the Lord Deputy Perrot, 10 September 1586, *APC*, XIV, (1586-7), 219.

⁶²² Stephen le Sieur to Francis Walsingham, 3 December 1587, *CSPF, Eliz*, XXI, part 3, (April-December 1587), 439; Lord Deputy Perrot to the Privy Council, 1 July 1587, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 375; William Lyon, Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, to Geoffrey Fenton, 17 December 1587, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 454; Francis Wroth to Cecil, 5 September 1587, *Cal. MSS Salisbury*, III, (1583-1589), 279.

particularly disloyal subject because only he had refused to comply with this while the threat of the Spanish Armada loomed.⁶²³ Perrot also alleged that the O'Donnells, particularly Hugh's wife Finola, 'nourished Scottes' while certain MacSweenys actively aided rebels in Connaught.⁶²⁴ Through political convenience English officials had overlooked the interference of the people of Tír Conaill in the western province as well as Hugh's Scottish links in the past, but neither was permissible any longer. Perrot simply no longer trusted Hugh McManus. Thus, the deputy placed no weight on O'Donnell's offer of submission and pledges in September 1587, believing that he would always 'p[er]form littell', whatever he promised.⁶²⁵ Accordingly, the deputy sought consent to seize pledges in the form of Hugh, Finola, or their son, Red Hugh. In September 1587, the last-named was ultimately kidnapped alongside sons of MacSweeny Fanad, MacSweeny Doe and O'Gallagher as pledges for O'Donnell's fidelity.⁶²⁶ This move by the deputy deprived O'Donnell and three of his most important followers of support. In the case of the two MacSweeneys in particular, this almost certainly deprived Hugh McManus of crucial military assistance against his local challengers. Indeed, it was Perrot's aim that O'Donnell would be severely weakened. The deputy believed the kidnaps would ensure that the queen's writ now ran in Tír Conaill, while O'Donnell's Scottish allies and the increasingly powerful earl of Tyrone would be rendered quiet.⁶²⁶ This policy was successful, to the extent that Tyrone soon lamented to Walsingham that Hugh

⁶²³ Standish O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity: a picture of Ireland, social and political, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth*, (London, 1889), 96.

⁶²⁴ Sir John Perrot to Cecil, 2 May 1567, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 338; Sir John Perrot to Queen Elizabeth, 26 September 1587; CP 16/28.

⁶²⁵ Sir John Perrot to Queen Elizabeth, 23 September 1587, CP 16/28; *Cal. MSS Salisbury*, III, (1583-1589), 284-5. ²³⁶ Sir John Perrot to Cecil, 2 May 1567, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 338; Sir John Perrot to Queen Elizabeth, 26 September 1587; CP 16/28.

⁶²⁶ Sir John Perrot to Queen Elizabeth, 26 September 1587, CP 16/28.

Roe's internment was 'the most prejudice that might happen unto me'.⁶²⁷ But English officials were disinterested in Tyrone's complaints, having determined to keep Hugh Roe in prison and support Hugh O'Gallagher's claims in Tír Conaill to ensure the lordship fell into English hands.⁶²⁸ The policies pursued by Perrot's successor as deputy, William Fitzwilliam, carried on in the same vein which ensured the continuing alienation of Hugh McManus and his allies from the crown.

Fitzwilliam's general instructions ahead of his return as deputy in 1588 were to sustain the garrison policy with the co-operation of friendly Irishmen.⁶²⁹ But the O'Donnells' new status amongst those deemed troublesome was reaffirmed by orders to retain Hugh Roe O'Donnell in Dublin Castle in order to keep Ulster peaceful.⁶³⁰ Fitzwilliam, like Perrot, thought this would ensure that Hugh's Scottish relatives would be unable to over-run and settle in Tír Conaill.²⁴² Therefore, these officials were partly keen to interfere in the lordship in order to halt the expansion of the MacDonalds into the north-west. Weakening O'Donnell by such means also made it easier to stop the Scots' influence spreading into Connaught, and allowed Richard Bingham to freely pursue his own self-interests in the western province.⁶³¹ This was only part of the story, however. The English meant to have direct control over some parts of Tír Conaill too. This was indicated by the conclusion of a surrender and regrant agreement with John O'Docherty in June 1588, which

⁶²⁷ Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to Francis Walsingham, 10 December 1587, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 442. See also *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 119, where Tyrone again wrote to Walsingham on 5 February 1589 asking for Hugh Roe's release.

⁶²⁸ Morwenna Donnelly, 'The Kidnapping and Imprisonment of Red Hugh', *Donegal Annual*, II, (1953/4), 458.

⁶²⁹ 'Instructions for Sir William Fytzwilliams', December 1587, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 460.

⁶³⁰ 'Instructions for Sir William Fytzwilliams', December 1587, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 461. 242

Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Francis Walsingham, 30 September 1588, SP 63/ 136, f. 222.

⁶³¹ Sir Richard Bingham to Cecil, 13 February 1588, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 472-3; Connolly, *Contested Island*, 234.

represented an attempt to pass control of Inishowen from O'Donnell to the crown.⁶³² Henceforth, O'Docherty was to attend English hostings, and pay rent directly to the crown, while Elizabeth was to possess Inishowen's abbeys.⁶³³ As R. J. Hunter has stressed, this implied that O'Docherty now owed allegiance to the queen rather than O'Donnell.²⁴⁶ Of course this was unacceptable to Hugh McManus. He had long resisted O'Neill's claims in the north of Tír Conaill, and no O'Donnell would willingly accept the loss of this fertile territory. Furthermore, English officials had at different times since the 1540s accepted the O'Donnells' rights there. Hugh McManus would not have been pleased at the crown's change of heart on this issue. The problem was that he was then powerless to do very much about it, having been weakened as a result of Perrot's policies. Fitzwilliam's subsequent behaviour towards Tír Conaill represented another attempt to strike at the heart of O'Donnell power.

Following Hugh Roe's kidnap, Hugh McManus had to contend with several challengers to the lordship of Tír Conaill. In a real break with the past, English officials now did much more to damage a ruling O'Donnell's power than to help him. Three of the main threats to Hugh McManus were his eldest son, Donnell O'Donnell; Hugh O'Gallagher, who claimed to be a son of Calvagh O'Donnell's, and Niall Garbh O'Donnell, Con O'Donnell's son.⁶³⁴ In the late 1580s, English

⁶³² 'Grant of Inishowen to Sir John O'Docherty', 26 June 1588, 'Fiants, Elizabeth', *Reports of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 16th report, (Dublin, 1884), 74.

⁶³³ 'Grant of Inishowen to Sir John O'Docherty', 26 June 1588, 'Fiants, Elizabeth', *Reports of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 16th report, (Dublin, 1884), 74. 246 Hunter, 'End of O'Donnell power', 230.

⁶³⁴ Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to Queen Elizabeth., 10 December 1587, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 442; Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to the Lord Deputy, 4 January 1588, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 464. See also the genealogical table on page xiv of this study for an illustration of which branches of the O'Donnell family Niall Garbh and Donnell belonged to.

officials bolstered each of these men in opposition to Hugh McManus. For instance the English captain, Nicholas Merryman, helped Niall Garbh and Turlough O'Neill to kill 'some of O'Donnell's chief leaders and people' in late 1588.⁶³⁵ Hugh O'Gallagher, meanwhile, had received possession of Derry and Finn Castles from Captain Bowen, who had previously seized them.²⁴⁹ This gave O'Gallagher authority over territory in Inishowen, as well as a base in Cinel Moen. In short, it placed him in power in two of the lordship's most fertile areas. This gave him the means to procure and sustain an army, and made him a serious threat to Hugh McManus. The Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, for his part, had been busy building a faction which centred upon those who supported Donnell O'Donnell in opposition to his father.

In late 1588, Fitzwilliam had secured submissions from Hugh McManus and Finola's opponents, such as MacSweeney Banagh, Hugh McHugh Dubh O'Donnell, O'Boyle, and O'Donnell's eldest son, Donnell O'Donnell.⁶³⁶ The lands of MacSweeney Banagh and O'Boyle were to the west of the main O'Donnell territories, and Hugh McHugh's sphere of influence lay to the north.⁶³⁷ In effect, this gave Fitzwilliam the chance to surround O'Donnell with sublords who were hostile to him. Further, the territories of MacSweeney and O'Boyle were also on the bay of Donegal and might prevent support reaching O'Donnell via that route. The same was true of Hugh McHugh Dubh to the north; he could make it difficult for

⁶³⁵ *AFM*, V, 1867-9, Patrick Foxe to Francis Walsingham, 28 January 1589, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 113. 249 Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion*, 127.

⁶³⁶ Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to the Privy Council, 31 December 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592). 94. Donnell's mother was an Irishwoman, not Finola.

⁶³⁷ See Map 2, on page vii of this study for these locations.

O'Donnell to travel to Lough Foyle. The deputy also installed Donnell as sheriff of Donegal in an attempt to use his fear of Finola for English benefit.⁶³⁸ Donnell's appointment has led Christopher Maginn to suggest that Tudor power remained weak in the north-west because one of O'Donnell's sons took the office of sheriff.²⁵³ In fact, Donnell was Fitzwilliam's man in the lordship, and behaved like an Irish overlord, inaugurating Hugh Maguire as lord of Fermanagh in 1589.⁶³⁹ Donnell also allied with Turlough O'Neill and seized large parts of Tír Conaill with the aid of two others who had also submitted to Fitzwilliam, Donough MacSweeny Banagh and Teige Oge O'Boyle.⁶⁴⁰ By supporting Donnell, the deputy hoped to augment the burgeoning split between the competing powers within Tír Conaill if possible. This was akin to Perrot's earlier policy of seeking to split the Dunyveg and Antrim branches of the MacDonald family apart so that the crown could benefit if they destroyed one another.⁶⁴¹ Thus, though through a proxy, Fitzwilliam was perfectly able to destabilise Hugh McManus' rule in Tír Conaill and this was among the things that made Hugh Roe O'Donnell wary of English officials in the 1590s.

Fitzwilliam also imitated Perrot by seizing Owen MacToole O'Gallagher and John O'Docherty as pledges until O'Donnell delivered better ones, including his second son Rory, for the performance of duties and rent payments.⁶⁴² The contemporary observer, Fynes Moryson, stated that Fitzwilliam's motive was to punish O'Gallagher and O'Docherty because he believed they were hiding Spanish

⁶³⁸ Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to the Privy Council, 31 December 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 94-5. 253 Christopher Maginn, *William Cecil, Ireland and the Tudor State*, (Oxford, 2012), 67.

⁶³⁹ *AFM*, VI, 1875-77.

⁶⁴⁰ *AFM*, VI, 1889-91; Sir Nicholas White to Cecil, 29 January 1590, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 302. Donnell was married to Turlough O'Neill's daughter, see Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 107.

⁶⁴¹ Ciaran Brady, 'East Ulster, the MacDonalds and the provincial strategies of Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone, 1585-1603', in William P. Kelly and John R. Young, eds. *Scotland and the Ulster Plantations*, (Dublin, 2009), 49-50.

⁶⁴² Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to the Privy Council, 31 December 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 94.

treasure from wrecked Armada ships.⁶⁴³ But Morgan's suggestion that Fitzwilliam had Owen imprisoned in order to deny Finola MacDonald support in the succession struggle in Tír Conaill is also persuasive. Certainly, the deputy went on to block efforts to release O'Gallagher, deeming him too 'dangerous to set at large' as late as August 1590.⁶⁴⁴ Furthermore, McGettigan has argued that Tír Conaill's people saw this 'as treachery for O'Gallagher and O'Docherty were pro-English nobles', echoing Moryson's assertion that the Irish 'repined' at their 'harsh usage'.⁶⁴⁵ The internment of Owen, in particular, would have been distressing to O'Donnell, for O'Gallagher had been a long-term confidant of the lord of Tír Conaill.⁶⁴⁶ Imprisoning loyalists was certainly no way to convince Irishmen that the deputy would deal fairly with them. However, there were beneficiaries, such as Donnell O'Donnell, who seized Owen's lands while he was imprisoned.⁶⁴⁷ All this only solidified the impression that Fitzwilliam was supporting O'Donnell's local rivals and abusing his friends.

Hugh McManus' family were not helped by the continuing suspicion amongst the English following the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 that many in Tír Conaill would support any new force Philip II might send to Ireland. This was despite the fact that, when wrecked Spanish ships had surfaced on Tír Conaill's coast late that year, O'Donnell sought to display loyalty to Elizabeth by exchanging 30

⁶⁴³ Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary*, Book II, part I, (Glasgow, 1908), 8.

⁶⁴⁴ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 130; Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 20 August 1590, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 360; The Privy Council had urged Fitzwilliam to treat Owen fairly in 1589, see their letter to the deputy dated 6 October 1589, *APC*, XVIII, 178.

⁶⁴⁵ McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 44-5; Moryson, *An Itinerary*, Book II, part I, 8.

⁶⁴⁶ It is evident that Owen MacToole was O'Donnell's closest confidant in the mid-1570s, if not before. See page 147-8 of this chapter.

⁶⁴⁷ Privy Council to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 6 October 1589, *APC*, XVIII, (1589-1590), 177.

Spanish prisoners for his son's liberty at Dublin.⁶⁴⁸ However, this failed, not least because the Privy Council was unwilling to risk Hugh Roe's release while the Spanish threat remained in Ulster.⁶⁴⁹ There were a few things which had not helped O'Donnell's case. Within Tír Conaill, O'Docherty, MacSweeny Doe and the sons of Con O'Donnell had all been suspected of harbouring Spaniards in 1588, while there were rumours that Redmund O'Gallagher, the Bishop of Derry, had gone to Rome seeking aid.⁶⁵⁰⁶⁵¹ Moreover, Finola MacDonald had reportedly threatened to seek Spanish aid against the crown if Hugh Roe was not released, which strengthened the perception that Finola was pro-Spanish and the O'Donnells dangerous.⁶⁵² Thus, O'Donnell's efforts to obtain Hugh Roe's release to improve the worsening local situation came to naught. Ultimately, this actually made it more likely that Hugh McManus and his allies would seek foreign aid to preserve their domestic power, since none was forthcoming from the crown.

In the absence of external assistance, Finola MacDonald had already taken on the mantle of attempting to preserve Hugh McManus' sway over Tír Conaill. In May 1588, she had utilised her Scottish forces to defeat Hugh O'Gallagher in order to defend the claims of her son, Hugh Roe, to the lordship.⁶⁵³ She went on to burn down Donegal Castle in early 1589 to prevent the English using it as a garrison.

⁶⁴⁸ Patrick Foxe to Francis Walsingham, 26 September 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 44.

⁶⁴⁹ Privy Council to the Lord Deputy and Council, 10 November 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 73-4.

⁶⁵⁰ Richard and Henry Hovenden to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 8 September 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592),

⁶⁵¹ ; Richard and Henry Hovenden to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 8 October 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 53; Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Deputy, 11 October 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 54; Geoffrey Fenton to the Lord Deputy, 9 October 1588, 54. On O'Gallagher, see Patrick Foxe to Walsingham, 26 September 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 44.

⁶⁵² Henry Dowgan and Soleman Faranan to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 13 October 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 63; Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to the Privy Council, 31 December 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 92-3; *AFM*, V, 1871-3.

⁶⁵³ Sir Richard Bingham to Cecil, 15 May 1588, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 518; *AFM*, V, 1873.

Finola also later defeated and killed the crown's sheriff of Donegal, Donnell O'Donnell.⁶⁵⁴ Concurrently, the earl of Tyrone was allegedly encouraging his vassal, McMahon of Monaghan, to reject an English sheriff. Alongside Finola's actions, this encouraged the view amongst English officials that it was the Hugh McManus-Tyrone alliance which was preventing the spread of English law into Ulster.⁶⁵⁵ Furthermore, Finola had supported O'Rourke of Leitrim in his rebellion against Richard Bingham in Connaught in the late 1580s and early 1590s. This prompted Bingham to seek permission to attack MacSweeney Doe in Tír Conaill in revenge in September 1590.⁶⁵⁶ Given that even the weakened Hugh McManus' faction could cause the crown trouble in Connaught, it is not surprising that many English officials were unwilling to consider Hugh Roe's release. Therefore, while Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam had suggested in November 1589 that Hugh Roe could be released 'with benefit to Her Majesty's service', there was no movement towards this.⁶⁵⁷

As mentioned, the alleged pro-Spanish leanings of Hugh McManus and Finola went some way to ensuring that the English were keen to avoid allowing the family to re-assert their power in the north-west. As Christopher Maginn has argued, the very fact that Spanish sailors had come ashore in Ulster when their ships had been wrecked on its coasts after the Armada's defeat was proof to Englishmen that their fate was intertwined with that of Ireland.⁶⁵⁸ This was especially critical as there

⁶⁵⁴ Soloman Faranan, Turlough O'Neill's man, to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 18 February 1589, SP 63/142, f. 37; *AFM*, V I, 1889-91.

⁶⁵⁵ Sir Nicholas White to Cecil, 7 April 1589, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 142.

⁶⁵⁶ Sir George Bingham to Sir Richard Bingham, 10 March 1590, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592) 324; Sir Richard Bingham to Sir Francis Walsingham, 21 April 1590, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 333; Sir Richard Bingham to Cecil, 13 September 1590, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 363.

⁶⁵⁷ Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 28 November 1589, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 268.

⁶⁵⁸ Maginn, *William Cecil*, 104.

remained fear of a Spanish invasion with Catholic French assistance.⁶⁵⁹ There were also repeated reports between 1589 and 1592 that Philip II would send an English captain named William Stanley with large forces to attack Ireland or England.⁶⁶⁰ Philip hoped to prevent Elizabeth aiding the French king, Henry of Navarre, against Catholic Leaguers in Normandy and Brittany, and to gain revenge for Francis Drake's attacks on Spanish ports.⁶⁶¹ Meanwhile, Irish clergy were seeking aid, with Bishop Edmund McGauran in Flanders and the Bishop of Derry, Redmund O'Gallagher, canvassing the MacDonalds in the Scottish Isles for assistance in 1590.⁶⁶² The English were alarmed by this apparent Scottish-Spanish-Irish conspiracy, and this continued to shape their policy towards Hugh McManus and his allies into the 1590s. This was despite the fact that one source claimed that Spaniards were said to be 'very much set against O'Donnell and O'Dogherty...for that many Spaniards were killed...by them in 1588'.⁶⁶³ This suggests it was by no means automatic that Spanish forces would aid the O'Donnells, which has implications for the way Hugh Roe's later Spanish negotiations must be viewed.

At the same time, as the 1590s opened Irish leaders were to find that reforming Englishmen were as determined as ever to get their way in Ulster and this

⁶⁵⁹ Lyons, *Franco-Irish relations*, 164. Preparations for the defence of Ireland against Spanish invasion in March 1590 are in evidence in 'Advices from London', 5 March 1590, *CSPSp*, XVII, (1587-1603), 575.

⁶⁶⁰ Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Cecil, 6 November 1589, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 260; Sir Richard Bingham to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 1 May 1592, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 480; 'Replies of John Snowden to the preceding interrogatories', 25 May 1591, *CSPDom*, *Eliz*, (1591-4), 45.

⁶⁶¹ For French motives, see 'Account by Thomas Phelippes of the plot of the Catholic enemies', October 1591, *CSPDom*, *Eliz*, (1591-4), 118; 'Advertisements from Spain for Treasurer Burghley', 6 May 1591, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 392. For Spanish concerns, see 'A discovery of certain proceedings in Spain by Henry Carmick', 1591, BL Lansdowne MS 72, f. 86.

⁶⁶² Sir Henry Duke to the Lord Deputy, 7 March 1589, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 135; Robert Bowes to Cecil and Walsingham, 16 March 1590, *CSPSco*, X, (1589-1593), 253; Privy Council's answers to Lord Deputy and Council to be reported by Edward Waterhouse, 13 April 1590, *APC*, XIX, (1590), 51.

⁶⁶³ 'Addition to the first examination of Turlough O'Keynai, priest', 5 January 1592, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 453.

threatened the political status of lords throughout the province. Nicholas Canny has observed that William Fitzwilliam ‘dedicated himself to shiring Ulster’ in his last term as deputy between 1588 and 1594.⁶⁶⁴ Typical of such schemes was the Monaghan settlement of 1591. This followed the execution of the lord there, Hugh Roe McMahon, for making war on his rival, Ever McCooley McMahon, and protecting ‘traitors’ from the sheriff.⁶⁶⁵ Hugh Roe was not succeeded as lord, with Fitzwilliam instead dividing Monaghan ‘among the chief lords and freeholders’, as Elizabeth wished. There was now no single man in power there, but seven much weaker lords.⁶⁶⁶ Morgan has asserted that this resembled an updated surrender and regrant arrangement, though much smaller portions of land were granted to each of the local challengers with a consequent loss of status for the principal lord.⁶⁶⁷ Moreover, freeholders were only to be required to pay one-tenth of their former rents to the overlord, who was also barred from expanding his own holdings at their expense.²⁸² As such a settlement promised to cause powerful men in Ulster political and financial loss, they were bound to resist the extension of that policy throughout the province. Nonetheless, that is what some Englishmen sought to pursue.

Amongst those who saw the Monaghan settlement as the template to be followed throughout Ulster was the solicitor-general Roger Wilbraham.⁶⁶⁸ This was a view which was apparently shared by the crown, as the Bagenals and others had

⁶⁶⁴ Canny, ‘Taking sides in early modern Ireland’, 100.

⁶⁶⁵ Mr Roger Wilbraham to Cecil, 26 October 1590, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 369. These were the reasons given by Roger Wilbraham.

⁶⁶⁶ Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 14 October 1591, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 427.

⁶⁶⁷ Morgan, *Tyrone’s Rebellion*, 14. 282

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 67.

⁶⁶⁸ Mr Solicitor Roger Wilbraham to Cecil, 4 December 1591, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 442. The sheriff of Sligo, Nicholas Taaffe, had suggested dividing Tír Conaill on a similar basis in 1585, but now such policies were being extended into the north effectively. See his letter to Cecil, April 1585, SP 63/116, f. 84v.

already been commissioned in July 1591 to divide all parts of Ulster which remained unshired as they saw fit.⁶⁶⁹ Henry Bagenal was pleased, believing that this would release inferior Irishmen from lordly tyranny and lead to the end of local wars which, he envisaged, would deprive Scots of their reason to come to Ireland at long last.²⁸⁵ For Irishmen, however, the extension of this policy into their territories was to be avoided. Some indication of what Fitzwilliam's settlement ultimately meant was evident soon after, with grants of abbey land and other territories in Monaghan to English officials like Captains Willis and Henshaw.⁶⁷⁰ This new format co-existed with established, but unpopular, ideas as to how to enforce reform. In May 1590, Lord Justice Gardiner and Henry Wallop had mooted dividing Tír Conaill up, and having locals pay for the establishment of sheriffs there.⁶⁷¹ Such policies had been rejected by Hugh McManus O'Donnell in recent memory. The sheriffs had both wreaked financial destruction upon his lordship and become competitors for authority there. Furthermore, certain English captains continued to run roughshod over the people of the lordship. Nonetheless, English officials remained determined to press their vision of reform upon the lords of Tír Conaill, who balked at the unpalatable challenge to their power.

It was into this situation that Hugh Roe O'Donnell emerged upon his escape from Dublin Castle in late 1591. Returning to Tír Conaill through friendly Tyrone

⁶⁶⁹ 'Commission to the Primate of Armagh, Henry Bagenal and others to divide Ulster into shire grounds as they see fit', 'Fiant Elizabeth', 10 July 1591, *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 16th Report, 165. 285 Sir Henry Bagenal to Cecil, 20 February 1592, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 458, 460.

⁶⁷⁰ 'Grant to Sir Humphrey Willis of Ballemorchie in the barony and county of Monaghan', 17 November 1591, 'Fiant Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 16th Report, 188; 'Lease of the castle, town and friary of Monaghan to Captain Thomas Henshaw', 12 February 1592, 'Fiant Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 16th Report, 201.

⁶⁷¹ 'Opinions of the Justice Gardiner and Sir Henry Wallop for the reformation of Ulster', 19 May 1590, SP 63/152, f. 132.

and Fermanagh, he found the lordship effectively under the control of the plundering English captains Willis and Connell. Hugh Roe had a base to work from, though, as his father Hugh McManus held sway at Ballyshannon and Donegal Castle in the south of the lordship.⁶⁷² The behaviour of John Perrot towards his father and himself in 1587-8 shaped the policies pursued by Hugh Roe to some degree. For McGettigan, it was very important in explaining later disaffection towards Englishmen in Tír Conaill and this argument holds weight.²⁸⁹ Nevertheless, it is important not to over-play the effects this had, as it translated into wariness towards officials rather than an outright refusal on Hugh's part to ever consider friendship with Elizabeth. As will be discussed in chapter four, he was in fact willing to contemplate working with the crown to establish his power in Tír Conaill. This proved difficult as he was determined to resist the final extension into the lordship of English policies which threatened his status and power, and Elizabeth and her officials were equally set upon having their way on such matters.

This chapter has shown that relations between the crown and Hugh McManus O'Donnell between the late 1560s and the early 1580s were often more uneasy than historians have suggested hitherto. Hugh's local interests, his primary concern, often conflicted with crown policy which made some strain inevitable. It has long been accepted that there was a break-down in relations from the mid-1580s onwards, but real friction which existed before this has been downplayed. In the late 1560s, Hugh's refusal to accept English legal arbitration in his local disputes, his links with the MacDonalds, and his repeated incursions into Connaught brought criticism from

⁶⁷² *AFM*, VI, 1913, 1923, 1925. 289
McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 41.

English officials. That these issues did not then damage crown-O'Donnell relations irreparably was because Hugh continued to be an intermittently useful ally against Turlough O'Neill. This fact often preserved O'Donnell somewhat from the criticism of crown officials in Connaught, such as Presidents Nicholas Malbie and Richard Bingham, in subsequent decades. For his part, Hugh's need for local aid meant that he set aside any anger he felt that the crown sometimes supported the claims of his local rival, Con O'Donnell, in Tír Conaill.

Like Manus O'Donnell, Hugh was also willing to experiment with certain English initiatives to see whether they would bolster his local position, particularly when he was weakened and subject to attacks from Turlough O'Neill, as in the early 1580s. He rejected these when they proved insufficient for his needs or actively damaged his local power. This reveals that he was behaving pragmatically rather than loyally, just as Manus O'Donnell had done previously. It was John Perrot's recognition of this, in the mid-1580s, which finally led to a crucial breakdown in crown-O'Donnell relations. Perrot believed that Hugh had done little to reform Tír Conaill, as promised, and never would. The truth was that reform had to benefit O'Donnell; he would not go along with it unquestioningly. It did not work for him for several reasons. Throughout the period, the crown had done little to defend him against his local enemies. Furthermore, the attempt to extend the shire system into Tír Conaill had gone badly. The new officials had competed with Hugh Roe and undermined his local power. They had also ravaged the lordship economically, and supported his political rivals against him. Irishmen were also alarmed by reform in Mayo and Monaghan, which involved an unpalatable loss of status for principal

lords. This made them less keen on friendship with the English, and encouraged many to look abroad for support in preserving their local hegemonies.

By 1587, O'Donnell's links with the man now considered the biggest threat to Ulster's peace, Hugh O'Neill, was also shifting English opinion decisively against the lord of Tír Conaill. O'Donnell found that he was now aligned with the most powerful of the O'Neills. Previously, it was the opposition of the strongest O'Donnell lords to their counterparts in Tyrone which had made them valuable crown allies, but this no longer applied. One consequence of this was that Hugh McManus was thereafter subject to English interference in Tír Conaill's power struggles which went beyond anything which had gone before. Lord Deputies Perrot and Fitzwilliam sought to weaken Hugh McManus so that his branch of the family would no longer be supreme in Tír Conaill. All this shaped the perception of Hugh Roe O'Donnell when he considered how to conduct relations with the crown and its officials in the 1590s. Nevertheless, O'Donnell's willingness to align with Fitzwilliam in late 1588 illustrates that English policies remained acceptable to Irishmen if they affected one's local political standing positively. It should also be acknowledged that, by and large, the crown and its representatives continued to seek influence in Tír Conaill by supporting the claims of one or other of the competing local powers there. There was no attempt to overthrow O'Donnell power totally. Instead, an agreement with an O'Donnell who was prepared to acknowledge Elizabeth's sovereignty and a reduction in his sphere of influence was still desirable, if unlikely. Bearing this in mind, the next chapter discusses whether, and to what

extent, the policies and outlook of Hugh Roe O'Donnell during his time in power between 1592 and 1602 differed from those of his predecessors.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LORDSHIP OF HUGH ROE O'DONNELL, 1592-1602

Hugh Roe O'Donnell's rule in Tír Conaill between 1592 and 1602 was largely characterised by war with the English crown. His motivations in pursuing this policy have been scrutinised ever since. His biographer and close contemporary, Lughaidh O'Clerigh, insisted that Hugh and his allies were nationally-minded, fighting in defence of their 'fatherland'.⁶⁷³ Though O'Clerigh's aim was to exalt O'Donnell amongst seventeenth-century European leaders by portraying him as a selfless national hero, the idea that opponents of the English were fired by national consciousness persisted in the early twentieth century.⁶⁷⁴ This led Alice Stopford Green to aver that there had been an alliance between English-Irish people and Gaels in opposition to English policies, particularly in the economic sphere.⁶⁷⁵ In the 1930s, such nationalist interpretations were rejected by Gerald A. Hayes-McCoy, who stated that the war was not about Ireland's 'political freedom', since nation-states did not exist in their modern form in the sixteenth century.⁴ However, in the late 1980s, Brendan Bradshaw argued that there was an emergent nationalism evident from a reading of English-Irish and Gaelic literature of the period which had to be taken account of.⁵ Building upon this, David Finnegan has recently suggested that this cultural alignment took the form of recognising mutual Roman Catholicism and a

⁶⁷³ Lughaidh O'Clerigh, *Beata Aodha Ruaidh uí Domhnaill*, I, trans. Paul Walsh, (Dublin, 1948), 165.

⁶⁷⁴ Paul Walsh, ed. *Beata Aodha Ruaidh uí Domhnaill*, II, (Dublin, 1957), 20.

⁶⁷⁵ Alice Stopford Green, *The making of Ireland and its undoing, 1200-1600*, (London, 1908), 192, 202, 213, 345-52, 489. 4 Gerald A. Hayes-McCoy, *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland, 1565-1603*, 2nd edition, (Dublin, 1996, c. 1936), 304. 5 Brendan Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and historical scholarship in modern Ireland', *IHS*, 26, (1988-9), 345. The idea that some form of cultural nationalism existed in Europe in the late sixteenth century has lately been accepted by Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Esser. See their 'Introduction: early modern frontiers in comparative context', in Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Esser, eds. *Frontiers and the writing of history, 1500-1850*, (Hannover-Laatzén, 2006), 13.

‘common homeland’.⁶⁷⁶ Meanwhile, Richard McCabe opines that O’Clerigh’s biography of Hugh Roe hints at a nascent ‘pan-Gaelic or even proto-nationalist’ view which eschewed ‘ethnic and regional loyalties’. Still, McCabe acknowledges that O’Clerigh, writing in the 1630s, lamented throughout his text the ‘lack of Gaelic and Old English unity’ during the 1590s war.⁶⁷⁷ Thus, there may well have been a fledgling feeling of common purpose but it had limited impact on how lords behaved. As a consequence, it is not tenable to suggest that Irish elites were principally acting on nationalist impulses in resisting English encroachment into the north in the 1590s.

A narrower definition of this emerging Irish ‘nation’ has recently been offered by Brendan Kane, who posits the existence of a grouping concerned with furthering the interests of dynastic families rather than the wider population.⁶⁷⁸ While O’Donnell certainly aligned with other overlords to fight their common enemies, this was not particularly novel. Kane himself observes that the Geraldine League had put aside traditional rivalries to dispute Henry VIII’s authority in the late 1530s.⁶⁷⁹ Even earlier alliances, like that of Hugh Dubh O’Donnell and the eighth earl of Kildare around 1500, sought to preserve the participants’ power against challengers in a similar way. The only difference was that Irishmen rather than Englishmen were the target of that grouping’s ire. It is therefore helpful to acknowledge that the most committed ‘rebels’ in the 1590s were the same families

⁶⁷⁶ David Finnegan, ‘Old English views of Gaelic Irish history and the emergence of an Irish Catholic nation, c. 1569-1640, in Brian Mac Cuarta, ed, *Re-shaping 1550-1700: colonisation and its consequences: essays presented to Nicholas Canny*, (Dublin, 2011), 189.

⁶⁷⁷ Richard A. McCabe, ‘Fighting words: writing the Nine Years War’, in Thomas Herron and Michael Potterton, eds. *Ireland in the Renaissance, c.1540-1660*, (Dublin, 2007), 108, 112.

⁶⁷⁸ Brendan Kane, ‘A dynastic nation? Re-thinking national consciousness in early seventeenth century Ireland’, in David Finnegan et al, eds. *The Flight of the Earls*, (Derry, 2010), 124.

⁶⁷⁹ Brendan Kane, *The Politics and culture of honour in Britain and Ireland, 1541-1641*, (Cambridge, 2010), 1.

who had been regional powers in Ireland for centuries, and whose concern was to protect their status against challenges from others of any nationality.

Other historians, like Edmund Curtis, Darren McGettigan and John McCavitt, imbue O'Donnell with an anti-English fervour, occasioned by his imprisonment in Dublin Castle between 1587 and 1592, rather than stressing his nationalist credentials.⁶⁸⁰ These arguments involve suggestions that Hugh's stance meant that he would never deal with the English. This view has been rejected by Hiram Morgan, who states that O'Donnell was prepared to work with Elizabeth when this worked in his interests.⁶⁸¹ Discord reignited only when he was relatively secure in Tír Conaill and sought to extend his sphere of influence in the traditional Gaelic manner.

Therefore Hugh's policies were not based upon anti-English sentiment, but were aimed at furthering his interests through alliance with anyone who would support him. Those Englishmen who did not attack his power directly were more tolerable than politicians who had effectively become his local rivals. Consequently, though Standish O'Grady's claim that Irishmen 'hated all the officials' was inaccurate, O'Donnell complained fervently to Elizabeth about the actions of some.⁶⁸² Indeed, Christopher Maginn has recently stressed that the promotion of shire government under 'aggressive English captains' was the primary cause of the war.¹³ Certainly,

⁶⁸⁰ Edmund Curtis, *A history of Ireland*, 2nd edition, (Dublin, 1936), 208; Darren McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell and the Nine Years War*, (Dublin, 2005), 43, 120-1; John McCavitt, *The Flight of the Earls*, (Dublin, 2002), 18.

⁶⁸¹ Hiram Morgan, 'The real Red Hugh', in Pádraig Ó Riain ed. *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh: the life of Red Hugh O'Donnell – historical and literary contexts*, (Dublin, 2002), 23; Walsh, ed. *Beata Aoda Ruaidh Uí Dhomnaill*, II, 37. This has also been effectively conceded by McGettigan. See his *Red Hugh*, 41-2, 67-70.

⁶⁸² Standish O'Grady, *The Flight of the Eagle*, (London, 1897), 110. On O'Donnell's complaints, see Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion: the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland*, (Woodbridge, 1993), 113, 122-3. ¹³ Christopher Maginn, *William Cecil, Ireland and the Tudor State*, (Oxford, 2012), 212.

Hugh's apparent willingness to negotiate with the crown indicates it was the nature of the changes taking place that angered him, rather than the fact they were occurring at all. Like his predecessors, O'Donnell was willing to accept English government if it was beneficial to him, but found that growing numbers of officials wanted to strip him of his land and status. This chapter aims to highlight how those men threatened the traditional aims of O'Donnell power and argues that this was the main source of Hugh's discontent.

Perceptions of Hugh Roe as either favouring the Irish 'nation' or as antiEnglish are the result of a lack of meaningful comparisons with the policies pursued by his predecessors. Bernadette Cunningham has recently argued that the post-1587 entries in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, written in hindsight, emphasise the war with the crown in the 1590s while earlier English interventions in Ulster are scantily acknowledged.⁶⁸³ Some historians have replicated this and represent Hugh Roe's policies as more remarkable than they really were. Hayes-McCoy, for example, states that O'Donnell was reversing 'the policy of generations' by allying with the earl of Tyrone to 'unite' Ulster.⁶⁸⁴ Increased English pressure in Tír Conaill did mean

O'Donnell was more stridently opposed to crown authority than his predecessors. Still it was his father, Hugh McManus, who had initiated the alliance with Tyrone, though their ire was originally turned against their local enemies rather than Elizabeth. Earlier chapters of this thesis have also shown that both Manus and Hugh

⁶⁸³ Bernadette Cunningham, *The Annals of the Four Masters: Irish history, kingship, and society in the early 17th century*, (Dublin, 2010), 202, 212.

⁶⁸⁴ Hayes McCoy, *Scots Mercenary Forces*, 207.

McManus O'Donnell were prepared to form admittedly fragile alliances with other O'Neill lords where useful.⁶⁸⁵ The personal friendship between Hugh Roe and Tyrone did allow for the unusual unity of the 1590s alliance but, as is argued later in this chapter, O'Donnell by no means believed this arrangement would be a permanent political reality.

Renewed English efforts from 1599 onwards to interfere in Tír Conaill's internal politics played an important role in ensuring that relations between the crown and Hugh Roe broke down irrevocably. While stressing that there was a 'grand nation-wide revolt' between 1598 and 1601, Ciaran Brady acknowledges that Ireland remained prone to local feuds.⁶⁸⁶ Within Tír Conaill, this eventually allowed the English to exploit Niall Garbh O'Donnell's desire for power to turn him against Hugh Roe.⁶⁸⁷ As a result, it became apparent that Niall was the crown's man in Tír Conaill, not least as negotiations with O'Donnell and Tyrone had by now been abandoned completely. In accepting English aid, Niall ultimately put his own aims first, rather than subscribing to any notion that Irishmen ought to work together for the good of all. This reinforces the view that those most interested in fighting the English were those who already held local power and they too acted in their own interests rather than those of all Irishmen. Therefore, this chapter contends that Hugh Roe's policies were not particularly unique as he largely aped his predecessors by seeking principally to preserve his lordly status.

⁶⁸⁵ See chapter two, 62-65, 75-76, and chapter three, 135, 138-139.

⁶⁸⁶ Ciaran Brady, 'The captains' games: army and society in Elizabethan Ireland', in Keith Jeffery and Thomas Bartlett, eds. *A military history of Ireland*, (Cambridge, 1997), 137-138.

⁶⁸⁷ John McGurk, *Sir Henry Docwra, 1564-1631: Derry's second founder*, (Dublin, 2006), 91. 19 See, for instance, McCavitt, *Flight of the Earls*, 18.

The discord over O'Donnell's claims to power in Connaught is also critical in explaining why peace could never be reached in the 1590s. There had, of course, been dispute about this issue at times since 1541, but it now increased in intensity. By no means would the English accept that Hugh Roe had rights of overlordship in the western province, though he reiterated this demand repeatedly. The importance of negotiations in spelling out what O'Donnell really wanted has sometimes been downplayed, as it is assumed that he was disingenuous during them.¹⁹ However, there is no reason to think he was not asking for exactly what he sought, even if he knew success was unlikely. Consequently, this chapter emphasises the rebels' demands during negotiations in explaining why Hugh was 'out' in rebellion for so long.

One phenomenon which has been subject to attention from historians is O'Donnell's efforts to gain supranational aid, from Spain especially, against the English. Indeed, McGettigan characterises Hugh's commitment to a Spanish alliance as exceptional.⁶⁸⁸ However, Derek Hirst has recently outlined that, though Tyrone and O'Donnell offered to transfer the sovereignty of Ireland to Philip II, this was a common tactic.⁶⁸⁹ In fact, McGettigan's assessment appears to rest entirely upon the rebels' relative fortune in finally obtaining some Spanish aid in 1601.²² As Tadhg O'hAnnrachain has argued, this had more to do with the fact that the 'prolonged success' of the confederates against the crown made them attractive allies for Spain.⁶⁹⁰ Ultimately, the war's longevity meant Hugh Roe's need for aid continued

⁶⁸⁸ McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 125-6.

⁶⁸⁹ Derek Hirst, *Dominion: England and its island neighbours, 1500-1707*, (Oxford, 2012), 124. 22

McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 126.

⁶⁹⁰ Tadhg O'hAnnrachain, 'The strategic involvement of continental powers in Ireland, 1596-1691', in Padraig Lenihan, ed. *Conquest and Resistance: war in seventeenth century Ireland*, (Leiden, 2001), 32.

over an extended period, causing him to appear more committed to external alliances than his predecessors. Nonetheless, others portray O'Donnell as the impatient pacemaker in efforts to secure Spanish assistance. For John Silke the experienced Tyrone, who knew that Spanish aid had previously been lacking, was more hesitant than O'Donnell in committing to an alliance.⁶⁹¹ Even if this were true, it is unimaginable that Tyrone would not then have advised his closest ally against relying too heavily on Spain. Accepting this is important, because it facilitates a more realistic appraisal of how seriously O'Donnell took the ongoing negotiations with Elizabeth. Later, he also had reason to mistrust Philip II and Philip III, and to keep his options open. Moreover, Hugh's allegiance to Spain only went as far as was also offered to Elizabeth or even James VI of Scotland. Considering this illuminates how, in common with his predecessors, O'Donnell continually had to pursue other avenues of aid in case Spanish aid did not materialise. It was only from 1600 onwards, when he was out of options, that Hugh Roe threw himself totally into Spanish hands in a bid to regain his local predominance.

This chapter attempts to bring all these strands together to show how, by 1601, the crown and its representatives had attacked O'Donnell's power so completely that a peace deal was almost impossible. In doing so, it first considers the dynamic between the crown, Hugh Roe and the earl of Tyrone. It is suggested that O'Donnell initially sought to work with Elizabeth but became more fully aligned with Tyrone as distrust grew regarding English promises to recognise the Ulster lords' local power. Subsequently, O'Donnell's expansionist policy is discussed and

⁶⁹¹ John J. Silke, *Kinsale: the Spanish intervention in Ireland at the end of the Elizabethan wars*, 2nd edition, (Dublin, 2000), 256.

it is argued that the unwillingness of both parties to cede ground on his claims in Connaught was a major obstacle to peace. It is then contended that the point at which any détente became impossible was 1600, when Elizabeth finally committed to a policy of pursuing Hugh Roe's overthrow as lord of Tír Conaill. Previously, the queen had been slow to respond to English officials, such as Ralph Lane, who had urged her to occupy lands within the lordship in order to defeat O'Donnell. It should be acknowledged that even then the queen sought to work with another O'Donnell in Niall Garbh to reform Tír Conaill in a manner pleasing to her. Therefore Elizabeth remained committed to a policy of reducing the power of the lords of Tír Conaill rather than obliterating it. In the crown's view, Hugh Roe had to be removed because he would not accept this. The chapter is rounded out by a summation of Hugh's efforts to obtain external assistance and a brief discussion of the war's aftermath. It is stressed that, in 1603, Rory O'Donnell submitted upon terms which would earlier have seen the crown accept Hugh Roe's continuing rule in Tír Conaill.

The dynamic between O'Donnell, the crown and Tyrone during Hugh Roe's rule

Hugh Roe O'Donnell's policy towards the crown at the outset of his personal rule imitated that of his predecessors as he sought to befriend Elizabeth and negotiated with Dublin to that end. In late April 1592, he wrote to Lord Deputy William Fitzwilliam stressing willingness to serve the queen rather than heed the incitement of her enemies to make war on her.⁶⁹² This veiled threat was intended to remind her that Hugh could secure other allies if she snubbed him. Hugh's tactics were

⁶⁹² Hugh Roe O'Donnell to the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland, 26 April 1592, SP 63/165, f. 22. 26 See chapter two, 62.

strikingly similar to those employed by Manus O'Donnell in his efforts to win Henry VIII's support upon assuming the lordship of Tír Conaill in the 1530s.²⁶ Though Richard McCabe has correctly suggested that such 'professions of loyalty' followed certain 'rhetorical convention', they were still efforts to win the crown's approval.⁶⁹³ Certainly, the way new O'Donnell leaders dealt with English monarchs was little altered, as their recognition of a new lord's status remained desirable whilst he tried to establish himself domestically. This was particularly attractive to Hugh Roe because his inauguration ceremony had been shunned by Hugh McHugh Dubh O'Donnell of Rathmelton and Calvagh O'Donnell's sons, amongst others, indicating that they rejected his leadership.²⁸ To ward off the threat these men might pose to him, O'Donnell found it politically convenient to set aside any anger he felt over his imprisonment in Dublin Castle and seek Elizabeth's favour.

Hugh Roe found that Dublin politicians were keen on friendship and ready to overlook his decisions to take the name of O'Donnell without permission and attack Turlough Luineach O'Neill if he would serve Elizabeth as promised. For her part, the queen was happy to ignore his aggression towards English sheriffs if he would now be peaceable.⁶⁹⁴ Responding to Fitzwilliam, Hugh explained that he would have had no local help in defending the lordship had he not accepted the O'Donnellship, but promised not to attack O'Neill if this pleased the deputy.⁶⁹⁵ O'Donnell was doing his best to accommodate English wishes, but clarifying that he needed to be able to assert local authority effectively. Though Dublin politicians were suspicious

⁶⁹³ McCabe, 'Fighting words', 121. 28
AFM, VI, 1929.

⁶⁹⁴ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 13 June 1592, *CSPI*, IV, (Aug 1588-Sep 1592), 520-1. See Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Tyrone, 26 July 1592, *Cal. MSS Salisbury*, IV, (1590-1594), 218, for Elizabeth and the sheriffs.

⁶⁹⁵ Hugh Roe O'Donnell to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 18 May 1592, SP 63/165, f. 23.

of Hugh and threatened ‘further correction’ should he fail to appear before Fitzwilliam in August 1592, this did not necessarily indicate fractious relations or insincerity on O’Donnell’s part.⁶⁹⁶ Indeed, Anthony St Leger had made similar threats to Manus O’Donnell in 1543 in order to induce his attendance at Parliament and accepted him back into the fold when he did.³² Similarly, in the 1590s the Council wanted to compel Hugh to make peace and resorted to standard tactics in doing so.

Ultimately, Hugh Roe submitted to Fitzwilliam in August 1592. For McGettigan, though, O’Donnell remained ‘anti-English’, because he sought revenge for his imprisonment and realised that ‘his lordship had no future under an expanded English sovereignty over Ireland’.⁶⁹⁷ However, Michelle O’Riordan has argued that the Gaelic lords did not perceive English encroachments into their territories as ‘final’, but always subject to potential reversal.⁶⁹⁸ Hugh Roe’s willingness to negotiate throughout the 1590s indicates that this held true for him. His policy was to strengthen his leverage in these discussions, primarily by bringing as many inferior lords under his power as was possible. Nevertheless, John Silke has argued that Hugh submitted ‘with little sincerity’, and David Finnegan credits Tyrone with seeking peace in Ulster by bringing Fitzwilliam together with an otherwise ‘unrepentant’ Hugh.⁶⁹⁹ It is going too far to assert that Tyrone, who was also unhappy with aspects of English rule, was wholly centred on peace while O’Donnell

⁶⁹⁶ O’Donnell’s request for a loan to cover the cost of travelling to Dublin had caused disquiet in government circles, see Hugh Roe O’Donnell to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 18 May 1592, SP 63/165, f. 23; see Lord Deputy and Council to Hugh Roe O’Donnell, 7 June 1592, SP 63/165, f. 25-25v for threats of ‘further correction’. ³² See chapter two, 72.

⁶⁹⁷ McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 58.

⁶⁹⁸ Michelle O’Riordan, *The Gaelic mind and the collapse of the Gaelic world*, (Cork, 1990), 67.

⁶⁹⁹ John J. Silke, ‘O’Donnell, Hugh [Aodh O Domhnaill, known as Red Hugh, Hugh Roe, Aodh Rua], lord of Tyrconnell,

was completely disinterested. Indeed, Hugh Roe willingly made concessions in 1592, because this promised to solve his immediate problem of internal opposition within Tír Conaill. If he could obtain the crown's recognition of his power there, and even military support, the efforts of Niall Garbh O'Donnell and others to seize control of the lordship could be stymied. Elizabeth might also order English officials to recognise Hugh Roe's authority in the north-west. McGettigan himself acknowledges that O'Donnell agreed to pay rent and to accept the appointment of sheriffs in the lordship, but neglects to explain fully that he did so because there were useful advantages on offer in return.⁷⁰⁰ He also left himself some wiggle room, as he agreed to allow sheriffs into Tír Conaill only on condition that they did not overburden or oppress the lordship.⁷⁰¹

Though Standish O'Grady once argued that O'Donnell had made the English accept 'peace with him on his terms' he had actually acceded to the usual demands, and a little more besides, made of every Tír Conaill lord since the 1540s.⁷⁰² This indicates how valuable peace with Elizabeth was to him, at least while he established his local power fully. Meanwhile, English willingness to support him then highlights a continuing effort to pursue reform by assimilation in Tír Conaill. Hugh's imprisonment was judged to have been unjust, and was blamed upon the poor behaviour of the previous deputy, Sir John Perrot.⁷⁰³ Perrot was the man who had

(1572-1602), *ODNB*, online, (May 2006), paragraph 3 of 16, accessed at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20554>, 17 July 2014; David Finnegan, *Tyrone's rebellion: Hugh O'Neill and the outbreak of the Nine Years War*, (unpublished MA thesis, NUI Galway, 2001), 60-1, 64.

⁷⁰⁰ McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 54.

⁷⁰¹ 'Articles ministered to Hugh Roe O'Donnell upon his oath, whereunto he most willingly yielded', 2 August 1592, SP 63/166, f. 122v.

⁷⁰² O'Grady, *Flight of the Eagle*, 306; See, for instance, chapter two, 69, 110.

⁷⁰³ 'Submission of Hugh Roe O'Donnell to the Lord Deputy and Council', 2 August 1592, SP 63/166, f. 121.

personally wronged Hugh and this proclamation might have lessened his fears that other Englishmen intended his destruction. Moreover, though Fitzwilliam had treated others in Tír Conaill badly, he was now promising to recognise O'Donnell's local power at a time when alternative options were limited.⁷⁰⁴ Thus, in August 1592, the deputy was an acceptable ally who was then also deemed worthy by Hugh's main ally, Tyrone. Ultimately, this dynamic would not last. John Silke has described

O'Donnell's subsequent policies as 'a national struggle, to be supported by Spain, against England'.⁴¹ In fact his demands during negotiations were traditional and any ally who helped him obtain these was acceptable. The strife which continued between the crown and Hugh Roe was not borne of general anti-Englishness on his part but of his reaction to the attempts of certain officials, and later Elizabeth, to smash his local predominance.

Concern about the intent of English officials towards their lordships caused the existing interdependence amongst the Ulster lords to deepen, as Morgan has stressed.⁷⁰⁵ Indeed, the immediate cause of this closer alliance and its entry into rebellion, Morgan correctly asserts, was the decision to send Captain Humphrey Willis into Fermanagh as sheriff in 1593.⁴³ By December, O'Donnell, Tyrone and Hugh Maguire of Fermanagh had sealed their affiliation by giving 'othes' to Edmund McGawran, then Archbishop of Armagh.⁷⁰⁶ Though this also represented a breach of

⁷⁰⁴ Submission of Hugh Roe O'Donnell to the Lord Deputy and Council', 2 August 1592, SP 63/166, f. 121. 41 Silke, 'Hugh O'Donnell', *ODNB*, paragraph 4 of 16.

⁷⁰⁵ Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion*, 140. 43 Ibid, 14, 143.

⁷⁰⁶ Privy Council to Lord Deputy and Council, 7 July 1593, *APC*, XXIV, (1592-3), 365.

Hugh's promises to expel or capture Catholic Bishops, Dublin officials were initially hesitant to pursue an aggressive policy in the north-west in response.⁷⁰⁷ In early 1594 the Irish secretary, Geoffrey Fenton, advised against following the advice of the governor of Connaught, Richard Bingham, to erect garrisons on Tír Conaill's borders until it was certain Hugh Roe was a traitor.⁴⁶ However, by the summer of 1594 O'Donnell had helped Hugh O'Neill seize overall power from Turlough Luineach in Tyrone, and had assisted Maguire against English soldiers at Enniskillen Castle in Fermanagh.⁷⁰⁸ Cumulatively, his actions were taken as evidence of disloyalty and, along with Maguire and Tyrone, Hugh Roe was proclaimed traitor to the English crown in June 1595.⁷⁰⁹ By now, therefore, these three lords were banded together in alienation from Elizabeth yet it is evident that they continued to seek her friendship. This can be detected in their attempts to court her favour, as well as their suggestions on how they might do her bidding henceforth.

In August 1594 Tyrone informed Dublin that 'Odonell craveth a generall pardon for himself, his followers, and cuntrey, and...a thoroughe agreement' and both men came to the negotiating table again and again in the following years.⁷¹⁰ In dealings with English officials between 1594 and 1596, Hugh stressed that he feared English government only because of the treatment officers had meted out in Tír Conaill. In one letter to Lord Deputy William Russell in particular, O'Donnell professed to believe that Elizabeth did not know of the 'tyrannical dealinge' of the

⁷⁰⁷ Privy Council to Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland, 8 February 1593, *APC*, XXIV, (1592-3), 55-56. 46

Geoffrey Fenton to William Cecil, 15 November 1593, *CSPI*, V, (Oct 1592-June 1596), 172.

⁷⁰⁸ *AFM*, VI, 1935, 1949-53; 'Advertisements of Maguire's forces and others', 19 July 1594, SP 63/175, f. 168; Captain Thomas Henshaw to the Lord Deputy, 27 July 1594, SP 63/175, f. 177-177v.

⁷⁰⁹ Geoffrey Fenton to William Cecil, 24 June 1595, *CSPI*, V, (Oct 1592-June 1596), 332.

⁷¹⁰ The Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Deputy and Council, 8 August 1594, SP 63/175, f. 205.

English soldiers.⁷¹¹ On similar lines, O'Donnell continued to justify his own earlier offences by drawing a distinction between his feelings about Perrot's treatment of him and disloyalty towards the queen.⁷¹² Regardless of how keen Hugh Roe really was to accept English rule, he certainly intended to convey that Elizabeth's power was acceptable to him, but the abuse of officials was not.

The lords' solution to this, outlined in February 1595, was that they rather than English sheriffs should collect the crown's rents.⁷¹³ The confederates' aim, as they later outlined, was to show that they could perform the functions expected of officials and prove they deserved to keep their lands 'by their faithfull service and loyaltie'.⁷¹⁴ Similar motivations lay behind the occasional promises by Tyrone and O'Donnell to compel lords like MacWilliam and O'Rourke to submit to Elizabeth.⁷¹⁵ Morgan has argued that, in seeking this type of settlement, Tyrone sought palatinate jurisdiction as retained by Ormond in Tipperary.⁷¹⁶ Certainly the Irish were willing to do Elizabeth's bidding if she removed English contenders from their lordships. However, her acknowledgment in June 1600 that bad sheriffs remained an issue indicates that little was ever done either to address complaints about them or extend any new authority to the confederate lords.⁷¹⁷ One reason for this was that prominent officials like Lord Deputy William Russell preferred to blame men entertained by the

⁷¹¹ Hugh Roe O'Donnell to the Lord Deputy William Russell, 6 January 1595, SP 63/178, f.7-7v; Hugh Roe O'Donnell to the Lord Deputy and Council, 25 August 1594, SP 63/176, f. 23; Commissioners Henry Wallop and Robert Gardiner to the Lord Deputy and Council, 23 January 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 142.

⁷¹² 'Submission of Aodh Odonill [Hugh O'Donnell], chief of his name', 18 October 1595, SP 63/183, f.342; 'O'Donnell's submission', 18 October 1595, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 125.

⁷¹³ 'Articles of submission demanded by O'Donnell and others', 2 February 1595, SP 63/178, f.78.

⁷¹⁴ 'Articles of submission demanded by O'Donnell and others', 2 February 1595, SP 63/178, f.78; 'Demands of the earl of Tírone, O'Donnell and others', 19 January 1596, SP 63/186, f.81.

⁷¹⁵ Lord General Sir John Norris and Geoffrey Fenton to the Privy Council, 14 September 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 104-5.

⁷¹⁶ Hiram Morgan, 'The 1597 Cease-fire Documents', *The Duiche Neill: the journal of the O'Neill country historical society*, 11, (1997), 14.

⁷¹⁷ 'Certain instructions conceived by the Queen's Majesty to be imparted to her Deputy and Council in Ireland', June 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar 1600-Oct 1600), 276.

lords themselves for extorting Irishmen than do anything to curb sheriffs' excesses.⁷¹⁸ Hugh had sought reassurance that abuses would end, asserting that only concerns about this prevented him doing Elizabeth the service that he knew was correct.⁷¹⁹ Nevertheless, officials went largely unchallenged and the efforts of the confederate lords to become integrated into any reformed political, legal and fiscal hierarchy were rebuffed. Consequently, no peace was reached and war continued.

It is perhaps the unwillingness of English officials like Russell to do much to help Irish lords which has informed suggestions that the confederates were disingenuous during peace negotiations. For instance, O'Clerigh asserted that O'Donnell believed an English peace would be 'false' and that Tír Conaill would be seized afterwards as lands in Munster and Leinster had been.⁵⁹ Similarly, McGettigan argues that Hugh Roe thought that any gains he made in negotiations would be reversed quickly by the English.⁷²⁰ He certainly had reason for scepticism about English promises, but this does not mean he was utterly disingenuous in entering negotiations. Furthermore, not all lords in the other provinces mentioned had been dispossessed so there was always hope that Hugh too could avoid that fate. Ultimately, the English were the one permanent external influence in Ireland. Therefore, like his predecessors, he had to proceed on a pragmatic basis in his dealings with Elizabeth and seek any arrangement that might preserve his local power.

⁷¹⁸ Lord Deputy William Russell to William Cecil, February 1595, SP 63/178, f.139v.

⁷¹⁹ 'Notes of oppressions and indirect courses held in Tirconnell', 1594, SP 63/177, f.172. 59
O'Clerigh, *Life of Red Hugh*, I, 129.

⁷²⁰ McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 78.

For their part, the English preferred to seek to cause division amongst the confederate leadership in the mid-1590s, rather than to enter into a full-blown assault on Ulster. For instance, in late December 1597 London wanted an accord with Maguire and Tyrone, who had recently agreed a cessation with Ormond, in the hope of weakening Hugh Roe so much that he would ‘yeeld to anie reasonable condicions’.⁷²¹ At other times, the crown sought to cultivate links with O’Donnell instead. In April 1595, Elizabeth instructed William Russell to entertain Hugh secretly if he could be won from Tyrone as ‘wee have disposicion to favour him’.⁷²² If successful, Tyrone would be blamed for enticing Hugh ‘whose father and predecessors have always been loyal, to enter into rebellion’.⁷²³ Friendship with O’Donnell was thought valuable as it could quiet Connaught and prevent Spaniards landing upon Tír Conaill’s coasts.⁶⁴ In the case of Connaught, a friendly O’Donnell would not be so willing to help lords there in their own disputes with the crown. Such thinking shows an appreciation of the power O’Donnell wielded in the northwest and recognition of the fact that he could still prove to be a valuable ally to the crown. This was remarkably similar to Sussex’s reasoning for cultivating Calvagh O’Donnell in the early 1560s, especially in its reference to control of the coasts.⁷²⁴ Thus, the crown did not quickly write off working with one of the Ulster overlords to pacify the rest of the province. The real intention, however, was to allow Elizabeth

⁷²¹ Privy Council to Conyers Clifford, Governor of Connaught, 28 December 1597, *APC*, XXVIII, (1597-1598), 211; ‘The most humble and penitent submission of me, Hugh, earl of Tyrone, presented in min own person to the Right Honourable the Earl of Ormonde and Ossory’, 22 December 1597, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 478-479.

⁷²² Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy William Russell, 1 April 1595, BL Add MSS 37536, f. 44-45; *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 112.

⁷²³ ‘Proclamation against Tyrone and his confederates’, April 1595, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 111. ⁶⁴ Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Russell, 28 September 1595, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 124-5.

⁷²⁴ See chapter two, 96-97.

to lower the status of all. For this reason, the confederates resisted attempts to break their alliance as this would lower their collective leverage, but neither side was irrevocably committed to war at all costs in the mid-1590s.

The attempts to split the rebel faction did not work as well as they might once have done because the confederate leaders now trusted each other far more than the English. This was not helped by the erratic nature of the policies pursued by English officials in Ireland towards the Ulster lords in the mid-1590s. Judith Barry has highlighted how the Lord Deputy, William Russell, supported the second Earl of Essex, Robert Devereaux, who was in England clamouring for war against Spain as a part of a Protestant crusade against Catholics.⁷²⁵ John Norris' negotiations with the rebels in 1595 were therefore doomed, as Russell was not interested in peace with Irish Catholics and did not want Norris to succeed.⁶⁷ As Norris himself confessed in March 1597, Tyrone was left unsure who he could trust as Norris and Russell were so keen to 'cross one another'.⁷²⁶ Such inconsistency was a feature of English policymaking, with the result that the overlords could not trust the crown enough to consider abandoning the confederacy. It is almost certain that Irishmen thought that some English officials were being disingenuous in the offers they made during negotiations and had a hard time identifying whose promises were to be valued. This was unfortunate, because official crown policy never wholly abandoned entertaining peace with the confederate lords, even by the end of the decade.

Even as she sent a massive force of 16,000 foot to Ireland with the Earl of

⁷²⁵ Judith Barry, 'Sir Geoffrey Fenton and the office of Secretary of State for Ireland, 1580-1608', *IHS*, 35, (2006), 152-3. ⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 154.

⁷²⁶ Lord Deputy John Norris to Robert Cecil, 8 March 1597, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 242.

Essex in 1599, the queen still permitted Essex to give ‘full pardon’ to ‘all rebels’ as long as the terms did not dishonour her.⁷²⁷ Exonerated men were to be fined to recoup some of the war’s costs, but were otherwise only required to pay rents, keep open ‘dangerous passes’, help maintain forts, and use ‘English language and habitte’.⁷²⁸ In short, Elizabeth remained willing to negotiate for peace with the confederacy’s leaders even at this late date. Indeed, though Finnegan argues that the huge English army convinced the Ulster lords that they were now involved in a ‘fight to the finish with the crown’, they were treated favourably by Essex.⁷²⁹ Consequently, Tyrone and the English earl agreed terms for a cessation in September 1599, which was also expected to include Hugh Roe.⁷³⁰ The rebels were to ‘enjoy what they have now quietly during the cessation’ and were not required to allow garrisons to be placed in their lordships either.⁷³¹ All this apparently meant accepting O’Donnell’s power over certain sublords in Connaught too, at least wherever he was then in the ascendant.⁷³² As Derek Hirst suggests, Tyrone’s willingness to negotiate suggests that he still hoped, even then, that Elizabeth might ultimately compromise and it is possible that the same was true of O’Donnell.⁷³³ However, disapproving officials at the English court thought that Essex had left Tyrone in a position ‘to gov[er]ne there as he listed’ and Devereaux’s efforts to defend his actions fell on

⁷²⁷ ‘Instructions for our Cousin and Councillor, Robert, Earl of Essex’, 25 March 1599, SP 63/203, f.230-230v, 233v; SP 63/203, f. 236.

⁷²⁸ ‘Copy of an addition to the instructions of the Earl of Essex’. 25 March 1599, SP 63/203, f. 234v.

⁷²⁹ Finnegan, *Tyrone’s Rebellion*, 105.

⁷³⁰ ‘Journal of the Lord Lieutenant’s proceedings in the North’, 8 September 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 146-7; ‘Essex’s answers to Articles whereof his lordship’s opinion was desired’, 3 October 1599, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 337.

⁷³¹ ‘Articles agreed upon by the Lord Lieutenant and the Earl of Tyrone, the 15th of September 1599’, 15 September 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 154.

⁷³² William Palmer has suggested it meant accepting the rebels kept all their ‘conquests’, see his *The Problem of Ireland in Tudor Foreign Policy, 1485-1603*, (Woodbridge, 1993), 128., 135.

⁷³³ Hirst, *Dominion*, 124.

deaf ears when he rushed home in September 1599.⁷³⁴⁷³⁵ His case was not helped by rumours that he was plotting to overthrow Elizabeth and had promised Tyrone lands in England, which added to the perception that the English earl favoured the rebels.⁷³⁶ Meanwhile, the confederates had been emboldened by their dealings with Essex.

In November 1599, the rebels issued their most extensive demands yet through the earl of Tyrone. As Elizabeth's favourite, Essex, had recently been favourable towards them and their support within Ireland was at its strongest yet, Tyrone felt able to demand that Irishmen hold the positions of Lord Chancellor, Lord Treasurer, Lord Admiral, provincial governor and others.⁷³⁷ Though Morgan argues that these demands were intended to win the support of 'Catholic loyalists' throughout Ireland, he has also acknowledged that Tyrone wanted to retain the power over other Irishmen that his predecessors had had in Ulster.⁷³⁸ This was certainly indicated by the demand that Irishmen be allowed 'all lands and privileges that did appertain to their predecessors 200 years past'.⁷³⁹ In essence, this would mean the confederate leaders continuing as overlords of Ulster without interference. Elizabeth continued to favour some form of agreement, but she was joined by her secretary Robert Cecil in her unwillingness to allow that lords were to retain control over

⁷³⁴ 'Proceedings in the court of Star Chamber of the Earl of Essex in his government of Ireland', 29 November 1599, BL Stowe ⁷³⁵, f. 101. See Paul E. J. Hammer, 'Devereaux, Robert, second earl of Essex (1565-1601), soldier and politician', *ODNB*, online, (October 2008), paragraph 48 of 56, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7565>, accessed 15 July 2014, on Essex's return to England to appeal to Elizabeth's mercy.

⁷³⁶ 'Speeches in the Star Chamber, concerning the affairs of Ireland' (copy), 1599, BL Cotton Titus B/X, f. 367v; 'A declaration of Sir William Warren to Tyrone', 3 October 1599, SP 63/206, f. 50v.

⁷³⁷ 'Articles intended to be stood upon by Tyrone', November 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 280.

⁷³⁸ Hiram Morgan, 'Never any realm worse governed: Queen Elizabeth and Ireland', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, sixth series, XIV, (2004), 307. On the latter point, see Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion*, 165.

⁷³⁹ 'Articles intended to be stood upon by Tyrone', November 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 280.

sublords.⁷⁴⁰ It was perhaps the queen's refusal to move on this point which caused Tyrone to reject calls for a further cessation in November 1599.⁷⁴¹

This struggle for control over sublords in Ulster and Connaught had in fact been a permanent stumbling block in negotiations between the confederate lords and the crown, as is discussed more fully in the next section. Also critical in pushing crown-O'Donnell relations to breaking point in the war's later stages was the most effective English intervention in Tír Conaill's internal politics yet. All this was for the first time occurring alongside a dynamic whereby the leading O'Neill was an O'Donnell lord's most reliable ally. As Morgan suggests, their alignment had been forged in opposition to 'high level of government interference, in the form of spasmodic military incursions' into Tír Conaill as well as the 'onerous exactions' of English soldiers upon the people there.⁸³ Elizabeth's unwillingness to do much to curb the excesses of her officials led the two Ulster overlords to regard the English as the biggest threat to their local authority. The relative unity of O'Neill and O'Donnell ensured the war's longevity and allowed Hugh Roe to continue pushing for the best terms he could possibly extract from the crown. His chances of doing so were linked to his ability to pursue power over men in northern Connaught to his south, which was enhanced by the fact that he did not have to fear attack from Tyrone to the east. Previous O'Donnell leaders had rarely had this luxury for any length of time, as war with the O'Neills had been the norm. However, O'Donnell's

⁷⁴⁰ On Elizabeth, see Queen Elizabeth to the Lords Justices, the Lord Lieutenant Ormond and the Council, 6 October 1599, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 340; 'Hears of matters for our cousin the Earl of Ormonde to urge Tyrone to at the meeting, 6 October 1599, SP 63/205, f 467-467v. On Robert Cecil, see 'Speeches in the Star Chamber, concerning the affairs of Ireland', 1599, B. L. Cotton Titus B/X, f. 378.

⁷⁴¹ 'Warren's third trip to Tyrone to negotiate with him', 13 November 1599, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 348-9. ⁸³ Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion*, 113.

aggressive expansion into northern Connaught from the mid-1590s onwards was to place him on a collision course with Elizabeth and her officials and make peace negotiations even more difficult.

O'Donnell's expansionism: its character and impact upon his relations with the crown

As discussed in earlier chapters, it was a traditional O'Donnell policy to seek to expand the family's influence into other lordships, particularly those in northern Connaught.⁷⁴² Control over men in the western province was attractive for a few reasons. Having subdued lords such as O'Connor Sligo, the O'Donnell lords would then be able to call upon these Connaughtmen for military assistance in the future. This could enable the O'Donnells to extend their sphere of influence ever further, through the means of this enhanced army. Furthermore, as has been mentioned, some places in Connaught were rich in natural resources, such as cattle and fish.⁷⁴³ If an O'Donnell leader managed to compel lords in northern Connaught to pay tribute, he could expect some share of these goods. In turn, this enabled the O'Donnells to feed their army and pay for the services of Scottish mercenaries. Of course, the lords of northern Connaught would always try to resist O'Donnell overlordship, as they did not accept the claims of the lords of Tír Conaill over men in the western province in principle.

In the years following 1541, the English had sought to curb the expansionist tendencies of the O'Donnells as one facet of the political reform of the island. In

⁷⁴² See chapter two, 79-84, and chapter three, 124-131.

⁷⁴³ See chapter one, 48, for some examples of Connaught's natural riches.

1543, Manus O'Donnell had promised to cease invading others if the crown fulfilled pledges made to him.⁷⁴⁴ Similarly, in August 1592, Hugh Roe agreed not to attack his neighbours as part of his accord with Fitzwilliam.⁷⁴⁵ However, just as his 'loyal' predecessors had always done, Hugh Roe ultimately broke his word. This was partly because he was bound by Gaelic tradition to seek expansion, but also because it funded his war effort against the encroaching English troops on the borders of Tír Conaill.⁷⁴⁶ Therefore, Hugh's policy was not unique. Instead, he followed the pattern of his predecessors by seeking to secure power at home in Tír Conaill before building alliances in order to further his sphere of influence. Even his negotiations with the English, however half-hearted, were aimed towards the goal of obtaining recognition of his power in northern Connaught as well as in Tír Conaill. O'Donnell was to find that the English were no longer willing to tolerate any expansionism whatsoever, and it was on this point that peace negotiations foundered again and again. Furthermore, Hugh Roe indicated repeatedly that, if the crown would not allow his claims, he would resort readily to the conventional means of asserting overlordship. Therefore, though he was compelled to pursue force by the English stance towards him, both his policy towards Connaught and the means of achieving it remained traditional in outlook.

As soon as Hugh Roe began to interfere in other lordships, some Englishmen raised a tumult to seek his overthrow. Throughout the latter half of 1592 and into 1593, William Fitzwilliam and Richard Bingham complained of Hugh's aid for the

⁷⁴⁴ See chapter two, 83-84.

⁷⁴⁵ 'Articles ministered to Hugh Roe O'Donnell upon his oath, whereunto he most willingly yielded', 2 August 1592, SP 63/166, f. 122.

⁷⁴⁶ On Hugh's financing of war by controlling Connaught, see McGurk, *Docwra*, 70.

Burkes of Mayo, Brian O'Rourke of Leitrim and Maguire of Fermanagh in their revolts.⁷⁴⁷ Bingham was particularly vociferous in accusing O'Donnell of supporting Maguire's 'rebellious' expulsion of Sheriff Humphrey Willis from Fermanagh.⁷⁴⁸ As William Palmer has suggested, the Irish viewed the introduction of a sheriff into Maguire's lordship as akin to extending the Monaghan Settlement there.⁷⁴⁹ Hugh Roe's assertions that he feared being next to feel Willis' wrath if he left Maguire to his fate were plausible, but this intervention in another lordship did mean O'Donnell was defying his submission's terms.⁷⁵⁰ Therefore, Bingham's accusations held some water in government circles. He and his ally, Ralph Lane, went on to repeatedly argue for control of Sligo, Belleek and other castles near Tír Conaill's southern border on the grounds that O'Donnell had supported 'all the banished traitors' of Connaught and spoiled Elizabeth's subjects there.⁷⁵¹ By October 1594, Elizabeth's secretary William Cecil had accepted the view that Belleek and Bundrowes in northern Connaught ought to be seized to stop O'Donnell plundering in the western province, although little was done to put such a scheme into practice before 1601.⁷⁵² Instead, Bingham and then Conyers Clifford were expected to repel O'Donnell with whatever forces they were sent, while the crown continually denied the right of Hugh Roe to power over Connaught's lords. This was evidenced in several ways.

⁷⁴⁷ Richard Bingham, Governor of Connaught, to William Cecil, 15 June 1592, *CSPI*, IV, (Aug 1588-Sep 1592), 524; Lord Deputy William Fitzwilliam to William Cecil, 7 July 1592, *CSPI*, IV, (Aug 1588-Sep 1592), 538; Richard Bingham to William Cecil, 25 September 1592, 590-1.

⁷⁴⁸ 'Report by Patrick Barnewall of his interview and speeches with Sir Richard Bingham', 12 October 1593, SP 63/172, f. 71; *AFM*, VI, 1963-5.

⁷⁴⁹ Palmer, *The problem of Ireland*, 128.

⁷⁵⁰ 'Intelligence brought to Sir Richard Bingham the 29th of September by several espials', 2 October 1593, *CSPI*, V, (Oct 1592-June 1596), 163. There is evidence that Bingham himself wanted to follow up the weakening of Maguire with an attack on O'Donnell at 'Report by Patrick Barnewall of his interview and speeches with Sir Richard Bingham', 12 October 1593, SP 63/172, f. 71.

⁷⁵¹ Richard Bingham to the Lord Deputy, 22 July 1594, SP 63/175, f. 171. On calls for control of castles on Tír Conaill's borders, see Ralph Lane to William Cecil, 25 March 1593, *CSPI*, V, (Oct 1592-June 1596), 86; Ralph Lane to William Cecil, 10 March 1593, SP 63/168, f. 200-200v and Ralph Lane to William Cecil, 10 January 1594, SP 63/173, f. 39-39v. For details of Lane and Bingham's long-standing friendship, see Rory Rapple, 'Taking up office in Elizabethan Connacht: the case of Sir Richard Bingham', *EHR*, CXXIII, (2008), 280.

⁷⁵² 'Memorial by Burghley for matters of Ireland', 24 October 1594, SP 63/176, f. 187v.

While he worked to obtain his own pardon from the crown, O'Donnell sought to win clemency for his dependents. In 1594 and 1596, he canvassed for Brian Oge O'Rourke of Leitrim, Maguire of Fermanagh and others to be exonerated and restored to their lordships.⁷⁵³ For English policymakers, however, Hugh's insistence on this point was an obstacle to granting him his own pardon.⁷⁵⁴ Their objections were typified by Geoffrey Fenton's claim that allowing overlords to claim sublords as their 'adherents' encouraged others to rebel in the hope of obtaining favourable settlements for themselves.⁷⁵⁵ This was not a wholly new line of argument, as Anthony St Leger had argued in 1543 that allowing lords such power hampered reform efforts. The crown now denied Hugh's claims in Connaught and planned to demand he ensure his people did not 'reside' there and no Connaughtmen lived in Tír Conaill.⁷⁵⁶ After 1592, O'Donnell would never submit, even in theory, to suggestions that he should refrain from becoming involved in Connaught's politics. At the same time, he promised to cease using external aid at junctures between 1594 and 1596.⁷⁵⁷ This illuminates Hugh's main concern: the threat to his local power. Foreign allies were of secondary concern and useful only insofar as they enabled him to pursue this effectively.

Despite English demands that he stop intervening in Connaught, O'Donnell instead continued to seek acknowledgement of his claims there in 1595 and 1596,

⁷⁵³ The Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Deputy and Council, 8 August 1594, SP 63/175, f. 205. Hugh reiterated this request in January 1596, see 'Demands of the Earl of Tirone, O'Donnell, and others', 19 January 1596, SP 63/186, f.81.

⁷⁵⁴ Lord Deputy and Council to Hugh Roe O'Donnell, 1 September 1594, SP 63/176, f. 33; Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy William Russell, 31 October 1594, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 101.

⁷⁵⁵ Geoffrey Fenton to Sir William Cecil, 12 February 1596, SP 63/186, f. 201.

⁷⁵⁶ 'Memorial drawn up for consideration of the terms of a pacification with the rebel the Earl, O'Donnell, and others', 9 September 1595, SP 63/183, f.69; 'Articles to be preferred to Tyrone and others of the traitors craving pardon', 12 September 1595, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 122.

⁷⁵⁷ The Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Deputy and Council, 8 August 1594, SP 63/175, f. 205; Lord Deputy and Council to Hugh Roe O'Donnell, 1 September 1594, SP 63/176, f. 33. Hugh again promised to send Scots away in January 1596. See 'Articles propounded by the Commissioners to O'Donnell', 28 January 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 159.

offering to pay Elizabeth ‘such rentes and services’ as the province owed her in return.⁷⁵⁸ Hugh’s suggestion may have been intended to show willingness to replicate the functions Bingham performed as Connaught’s governor. However, Elizabeth was not interested and rejected O’Donnell’s right to power in Sligo.⁷⁵⁹ She also refused to leave that town free of a sheriff or a garrison, but agreed to accept that O’Connor owed Hugh Roe services if proof was shown.⁷⁶⁰ Thus, Elizabeth accepted that Hugh perhaps had some rights in Sligo, but was not its overlord and so had no say in its military or legal set-up. O’Donnell’s response to this argument can be gleaned from his earlier claim that he could not owe the queen for damage done in Connaught as the ‘loss redoundeth to himself’ since the territory belonged to him.⁷⁶¹ In this respect, Sean Connolly’s recent assertion that the terms extended by Elizabeth to the confederates in 1596 were attractive to them is erroneous, because Hugh was utterly unwilling to countenance a loss of status in Connaught.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the rebels remained ‘out’, as Morgan correctly argues, because they were not wholly satisfied with what they had been offered.¹⁰⁵ The fact that the crown’s attitude on this question was also hardening ensured that no lasting peace was then reached.

O’Donnell’s response to the floundering negotiations in early 1596 was to continue overawing Connaught as he saw fit, although this led to disapproving noises from English officials. In late March, Richard Bingham complained that the confederates planned to inaugurate an O’Kelly lord of Imany and other reports

⁷⁵⁸ On 1595 letter, see ‘Articles of petition and demand by O’Donnell and others’, 2 February 1595, SP 63/178, f.78; for 1596, see ‘Demands of the Earl of Tirone, O’Donnell, and others’, 19 January 1596, SP 63/186, f.81.

⁷⁵⁹ ‘The Queen’s answers to O’Donnell’s petitions’, 2 March 1596, SP 63/187, f.4.

⁷⁶⁰ ‘The Queen’s answers to O’Donnell’s petitions’, 2 March 1596, SP 63/187, f.4.

⁷⁶¹ Articles propounded by the Commissioners to O’Donnell’, 28 January 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 159.
¹⁰⁴ S. J. Connolly, *Contested Island: Ireland 146-1630*, (Oxford, 2007), 240. ¹⁰⁵ Morgan, *Tyrone’s rebellion*, 209.

stressed that O'Donnell meant to uphold other lords he had already created in the western province.⁷⁶² In pursuing this traditional policy of expanding his sphere of influence, Hugh Roe had two aims. One was to win favour in Tír Conaill by obtaining wealth from other lordships.¹⁰⁷ He also wanted to use his burgeoning power to strengthen his bargaining hand in negotiations with the English by proving his usefulness to Elizabeth through these exhibitions of political power.⁷⁶³ However, Hugh and his allies were instead accused of trying to seize 'the government of the country' from her.⁷⁶⁴ This charge was extended principally by those who saw themselves or their friends as contenders with the likes of O'Donnell for Elizabeth's patronage. Such motivations led the deputy, William Russell, to argue later that allowing Hugh Roe to defend his adherents' rights would prevent the queen granting lands in Connaught to English servitors.⁷⁶⁵ Russell's reasoning was in line with the thinking of the Privy Council, who had already argued that permitting the rebel leaders to represent Connaughtmen in negotiations would imply that Elizabeth recognised the Ulstermen as overlords of the western province.⁷⁶⁶ By now, this was the last thing she wanted to convey.

Elizabeth and her officials came to prefer cultivating Connaught lords against Hugh Roe's power there. She had previously considered supporting an O'Connor Sligo lord against Hugh McManus O'Donnell and this policy was resurrected in

⁷⁶² Richard Bingham to William Cecil, 20 March 1596, *CSPI*, V, (Oct 1592-June 1596), 501. See also 'Report of Gillaboy Flannigan, to the Lord Deputy, of the intentions of the rebels', 12 May 1596, *CSPI*, V, (Oct 1592-June 1596), 522. 107 Jane Ohlmeyer has observed that all Irish elites still sought to do this in the sixteenth century. See her *Making Ireland English: the Irish aristocracy in the seventeenth century*, (New Haven, 2012), 29.

⁷⁶³ Darren McGettigan observes that Hugh's successes in Connaught in the mid-1590s did indeed leave Elizabeth 'playing with a weak hand'. See his *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, 71.

⁷⁶⁴ Lord General John Norris and Secretary Geoffrey Fenton to the Privy Council, 6 July 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 4.

⁷⁶⁵ Lord Deputy William Russell to the Privy Council, 14 October 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 140.

⁷⁶⁶ Privy Council to Lord General John Norris and Secretary Geoffrey Fenton, 22 July 1596, *APC*, XXVI, (1596-1597), 39.

1596. It was believed a friendly Donough O'Connor Sligo could prevent O'Donnell's incursions into Connaught.⁷⁶⁷ Consequently, William Cecil was prepared to listen to Donough's pleas to have Ballymote Castle returned to him in order to repel his 'ancient enemy Odonell'.⁷⁶⁸ In the latter half of 1596, Hugh Roe responded to this prospective alliance against him by trying to compel O'Connor to join his faction and later promised to defend him if he did so.⁷⁶⁹ He also tried to have John Norris promise that no English forces would be sent to Sligo until the dispute with Donough was settled.⁷⁷⁰ In the latter action, Hugh's aim was probably to show O'Connor he could not rely on sustained English aid. Meanwhile, O'Donnell joined Tyrone in offering to compel Connaughtmen under their power to submit to the English.⁷⁷¹ By this means, the lords hoped to show that they were Elizabeth's allies, who would work with her officials to pacify sublords if their superiority over the latter was acknowledged. However, the English opted to support O'Connor instead, prompting Hugh to proceed to forcible attempts to win Sligo Castle in early 1597.⁷⁷² As O'Donnell's attempts to have his rights in Connaught acknowledged through official channels had failed, he was again resorting to force to assert these claims.

It is Hugh Roe's continual use of force and coercion upon prospective allies which indicates that his aim in Connaught was principally to exercise overlordship

⁷⁶⁷ Lord General John Norris and Secretary Geoffrey Fenton to the Privy Council, 6 July 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 5.

⁷⁶⁸ Donough O'Connor Sligo to William Cecil, 16 October 1596, SP 63/194, f. 138. Ballymote had been held by Richard Bingham since he had taken up the position of Governor of Connaught in 1584. On this, see John H. Andrews, 'Sir Richard Bingham and the mapping of western Ireland', *PRIA*, 103, C, (2003), 65. Bingham had attempted to protest such a move on the grounds that the queen, rather than O'Connor, was the true owner of Ballymote. See Sir Richard Bingham to William Cecil, 20 August 1595, SP 63/182, f.225.

⁷⁶⁹ Secretary Geoffrey Fenton to Lord Deputy William Russell, 5 September 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 102;

'Message delivered to O'Connor Sligo from O'Donnell', October 1596, SP 63/194, f. 139.

⁷⁷⁰ Hugh Roe O'Donnell to Lord General John Norris, 11 September 1596, SP 63/193, f. 173.

⁷⁷¹ Lord General John Norris and Secretary Geoffrey Fenton to the Privy Council, 14 September 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 104-5.

⁷⁷² Captain Gifford to Henry Wallop, 16 March 1597, SP 63/198, f. 135.

rather than work for the good of all Irishmen. As O’Clerigh suggests, Hugh sometimes acted as a supportive ‘pillar’ of Connaughtmen who had been dispossessed by Englishmen.⁷⁷³ A good overlord had to defend his adherents and when O’Donnell did this effectively some men in the western province supported him readily. For instance, in 1596 the MacWilliam Burkes of Mayo contrasted Tyrone and O’Donnell’s treatment of them as ‘men of good accompt’ with Richard Bingham’s harsh handling.⁷⁷⁴ Others in Connaught would flit to Hugh Roe’s side whenever he won a significant victory, such as his defeat of the-then governor of Connaught, Conyers Clifford, at Collooney Castle in 1599.⁷⁷⁵⁷⁷⁶ However, the allegiance of many lords in Connaught was wholly dependent on Hugh’s ability to defend them and the appearance that the confederacy might win the war. It was also based on a large measure of compulsion, as O’Donnell’s claims in Connaught were not accepted where lords there felt able to resist him.

O’Donnell’s tactics in securing submissions from unwilling allies indicate that he was asserting overlordship, rather than acting out of benevolence towards potential friends. He routinely burned around Clanricard and Thomond between 1595 and 1600 in his efforts to force the earls there to align with him.⁷⁷⁷ Shows of

⁷⁷³ O’Clerigh, *Life of Red Hugh*, I, 79, 113. See also Brady, ‘The Captains’ Games’, 158, where he observes that some Connaughtmen actively sought such support from O’Donnell.

⁷⁷⁴ ‘The complaints of the Burkes that were ready to come in’, 1596, SP 63/189, f. 9, 10v.

⁷⁷⁵ Clifford’s defeat is mentioned in The Earl of Essex and the Council to the Privy Council, 14 August 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 123. Reports that this caused Connaughtmen to side with the rebels are in evidence at The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, 19 August 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 125; Gerrot Comerford, Attorney General of Connaught, to Robert Cecil, 27 August 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 135. Similar examples can be found at ‘Journal of Sir William Russell, 24 June 1594-23 May 1597’, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 254; ‘Rebels in Connaught, by Sir Conyers Clifford’, September 1597, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 269-70; Lord Deputy Russell and Council to Privy Council, 20 January 1597, BL Cotton Titus/XII, f. 484.

⁷⁷⁷ ‘Journal of Sir William Russell, 24 June 1594-23 May 1597’, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 254; Lord Deputy Mountjoy to George Carew, 1 July 1600, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 406; Redmond Fallon to Geoffrey Fenton, *CSPI*, VI (July 1596-Dec 1597), 211; Richard Bingham to Robert Gardiner, chief justice of Ireland, 25 January 1597, BL Cotton Titus/XIII, f. 494.

force also made Conor MacDermot of Moylurg and others join Hugh's side in 1596, and caused Brian O'Rourke of Leitrim to shy away from a promise to serve Clifford against O'Donnell in 1598.⁷⁷⁸ Moreover, he continued to extract pledges from, and imprison, those he suspected would disobey him or side with his enemies.⁷⁷⁹ Others who would not obey O'Donnell were removed and replaced with favoured nominees, such as Theobald MacWilliam Burke in Mayo in 1595 and a new O'Brien earl in Thomond in 1598.⁷⁸⁰ As Elizabeth Fitzpatrick has argued, the sole criterion for these choices was willingness to 'accept the overlordship of either O'Neill or O'Donnell'.⁷⁸¹ In this, Hugh Roe showed scant regard for any lord's right to their lands. Nevertheless, although Brendan Kane suggests that O'Donnell's Gaelic rivals thought his tactics 'smacked of tyranny', they were in fact the typical practices by which O'Donnells had asserted their power since their emergence in the twelfth century.⁷⁸² The point is that Hugh was imitating old means of protecting his own status, rather than applying new ways of thinking to uphold either these interests or, indeed, the wishes of all. The lords in Connaught understood that this was how men traditionally asserted power in Gaelic society, but the rules of the game also meant they were free to resist this when they could.

Where Hugh Roe was exceptional is that his expansionism was more successful than almost any of his predecessors. Alongside Tyrone, he responded to

⁷⁷⁸ *AFM*, VI, 2011, 2053-2055. Evidence that O'Rourke had promised to align with Clifford is at Privy Council to Brian O'Rourke, 28 May 1598, *APC*, XVIII, (1597-8), 481.

⁷⁷⁹ O'Clerigh, *Life of Red Hugh*, 111, 113; Lord Deputy Russell and Council to Privy Council, 20 January 1597, BL Cotton Titus/XII, f. 484; John Auchinross to George Nicolson, 17 June 1598, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 1, (1597-9), 221.

⁷⁸⁰ *AFM*, VI, 1987-9. On Thomond, see 'A true declaration of the state of the Province of Connaught, by the Lady Clifford', 31 October 1598, *CSPI*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 304.

⁷⁸¹ Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, 'Parley sites of O'Neill and O'Domhnaill in late sixteenth century Ireland', in David Edwards, ed. *Regions and rulers, 1100-1650: essays for Kenneth Nicholls*, (Dublin, 2004), 215.

⁷⁸² Kane, *Politics and culture of honour*, 108; on suggestions these were O'Donnell tactics since the twelfth century, see Walsh, ed. *Beata Aoda Ruidh Uí Dhomhnaill*, II, 51-2.

the failed negotiations of 1596 by seeking to extend his power as far south as possible. As well as the successes in Connaught outlined above, the confederates also aligned with Feagh McHugh O'Byrne of Wicklow, an ally Hugh Roe had made while imprisoned in Dublin Castle, and later supported the claims of the O'Mores and O'Connors to have their midlands' lands returned to them.⁷⁸³ Tyrone and O'Donnell also sought to lure Munstermen into their party from 1596 onwards by stressing that the confederates would defend Catholicism in Ireland.⁷⁸⁴ Moreover, military victories, such as Tyrone's success over Henry Bagenal at the battle of Yellow Ford in 1598, were used to encourage lords in the midlands and south of Ireland to side with the rebels.⁷⁸⁵ By this means, the confederate faction gained links in each province of Ireland. Soon, English observers began doubting the loyalty of the Irish towns, and the confederacy erected a new Desmond in Munster and drove the English settlers who had been there since the mid-1580s away.⁷⁸⁶ Such was Tyrone's popularity that the-then Lord Deputy, Charles Lord Mountjoy, reported in July 1600 that the Palesmen and the towns were ready to make the earl the 'King of Ireland'.⁷⁸⁷ All this gave credence to the idea that there was relative unity amongst the Irish, which was the real success of the Ulster overlords. Furthermore, as Colm Lennon has argued, English attempts to ramp up the war effort in late 1599 only

⁷⁸³ Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 28 August 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 92; Thomas Jones, Bishop of Meath, to William Cecil, 18 April 1598, *CSPI*, VII (January 1598-March 1599), 117, 119.

⁷⁸⁴ The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 15 October 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 143; The Earl of Tyrone to Edward Gybbon, The White Knight, 7 April 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 8.

⁷⁸⁵ Eleanor Hull, *A history of Ireland and her people*, volume 1, (London, 1926), 407.

⁷⁸⁶ John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, attendant on the Governor of Ostend, 8 November 1598, *CSPDom*, Elizabeth, (1598-1601), 118; James Sarsfield, Mayor of Cork, to the Privy Council, 21 October 1598, *CSPI*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 294.

⁷⁸⁷ Lord Deputy Charles Mountjoy to Robert Cecil, 4 July 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar 1600-Oct 1600), 301. 132

Colm Lennon, *Sixteenth-century Ireland: the incomplete conquest*, (Dublin, 1994), 298.

prompted the rebels to redouble their own endeavours to win lesser lords into their faction in the hope of convincing Spain to send aid.¹³²

Less successful were O'Donnell's efforts to arrange a marriage alliance with the earl of Desmond's daughter in late 1600. Negotiations for this were conducted through the Countess of Desmond and her husband O'Connor Sligo.⁷⁸⁸ John Silke has persuasively suggested that Hugh Roe's efforts to subdue Connaught had been aimed at extending his power this far south.⁷⁸⁹ Ambitious as this was, earlier O'Donnell leaders had also tried to forge links with men in Munster. Indeed, this proposed faction was similar to the short-lived alignment between Eleanor Fitzgerald and Manus O'Donnell in 1538/9. That grouping had also had links with the-then earl of Desmond and O'Connor Sligo.⁷⁹⁰ They, too, had aimed to win concessions from the English or to secure foreign aid against the crown. Importantly, the grouping's success in giving the appearance of a nationwide alliance in opposition to crown rule had had some role in convincing English officials to seek closer relations with the Irish overlords in 1541. The earl of Desmond's attempt to build a faction in order to strengthen his negotiating position in the early 1570s had not met with the same result. Nevertheless, Hugh Roe O'Donnell perhaps held out hope that this strategy could succeed again in 1600.⁷⁹¹ At all events, the methods used to try and realise the lords' demands had not radically altered since the late 1530s. It remained common practice to build a large faction in order to increase leverage in discussions with the

⁷⁸⁸ The proposed marriage alliance was thwarted by the earl of Desmond's reluctance, see Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, 16 December 1600, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 492; Robert Cecil to the Earl of Desmond, 25 January 1601, *Cal. Carew MSS*, IV, (1601-1603), 11; George Carew to Robert Cecil, 22 March 1601, *Cal. Carew MSS*, IV, (1601-1603), 34.

⁷⁸⁹ Silke, *Kinsale*, 54.

⁷⁹⁰ See chapter two, 62-63.

⁷⁹¹ Anthony M. McCormack, *The earldom of Desmond, 1463-1583: the decline and crisis of a feudal lordship*, (Dublin, 2005), 187.

crown. It was also still critical to ignore any suggestion that expansionist policies should be curtailed. Without pursuing these, there was no chance would-be rebels could build the size of clique necessary to cause the crown to listen to their demands. This was one more reason why Hugh Roe would never rescind his claims of overlordship over men in northern Connaught.

Ultimately, the Ulster lords were to find that the English were never going to compromise on the question of expansionism. At their strongest, in 1599, the confederates demanded all the rights that had been in the preserve of their predecessors 200 years before.⁷⁹² However, Elizabeth was not willing to budge and Hugh O'Neill was told that if he wanted peace he must accept that he would have no power over sublords outside Tyrone and that his adherents would be pardoned separately.⁷⁹³ The same undoubtedly held true for O'Donnell. Their response was to reject calls for a further cessation in November 1599, while Hugh Roe and O'Rourke went to Connaught to establish O'Connor in Sligo and install a new O'Brien in Thomond.⁷⁹⁴ The lords had no intention of ceding the ability to create sublords who accepted their power or allowing their adherents to be drawn into the crown's sphere of influence. This was the main sticking point in negotiations throughout the 1590s. The confederate leaders were banking on their ability to continue winning support from lesser lords in order to resist the crown's will. Their days of being able to do this were in fact coming to an end.

⁷⁹² 'Articles intended to be stood upon by Tyrone', November 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 280.

⁷⁹³ Heads of matters for our cousin the Earl of Ormonde to urge Tyrone to at the meeting, 6 October 1599, SP 63/205, f. 467.

⁷⁹⁴ 'Warren's third trip to Tyrone to negotiate with him', 13 November 1599, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 349.

By 1601, Hugh Roe O'Donnell was no longer able to effectively prosecute the war in Connaught, Clanricard and Thomond as the confederates had always intended.⁷⁹⁵ He was also unable to respond to the pleas of his dependent, Theobald MacWilliam Burke, for help against the crown's man, Theobald-na-Long Burke, in Mayo.¹⁴¹ Indeed, O'Donnell's stock had fallen so far that his efforts to persuade Leinstermen to follow him to Munster when Spaniards landed at Kinsale were fruitless.⁷⁹⁶ Recently, Brendan Kane has suggested that submission to the crown remained an option for the confederates right up to the time of the battle of Kinsale in 1601.⁷⁹⁷ Certainly, ongoing discussions had continued until at least 1599, but had come to naught. This was in part because neither the crown nor the confederate leaders would give an inch on the question of the legitimacy of the power of the latter over their adherents. The Ulster overlords could not afford to bend to the crown's will on this issue, because the collection of tribute remained their only means of remaining wealthy and upholding their status.⁷⁹⁸ After 1599, Elizabeth took a different tack in her efforts to subdue O'Donnell. Having negotiated with him at regular intervals since 1594, the queen now finally authorised committed attempts to undermine him within Tír Conaill itself. It was the success of this policy which led to the weakened circumstances O'Donnell found himself in by 1601.

⁷⁹⁵ 'The Examination of Morietagh McDermott McShee', 21 April 1600, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-31 July 1601), 282. 141 *AFM*, VI, 2267.

⁷⁹⁶ The Lord Chancellor and Privy Councillors in Dublin to the Privy Council, 23 November 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 180-1. See McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 95, where he affirms that others saw O'Donnell could no longer protect his adherents.

⁷⁹⁷ Kane, *Politics and culture of honour*, 112.

⁷⁹⁸ Though the English had attempted to bring the Irish lords to commit to rental agreements for their territories, these efforts had failed. The Irishmen expected their political power to be defended in return, but this rarely happened. By the 1590s, the crown was actively looking to have the wealth of the north for itself, which was yet another reason that the confederates remained out in rebellion for so long. These fiscal initiatives, and their impacts upon crown-O'Donnell relations, are discussed more fully in chapter five.

Crown interventions within Tír Conaill during Hugh Roe's rule

As has been outlined, the crown was supportive of Hugh Roe in Tír Conaill in the early days of his rule, which allowed him to repel the threat of those sublords who had initially rejected his authority.⁷⁹⁹ Consequently, O'Donnell was then willing to release O'Docherty from captivity and live in peace with Niall Garbh and Hugh McHugh Dubh O'Donnell as Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam asked.⁸⁰⁰ Thus, the relationship between Hugh and the crown at this point was relatively good. His power over his adherents was acknowledged and so he was willing to offer obedience to Fitzwilliam. While the crown effectively accepted Hugh Roe's continuance as lord of Tír Conaill until 1599, he was concerned about English intentions in the light of the policies pursued in Fermanagh and elsewhere. Furthermore, some Englishmen continually agitated for the removal of lords' power on the grounds that reform could never proceed while it was tolerated.

During the 1590s, certain English officials still advocated conciliation with Irishmen as the way to reform the island. However, these men often supported striking at lordly power in the process. In 1594 Richard Beacon, the former Attorney-General for Munster, emphasised the need to fully abolish already outlawed 'corrupt laws and customs' at last. In particular, Beacon lamented the fact that overlords continued to extort from their inferiors.⁸⁰¹ Of course, this was an imperative for men like O'Donnell, who had no other means of enriching themselves

⁷⁹⁹ *AFM*, VI, 1929, 1935.

⁸⁰⁰ 'Articles ministered to Hugh Roe O'Donnell upon his oath, whereunto he most willingly yielded', 2 August 1592, SP 63/166, f. 122.

⁸⁰¹ Clare Carrol and Vincent P. Carey, eds. *Solon His Follie, or, a Politique discourse touching the reformation of commonweales conquered, declined, or corrupted, by Richard Beacon*, (New York, 1996), 81, 105; D. Alan Orr, 'Inventing the British Republic: Richard Beacon's *Solon His Follie* (1594) and the rhetoric of civilisation', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 38/4, (2007), 977, 983.

and did not receive the crown's patronage. Nevertheless, as Justice Nicholas Walsh later stressed, the continuance of the system of exactions caused men of lesser status to forget their allegiance to the queen in favour of obeying Irish overlords.⁸⁰² Thus, for some Englishmen, the lords' power prevented Elizabeth receiving the proper acknowledgment of her sovereignty over Ireland from her subjects there. Consequently, some English functionaries wanted to intervene within lordships in order to diminish the status of the elite men. This would break their hold over others in Irish society. An example of this tendency saw William Weston propose that freeholders be erected in Ulster and lords left with only with 'a convenient portion' of demesne lands in a bid to reduce their status.⁸⁰³ From 1599 onwards, Elizabeth and her officials began threatening O'Donnell's power in this way by making strenuous efforts to draw his sublords away from him by offering them grants of the lands they held in Tír Conaill in return. Of course, as this occurred, Hugh became more alienated from the crown.

Suggestions that planting English settlers in areas which resisted reform would ensure its eventual success were also prevalent in the 1590s. For instance, George Carew pressed for 'English collonies', resembling those in Munster, to be established in Ulster in April 1594.⁸⁰⁴ Richard Beacon favoured these also, arguing that reform would occur when those living near plantations copied the customs of the settlers.¹⁵¹ Others went further, with Edmund Spenser advocating the conquest of

⁸⁰² Mr Justice Nicholas Walsh to William Cecil, 12 March 1596, SP 63/187, f. 75.

⁸⁰³ Sir William Weston to Sir John Puckering, 28 August 1593, SP 63/171, f. 97-97v.

⁸⁰⁴ 'Treatise on Ireland by Sir George Carewe', April 1594, SP 63/174, f. 28. 151
Carrol and Carey note this preference; see their *Solon His Follie*, XIV.

Ireland on the grounds that England had embraced civil law reforms following the Norman Conquest in the eleventh century.⁸⁰⁵ Spenser's scheme, Jane Ohlmeyer stresses, required English settlers to replace Irish elites and erect 'the political, economic and social framework' necessary for 'a civilised life'.¹⁵³ In 1598, one practical plantation proposal suggested that 2000 Dutchmen should be sent into the north, as their obedience to the law would induce Irishmen living nearby to follow their example.⁸⁰⁶ A similar plan, which had earlier been put forward by the vicar of Christchurch, John Bell, suggested that 2000 English planters go to Ulster to conduct a 'planting warr' against Irish rebels, who were making Elizabeth's 'enheritans' there 'desolate'.⁸⁰⁷ However, effective efforts to enact such schemes in Ulster had to wait until 1609, with other tactics continuing to receive more prominence during the war itself. It is for this reason that viewing O'Donnell reactions to English rule in the sixteenth century through the prism of the colonial question is not tenable. Though there may have been fears that such a policy could be established one day, this was not what Hugh Roe and his allies were reacting to. Indeed, the crown was not seeking to send settlers into the north in the 1590s but to coerce the existing lords into accepting a reduction in their local authority. Furthermore, the confederate lords were embroiled in a struggle for power with English forces, but also came to be threatened by Irish rivals late in the decade. In short, there were more than two 'sides' vying for control of Tír Conaill by 1600, though the crown had decided to switch its support to Hugh's enemies in the lordship. It was by no means certain at

⁸⁰⁵ Bart van Es, 'Discourses of conquest: the *Faerie Quene*, the Society of Antiquaries and *A View of the present state of Ireland*', *English Literature Renaissance*, 32, (2002), 132-3. See also Ciaran Brady, 'Spenser's Irish crisis: humanism and experience in the 1590s', *Past and Present*, no. 111, (1986), 28-30. 153 Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English*, 100.

⁸⁰⁶ 'A discourse for the reformation of Ulster by colonies', 1598, BL Cotton Titus, XIII, f. 114.

⁸⁰⁷ 'How Irish rebels may be taught to be obedient to Her Majesty, addressed to William Cecil, by John Bell, vicar of Christchurch, 1597, SP 63/201, f. 344v, 345v, 349.

this juncture that the crown would later follow a policy of settlement in Ulster.

The crown's aim in the 1590s was to destroy any leverage the confederate lords had in the ongoing negotiations to ensure that they would accept a deal favourable to English interests. This was best achieved through military success against the Ulster overlords. Accordingly, throughout the 1590s, the most commonly posited means of subduing the north was the continued use of garrisons. These plans usually came from military men, who wanted to ensure they had the benefit of Ireland's resources once victory was achieved. One vociferous proponent of permanent garrisons in Ulster was Captain Nicholas Dawtrey, who repeatedly stressed that they were necessary to fully establish English government there because using Irishmen to keep the peace had failed.¹⁵⁶ Garrisoning was practically applied

¹⁵⁶ Dawtrey wrote on this subject in May 1594, see 'Captain Dawtrey's discourse on Ireland', 24 May 1594, SP 63/174, f. 239v-240v, and in 1597, see Hiram Morgan, 'A booke of questions and answers concerning the warrs or rebellions of the kingdome of Irelande', *Analecta Hibernica*, 36, (1995), 88-9.

often during the 1590s, though it took time for it to be re-established in Tír

Conaill.⁸⁰⁸ In the middle of the decade, Richard Bingham urged fortification at

Derry, emphasising that attacks upon Tír Conaill had earlier rendered Hugh Roe

unable to help Tyrone or invade Connaught.⁸⁰⁹ In 1597, meanwhile, Dawtrey

proposed an encampment in O'Donnell's lordship would prevent Scots from landing

at Lough Foyle or Lough Swilly.⁸¹⁰ Before 1600, however, London was hesitant to

carry out these schemes, perceiving that the Pale would be at risk if Spanish forces

⁸⁰⁸ There had been temporary garrisons at Derry in the 1560s and Donegal Abbey in the 1580s. On the former, see chapter three, 131; on latter, see McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 45.

⁸⁰⁹ Richard Bingham to Robert Cecil, 7 June 1595, SP 63/180, f.61.

⁸¹⁰ Morgan, 'Booke of questions', 119, 122.

landed while attention was elsewhere.⁸¹¹ Nevertheless, some officials continued working towards the day when O'Donnell would feel English power closer to home. This rendered peace with Hugh Roe almost impossible, as the war had initially been caused by fear of renewed English interference within Tír Conaill.

Ciaran Brady has persuasively argued that a principal cause of the war was the 'reckless, expropriative and violent actions' of English military men and other officials within Irish lordships.⁸¹² Certainly, complaints about the behaviour of English functionaries featured prominently in the Ulster lords' expressions of grievance during the war. In 1594, Tyrone reported that Fitzwilliam's long detainment of Hugh McManus O'Donnell's advisor, Owen MacToole O'Gallagher, had caused Hugh Roe 'to be most fearful'.⁸¹³ O'Donnell himself outlined the harsh treatment he believed had been visited upon Tír Conaill by various English officers. Since the early 1580s, Hugh bemoaned, soldiers and their captains had repeatedly preyed upon the lordship and supported Hugh McManus' enemies, like Turlough O'Neill, against him. In particular, John Perrot and William Fitzwilliam were identified as having done little to stop this.⁸¹⁴ Therefore, though Hugh repeatedly stressed that Elizabeth's rule and English law were acceptable to him, he was as clear that the interference of English officials in his lordship was not.⁸¹⁵ He had been

⁸¹¹ 'A consideration had of the plot and project sent out of Ireland', 30 March 1597, SP 63/198, f. 170. This concern stymied plans to send Samuel Bagenal to garrison Lough Foyle in 1598. See 'Instructions given to Sir Samuel Bagnall, knight', 17 August 1598, *APC*, XXIX, (1598-1599), 55-60 and 'Commission for Sir Samuel Bagenall, knight', 7 August 1598, SP 63/204, f. 85. The abandonment of this plan is evident at 'Instructions for Samuel Bagenall, knight', 23 August 1598, *APC*, XXIX, (1598-1599), 85-6.

⁸¹² Ciaran Brady, 'From policy to power: the evolution of Tudor reform strategies in sixteenth century Ireland', in Brian Mac Cuarta, ed, *Re-shaping 1550-1700: colonisation and its consequences: essays presented to Nicholas Canny* (Dublin, 2011), 41.

⁸¹³ 'Causes and articles wherewith the Earl of Tyrone is grieved', 14 March 1594, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 89. O'Donnell himself stated in January 1596 that he had been frightened by this. See 'Hugh O'Donnell's grievances', 27 January 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 153.

⁸¹⁴ 'Notes of oppressions and indirect courses held in Tirconnell', 1594, SP 63/177, f.170-172. O'Donnell again cited this grievance in January 1596, see Hugh O'Donnell's grievances', 27 January 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 152.

⁸¹⁵ 'Notes of oppressions and indirect courses held in Tirconnell', 1594, SP 63/177, f.172.

alarmed by their aggressive behaviour in Fermanagh and elsewhere, and sought assurances that they would not be permitted to set up base in Tír Conaill once more. He met with some success in 1596 when the queen allowed that Hugh Roe's lordship would have no sheriff for now.⁸¹⁶ However, some of Elizabeth's other proclamations, and policies, towards Tír Conaill at this point were less reassuring for O'Donnell.

In her 1596 correspondence with Hugh Roe, the English queen challenged his power over Tír Conaill's sublords by reviving the idea that O'Docherty held Inishowen by English patent rather than on O'Donnell's say-so.⁸¹⁷ Of course, Sir John O'Docherty had completed a surrender and regrant agreement in June 1588 and so Elizabeth felt entitled to claim power over Inishowen.⁸¹⁸ Nevertheless, there was no way any O'Donnell leader would accept this line of argument. As has been mentioned, power over that fertile territory had been one of the key struggles of the O'Donnell-O'Neill wars for over a century.⁸¹⁹ The English had acknowledged O'Donnell authority in Inishowen until the mid-1580s too. Thus, the crown and Hugh Roe would never be able to come to any form of agreement while Elizabeth challenged his rule over this area. Furthermore, she even questioned his right to be O'Donnell at all, arguing that he held Tír Conaill only through his father's life interest and sufferance while he lived.⁸²⁰ This veiled threat was intended to imply

⁸¹⁶ See Demands of the earl of Tirone, O'Donnell and others', 19 January 1596, SP 63/186, f.81; 'Hugh O'Donnell's grievances', 27 January 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 153, on O'Donnell's requests, and 'The Queen's answers to O'Donnell's petitions', 2 March 1596, SP 63/187, f.4; 'Instructions to those of the Council in Ireland sent to meet with Tyrone and O'Donnell, 11 March 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 169, for Elizabeth's response.

⁸¹⁷ 'The Queen's answers to O'Donnell's petitions', 2 March 1596, SP 63/187, f.4; Articles propounded by the Commissioners to O'Donnell', 28 January 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 159.

⁸¹⁸ See chapter three, 173-174, for more on O'Docherty's surrender and regrant agreement in 1588.

⁸¹⁹ See chapter one, 50-51.

⁸²⁰ 'The Queen's answer to O'Donnell's petitions', March 1596, BL Add MSS 37536, f. 51v. In pushing this argument,

that Hugh Roe's shelf-life as O'Donnell was limited and that he would need English favour to retain power. In comparing him unfavourably to Hugh McManus, deemed 'a good faithfull and obedient subiect', Elizabeth was conveying that her support was far from certain in that scenario.⁸²¹ Given the implicit threat to O'Donnell's status, it is little wonder that no lasting peace was reached in 1596.

If Hugh was nervous about Elizabeth's implicit ultimatum, his uneasiness would have been increased by the knowledge that some within Tír Conaill might support moves against him. He had been reliant on English assistance to force some sublords to obey him in 1592. This worked for a time but eventually, as John McCavitt argues, these men became envious of Tyrone and O'Donnell who had benefited most from the confederacy's success.¹⁷¹ Hugh Roe was evidently aware that his sublords were not wholly committed to him. In May 1594, he imprisoned O'Docherty in May 1594 on suspicion of feeding English troops, and had earlier seized pledges from Niall Garbh and others to ensure their fidelity.⁸²² This tension is further evidenced by the efforts of some observers to persuade Elizabeth to take advantage of the divisions within Tír Conaill in order to weaken the rebels. One way to break Hugh Roe's power was to support his rivals for the O'Donnellship against him. Accordingly, the archbishop of Cashel, Miler Magrath, urged her to support either Hugh McHugh Dubh or the sons of Con O'Donnell against Hugh Roe.⁸²³ As

Elizabeth was perhaps mindful of Miler Magrath's 1594 suggestion that Hugh McHugh Dubh O'Donnell had the best claim to Tír Conaill by Gaelic law and Calvagh O'Donnell's sons by English law. See 'Notes on the state of Ireland drawn up with a view to forward the proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Commission', August 1594, SP 63/175, f. 294v.

⁸²¹ 'The Queen's answer to O'Donnell's petitions', March 1596, BL Add MSS 37536, f. 51v. 171 McCavitt, *Flight of the earls*, 26.

⁸²² 'Declaration by Darby Newman of speeches made by the Earl of Tirone', 19 February 1594, SP 63/173, f. 173v; 'Note of intelligences received out of the North', 20 May 1594, SP 63/174, f. 215.

⁸²³ The sons of Con O'Donnell were Niall Garbh, Con and Hugh Boy. See genealogical table, page xiv of this study. 174 Notes on the state of Ireland drawn up with a view to forward the proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Commission', August 1594, SP 63/175, f. 294v.

the senior man in the lordship, Hugh McHugh had a claim by Gaelic law.

Meanwhile, Con's sons had a claim to the lordship via English law because their grandfather, Calvagh O'Donnell, had held the lordship by patent from the crown.¹⁷⁴

Another means of weakening O'Donnell was by securing the support of Tír Conaill's other sublords for the crown. A religious figure named Meredith Hanmer stressed in 1597 that this was possible because O'Docherty and others hated O'Donnell for claiming the rights to their lands and wished to be free of his extortion.⁸²⁴ Despite the fact that the English had the potential to build a faction against Hugh Roe, successful moves in this direction had to wait until 1598 when the governor of Connaught, Conyers Clifford, secured the submission of Shane McManus Oge O'Donnell of Tory Island.⁸²⁵ However, as the English began to extend their alliance further into the north-west, the confederates were on the verge of making their clearest demonstration yet that this was the crux of their grievance.

The confederate leaders continually looked for some sort of agreement with the crown in the 1590s. Nicholas Canny has argued that the earl of Tyrone did so because he sought 'palatinate jurisdiction' in the north in order to thwart any challenge his half-brother, Cormac MacBaron, might make for power there.⁸²⁶

Similar motivations had governed the interest of both Conn Bacach O'Neill and Manus O'Donnell in seeking English titles in the 1540s.¹⁷⁸ Hugh Roe, who had envious rivals at home, also had reason to desire Elizabeth's promises that she would

⁸²⁴ 'The description of the Realm of Ireland, by Meredith Hanmer', 1597, SP 63/201, f. 374; 'Notes on the state of Ireland drawn up with a view to forward the proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Commission', August 1594, SP 63/175, f. 294v.

⁸²⁵ Conyers Clifford, Governor of Connaught, to the Privy Council, 24 April 1598, *CSP*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 129-30.

⁸²⁶ Nicholas P. Canny, 'Taking sides in early modern Ireland: the case of Hugh O'Neill of Tyrone' in Vincent Carey and Ute Lotz-Heumann, eds. *Taking Sides? Colonial and confessional mentalities in early modern Ireland*, (Dublin, 2003), 105. 178 See chapter two, 68-69.

not support them instead. As mentioned above, this was far from guaranteed as she had not been above implying that she did not wholly accept his claim to Tír Conaill was lawful. The concern of the Ulster overlords regarding recognition of their local authority was reflected in their November 1599 demand that they were allowed to retain the traditional rights and privileges which ruling O'Donnells and O'Neills had claimed for centuries.⁸²⁷ In effect, the confederate leaders were asking Elizabeth to accept that she would have no right to interfere with their ability to treat their sublords as they saw fit. However, they were also seeking assurances that they, personally, would have her support in upholding these claims against both external and internal opponents. Like the other demands made by the rebels at this time, the queen ignored this. Indeed English policy, if anything, turned more decisively towards breaking the hold of the provincial powers over their sublords. Consequently, after 1599, negotiations were abandoned. The rebel leaders were now, finally, faced with the war on their doorsteps that the 1590s campaign had been fought to avoid.

In 1600, the English decided upon direct action in Tír Conaill and followed a two-pronged policy. The first part of this saw Sir Henry Docwra sent to govern northern Tír Conaill and Captain Matthew Morgan to do the same in the south of the lordship and in Fermanagh.⁸²⁸ As John McGurk observes, the aim of this was to divide the confederates while preventing Hugh Roe's forays into Connaught.¹⁸¹ This initially failed, as he freely plundered Thomond and further south in the summer of

⁸²⁷ 'Articles intended to be stood upon by Tyrone', November 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 280.

⁸²⁸ 'Instructions for the Lord Mountjoy', January 1600, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 446; 'Commission to Henry Docwra to be commander and governor of the forces and inhabitants of Loughfoyle', 14 March 1600, 'Fiant Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 17th report, (Dublin, 1885), 117-118; 'Commission to Matthew Morgan to be commander over Ballyshannon, Fermanagh, Assaroe, Tirhugh etc', 14 March 1600, 446. ¹⁸¹ McGurk, *Docwra*, 51.

1600.⁸²⁹ This was a result of his ability to continue meeting with his Connaught supporters to go raiding, indicating that Matthew Morgan was either absent or ineffectual in the south of Tír Conaill.¹⁸³ Hugh Roe's men also hurt Docwra in battle in late July 1600, and O'Donnell stole 200 horses from the English garrison.⁸³⁰ His successes, however, were merely temporary. This was because the second part of the policy being pursued by the crown was beginning to bear fruit.

Immediately upon arriving at Lough Foyle, Docwra had made moves to further the policy of cultivating Tír Conaill's sublords to weaken O'Donnell. A new governor of the fort at Derry, Docwra was particularly keen on friendship with the lord of Inishowen, Sir John O'Docherty, whose land was fertile and could help sustain the Foyle garrison.⁸³¹ As the O'Dochertys had long been keen to throw off O'Donnell overlordship, Sir John set aside his suspicion of Docwra in October 1600 and asked for power over Inishowen as granted in his 1588 submission.⁸³² As Sir Henry was beginning to have some success against O'Donnell, O'Docherty's request was also perhaps an indication that his instinct for self-preservation was kicking in. Though Sir John died early the next year, Cahir O'Docherty and his MacDevitt allies joined Docwra's faction as his candidate for Inishowen, against O'Donnell's choice of Felim Oge O'Docherty, and their power effectively allowed the governor to secure

⁸²⁹ *AFM*, VI, 2195-2201; Lord Deputy Mountjoy to George Carew, 1 July 1600, Cal. Carew MSS, III, (1589-1600), 406. 183 Sir Arthur Savage, Governor of Connaught, to Robert Cecil, 3 July 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar 1600-Oct 1600), 291; *AFM*, VI, 2195-2201.

⁸³⁰ Captain Humphrey Willis to Robert Cecil, 31 July 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar 1600-Oct 1600), 334.

⁸³¹ Henry Docwra, Governor of Lough Foyle, to Robert Cecil, 19 December 1600, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-31 July 1601), 94. Docwra boasted of having obtained this in March 1601. See Henry Docwra, Governor of Lough Foyle, to Robert Cecil, March 1601, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-31 July 1601), 213.

⁸³² On the O'Dochertys' hopes to be free of O'Donnell power, see McGurk, *Docwra*, 216. For O'Docherty's request for Inishowen, see Captain Humphrey Willis to Robert Cecil, 29 October 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar 1600-Oct 1600), 535. However, O'Docherty remained ever suspicious of Docwra and later accused him of 'being set upon war', see Sir John O'Docherty to Henry Docwra, December 1600, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-31 July 1601), 76.

Inishowen for the war's duration.⁸³³ This gave Docwra authority over a fertile and productive part of Tír Conaill, making it easier for him to feed his army and making it more difficult for O'Donnell to do the same thing.

Docwra also succeeded in winning the support of Mulmurry MacSweeny Doe for a time, though this alliance was more tumultuous. Mulmurry had submitted to the crown in April 1600 in return for a regrant of his lands and an award of the lordships of Fanad and Banagh.⁸³⁴ This effectively entailed acknowledging Mulmurry as supreme among the MacSweeneys. Traditionally, the Fanad branch were seen as the senior line of the family, but this would have given MacSweeny Doe power over Fanad to his east, and the lands of MacSweeny Banagh in the south-west of Tír Conaill. When Docwra was unable to make good on what had been promised to Mulmurry, he temporarily realigned with Hugh Roe.⁸³⁵ However the Lord of Doe eventually joined MacSweeny Fanad in seeking Sir Henry's favour once more, as O'Donnell was by now acting aggressively towards his inferiors upon 'the least cause of suspicion'.⁸³⁶ Like O'Docherty, it is possible that these MacSweenys were swayed by Docwra's increasing success and his new friendship with Niall Garbh O'Donnell. MacSweeny Doe's constancy remained uncertain throughout the war, meaning the crown could never be sure of his ongoing allegiance. Still, there was now an incessant challenge to O'Donnell's supremacy

⁸³³ *AFM*, VI, 2237; Sir John Bolles to Robert Cecil, 7 March 1600, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-31 July 1601), 206.

⁸³⁴ 'Grant to Mulmurry MacSweeny Doe', 5 April 1600 and 28 April 1600, 'Fiants Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 17th report, 119-120, 122.

⁸³⁵ Indeed, MacSweeny has been identified as repeatedly switching sides 'for his own gain'. See Fr. David (OFM, Cap), *The MacSweenys*, (Creelough, 1993), 18, 20.

⁸³⁶ Henry Docwra to Robert Cecil, 12 February 1601, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-31 July 1601), 190.

over such men and the governor had Mulmurry's allegiance at a crucial time in 1600 and 1601. With MacSweeney Fanad, MacSweeney Doe and O'Docherty onside, Docwra could look to control the entire north and north-west coast of Tír Conaill. This gave him a better chance of preventing military assistance reaching the rebels through Lough Foyle or Lough Swilly, because the territories of these overlooked these havens.⁸³⁷

In the mid-1590s, as mentioned above, some observers had urged Elizabeth to support the claims of O'Donnell's contenders for the lordship of Tír Conaill. Now, in 1600, Docwra entered into negotiations with Niall Garbh O'Donnell, who sought to be awarded the lordship in return for aiding the English against Hugh Roe.⁸³⁸ Niall also asked for, and received, soldiers in Elizabeth's pay to make war upon O'Donnell.⁸³⁹ Though the crown's war with Hugh Roe had been going on intermittently for years, this was the first time that overt support had been given to his main rivals within Tír Conaill. This was, however, qualified assistance. Niall was granted 'the chiefe livings and castles' in Tír Conaill, but Elizabeth reserved to herself ports and other castles with which to reward the MacSweenys and others, who should 'depend upon her'.⁸⁴⁰ As with Hugh Roe, London was not willing to allow Niall too much power over sublords, lest a new rebellion break out eventually.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, his eventual grant, in March 1601, stripped him of power over

⁸³⁷ See map 2 on page vii of this study.

⁸³⁸ 'List of men in the north whom Sir Arthur O'Neill offers to bring in', 18 April 1600, SP 63/207/2, f. 298; 'Neale Garve's last demands', 28 September 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar-October 1600), 447.

⁸³⁹ 'Neale Garve's last demands', 28 September 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar-October 1600), 447.

⁸⁴⁰ Privy Council to the Lord Deputy and Council, 28 May 1600, *APC*, XXX, (1599-1600), 335. 195 Privy Council to Lord Deputy Mountjoy, 1 March 1601, *APC*, XXXI, (1600-1601), 191-2.

Ballyshannon in southern Tír Conaill, and lands within the lordship that the crown held or had already granted away.⁸⁴¹ In effect, Niall was denied power over the MacSweenys and the O'Dochertys, and much land on the lordship's southern border. Elizabeth probably sought power in southern Tír Conaill in order to prevent the O'Donnells raiding northern Connaught and asserting overlordship there.⁸⁴²

It is important to observe that Niall had aligned with the English in October 1600 believing that he would be granted Tír Conaill as Calvagh O'Donnell had held it. It is therefore worth asking why Niall continued in his defection when Elizabeth attempted to deprive him of large parts of the lordship and power over the men who lived in those areas. One reason was that he was probably pleased to have assistance in attempting to further his own claims to the lordship, even if the English seemed to be determined to lessen his sphere of influence. Certainly Hayes-McCoy, for one, asserts that lords like Niall hoped to use the 'strife and confusion' of the war to ensure their own succession.⁸⁴³ Niall may also have thought that when he had obtained power in the lordship he 'could drive Docwra out' of Tír Conaill, as Sean O Faolain has suggested.⁸⁴⁴

It is also worth considering John Silke's charge that Niall's defection 'left him open to the charge of treason'.⁸⁴⁵ In making this accusation, Silke is following a

⁸⁴¹ 'Grant to Niall Garbh of the country or territory of Tirreconnell, in the province of Ulster', 18 March 1601, 'Fiantis Elizabeth', *Reports of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 17th report, 165.

⁸⁴² English officials had been urging this course of action for similar reasons for years. See page 207 above.

⁸⁴³ Gerald Hayes-McCoy, 'Gaelic society in Ireland in the late sixteenth century', in Gerald Hayes-McCoy, ed. *Historical Studies*, IV, (London, 1963), 57.

⁸⁴⁴ Sean O Faolain, *The Great O'Neill: a biography of Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone, 1550-1616*, (Dublin, 1942), 235.

⁸⁴⁵ John J. Silke, 'O'Donnell [O Domhnaill], Sir Niall Garbh (1568/9-1626), magnate and soldier', *ODNB*, online edition, (2006), paragraph 3 of 6, accessed at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20558>, 17 July 2014. 201 McCabe, 'Fighting words', 114.

line of argument pursued by O’Clerigh in the *Life* which, Richard McCabe suggests, has informed all modern arguments about Niall’s ‘treachery’.²⁰¹ Furthermore, as Padraig Lenihan has argued, lambasting Niall as a ‘bad Irishman’ places modern standards upon somebody who operated with an eye only to furthering his local power in north-west Ulster.⁸⁴⁶ This was a world where challenges to lordly power were common and doubt existed as to who had the real right to power in Tír Conaill anyway. Indeed, Niall’s policy was comparable with that of his father, Con O’Donnell, who sought English aid in his disputes with Hugh McManus O’Donnell between the 1560s and the 1580s. Con has not attracted the same opprobrium, presumably as his efforts did not directly result in the English seizing power in the north-west. This is again the consequence of heaping significance on the events of the 1590s at the expense of making meaningful comparisons with the policies of Red Hugh’s predecessors and their rivals. Niall’s actions had a different outcome to those of Con, but shared the aim of obtaining the lordship of Tír Conaill. It was no more Niall’s intent than it was Hugh Roe’s that the war should end in English control of the territory.

Regardless of Niall’s intentions, his defection did help Docwra turn the tide on Hugh Roe. Between October 1600 and the summer of 1601, Niall seized Lifford Castle, Donegal Abbey and Assaroe for the crown, as well as killing Manus O’Donnell, Hugh Roe’s younger brother, in battle.⁸⁴⁷ These successes had several effects. Firstly, power at Lifford gave the English control over an important part of

⁸⁴⁶ Padraig Lenihan, *Consolidating Conquest: Ireland 1603-1727*, (London, 2008), xiii.

⁸⁴⁷ On Niall’s victories in 1600 and 1601, see *AFM*, VI, 2215; Sir Arthur Chichester to Robert Cecil, 21 October 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar 1600-Oct 1600), 484; Henry Docwra to the Privy Council, 20 August 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 22-3; Sir George Carew to Robert Cecil, 21 August 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 37; Captain Humphrey Willis to Robert Cecil, 2 September 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 48.

Cinel Moen in eastern Tír Conaill. This was fertile territory, giving Docwra somewhere else from which to feed his army. Furthermore, having Lifford allowed the governor of Lough Foyle to begin making war on other lords throughout Tír Conaill and into Tyrone.⁸⁴⁸ In the past, O'Neill leaders like Turlough Luineach had been able to support dissident O'Donnells at Lifford in order to unsettle Tír Conaill, but now its location worked to the earl of Tyrone's disadvantage. Possession of Donegal Abbey and Assaroe were of further benefit to Docwra. As has been observed, the land around Assaroe was also productive and could be used to feed his army. Assaroe was also close to Ballyshannon, giving the English a base from which to seize that castle. This would finally allow them to stymie the O'Donnells' efforts to assert their overlordship in northern Connaught. Power over Donegal Abbey, meanwhile, put Docwra's men within striking distance of O'Donnell's chief house at Donegal Castle. This English presence in the south of Tír Conaill also tended to close off the havens of the bay of Donegal as a route through which the confederate leaders might procure military assistance. From Hugh Roe's perspective, this problem became even more pronounced when Niall compelled MacSweeney Banagh, Fanad and O'Boyle to seek their pardons.⁸⁴⁹ This solidified Docwra's support amongst those sublords whose lands were on the coasts of Tír Conaill, and gave the crown power over much of the lordship. It also deprived Hugh Roe of the military assistance of those sublords, such as the MacSweeneys, which had always been critical to upholding O'Donnell power in the north-west.

⁸⁴⁸ McGurk, *Docwra*, 96.

⁸⁴⁹ Henry Docwra to the Privy Council, 23 April 1601, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-31 July 1601), 289. 206
Sir John Bolles to Robert Cecil, 7 March 1600, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-31 July 1601), 206.

So successful were Niall and Docwra that Hugh Roe O'Donnell was driven out of Tír Conaill to live in exile in Connaught from March 1601 onwards.²⁰⁶ Thus, Hugh Roe's position was now that he was severely deprived of support at home, with the foundation upon which his power had been based now destroyed. Having been denied his claims of overlordship in Connaught, the crown's support for Niall Garbh completed Hugh's alienation from the crown. He had resisted English encroachments through fear that Elizabeth meant to subdue Tír Conaill by sending officials into the lordship to remove him. O'Donnell's refusal to submit to the queen's demands, especially on the question of Connaught, had in fact prompted her to do just that. Having been driven out of Tír Conaill, O'Donnell had to hope that some avenues of aid that had disappointed him hitherto might now produce the goods. By no other means would he regain the leverage necessary to reopen negotiations with the crown to save his status as lord of Tír Conaill.

The question of foreign allies

At the outset of his personal rule, Hugh Roe felt positive about working with the English crown. Consequently, he had agreed in August 1592 to expel 'all strangers' from Tír Conaill and assist Elizabeth, whenever summoned, against 'all forren eneymes'.⁸⁵⁰ Though he proceeded to seek foreign aid incessantly for the duration of the war, this original promise need not have been utterly disingenuous. Foreign friendships would have been unnecessary for O'Donnell had the crown consistently helped him uphold his local power as promised. As this did not happen, the lords

⁸⁵⁰ 'Articles ministered to Hugh Roe O'Donnell upon his oath, whereunto he most willingly yielded', 2 August 1592, SP 63/166, f. 122-122v.

sought support against the crown from external sources. Chief among these were the kings of Spain. Despite the continual attempts of the confederates to obtain Spanish assistance throughout the war, this section argues that suggestions that Hugh Roe was committed to living under Spain's monarchs are erroneous, for three interlinked reasons. Firstly, he was merely aping his predecessors in seeking leverage in negotiations by utilising the threat of foreign invasion against the English.⁸⁵¹ Secondly, in pursuing that tactic, there was little reason for the Ulster lords to imagine that assistance sufficient to enable them to drive the English presence from Ireland would ever arrive. This was, in part, because the Spanish monarchs too played a pragmatic game and had to consider the feasibility of aiding the confederate lords along with many other policy options and concerns. It is for this reason that close attention must be given to the European context, as well as the intertwined histories of the British Isles, if one wishes to reach a realistic appraisal of how committed Hugh Roe O'Donnell was to a Spanish alliance. Lastly, there is the question of the extent to which the Ulster lords would have wished to become subject to Spanish rule if the Iberian country's assistance had helped to banish the English presence from the north of Ireland. Evidence suggests that the confederates were not interested in replacing English rule with Spanish dominion which might pose a similar threat to their power. Similarly the rebel leaders offered James VI of Scotland, another potential ally, only minimal allegiance too.

Even before outright conflict exploded between the Ulstermen and the crown in the mid-1590s, there were rumours that European Catholic leaders would

⁸⁵¹ David Finnegan suggests that the rebels, at least before 1596, did not expect practical aid and thought leverage in their negotiations was the best they could achieve. See his *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 98.

intervene in Ireland. Indeed, Miler Magrath had informed Elizabeth as early as May 1592 that Pope Clement VIII and Philip II of Spain had sent Irish clergy home to ‘seduce the people from their loyalty’.⁸⁵² Hugh Roe O’Donnell and Maguire sought to capitalise on the apparent interest of these European figures in Ireland by sending James O’Hely, Archbishop of Tuam, to Rome and Spain to seek aid in January 1593. If this was successful, the Ulster lords would gain an advantage in their ongoing battles with aggressive English captains like Humphrey Willis.⁸⁵³ O’Hely and Maurice Fitzgerald, an Irish exile, convinced Philip II that Ireland would be a useful base from which to attack England. This would make it more difficult for Elizabeth to interfere with the Spanish king’s interests in France and Flanders. The result of the efforts of O’Hely and Fitzgerald was that Philip promised that the Irish could have 10,000 troops whenever required.⁸⁵⁴ Though no direct military assistance had reached Ulster by late 1594, Philip encouraged the rebels to retain hope that it would arrive eventually by repeatedly sending them presents, money and munitions. It was observed in January 1595 that this financial and military assistance had left O’Donnell ‘better able then manie of his neighbours’ to make war.⁸⁵⁵ In extending this patronage to the Ulstermen, Philip was at least treating them like valuable allies, which explains why friendship with him was attractive to them. Still, they were

⁸⁵² ‘Book set down in writing by the Archbishop of Cashel by Her Majesty’s express commandment, declaring the state of Ireland’, 30 May 1592, *CSPI*, IV, (Aug 1588-Sep 1592), 493.

⁸⁵³ Sir George Bingham to Richard Bingham, 3 January 1593, *CSPI*, V, (Oct 1592-June 1596), 71; Richard Bingham to William Cecil, 13 March 1593, SP 63/168, f. 206v-207. Magauran had been active in seeking Spanish aid since late 1591, after the execution of his friend, O’Rourke. See Micheline Kerney Walsh, ‘Archbishop Magauran and his return to Ireland, October 1592’, *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, xiv, (1990), 70.

⁸⁵⁴ Maurice Geraldine to Philip II, 4 September 1593, *CSPSp*, XVI, (1580-1586), 608-9. On the promises of 10,000 men, see ‘Note of intelligences received out of the North’, 20 May 1594, SP 63/174, f. 215v.

⁸⁵⁵ Geoffrey Fenton to William Cecil, 15 December 1594, *CSPI*, V, (Oct 1592-June 1596), 287. On O’Donnell’s ability to wage war, see ‘Certain advertisements out of the North of Ireland’, January 1595, SP 63/178, f.61v-62 and ‘Intelligences delivered to the Bishop of Meath’, 14 April 1597, SP 63/198, f. 328.

aware that they needed a firmer commitment from the Spanish king were they to prevail, as the mere threat of his intervention had not caused the English to accede to Irish demands by the summer of 1595. Consequently, O'Donnell and others did not place all their hopes in Spain.

One indicator that Hugh Roe was not wholly committed to friendship with either Spain or, indeed, Scotland was how quickly he promised to cease utilising aid from either source during negotiations between 1594 and 1596. At the same time, Hugh Roe would never budge on the question of his claims in Connaught, not least because the western province had always been a potential source of wealth for the lords of Tír Conaill.⁸⁵⁶ This suggests that, could an agreement on the things that mattered be reached, O'Donnell would jettison foreign friends readily. However, whenever the English would not accede to the demands of the Ulster lords, they renewed their efforts to obtain help from Spain, as in September 1595.⁸⁵⁷ In this, the confederates' intent was probably to utilise the English fear of Spanish invasion to cause Elizabeth to give grounds in negotiations. Certainly, the rebels' communication with Philip II in a climate where rumours abounded that Spain was preparing a large Armada to invade England and Ireland.⁸⁵⁸ Alongside the Irish victory over English forces at Clontibret in late 1595, these concerns prompted Elizabeth to instruct Lord Deputy William Russell and John Norris to accept

⁸⁵⁶ Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Deputy and Council, 8 August 1594, SP 63/175, f. 205; Lord Deputy and Council to Hugh Roe O'Donnell, 1 September 1594, SP 63/176, f. 33.

⁸⁵⁷ Tyrone and O'Donnell to the King of Spain, 27 September 1595, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 122.

⁸⁵⁸ Queen Elizabeth to Francis Drake, John Hawkins, Thomas Gorges, and Thomas Baskerville, 9 August 1595, *CSPDom*, Elizabeth, (1595-7), 88-9; Robert Cecil to Horatio Palavicino, 5 March 1596, *CSPDom*, Elizabeth, (1595-7), 181-2. 216 On Clontibret, see Henry Kamen, *Philip of Spain*, (New Haven, 1997), 306-307. On Elizabeth's instructions, see Queen Elizabeth to John Norris and Lord Deputy William Russell, November or December 1595, *Cal. MSS Salisbury*, XIII, (Addenda), 546. Commissioners Gardiner and Wallop were also instructed to ignore some articles of submission in January 1596 to secure a speedier peace; see 'Instructions delivered to Sir Henry Wallop and Sir Robert Gardener, on their going to parley with the Earl of Tirone', 8 January 1596, SP 63/186, f. 74.

submission under any terms.²¹⁶ Consequently, Commissioners Robert Gardiner and Henry Wallop, sent to Ulster in early 1596, took more seriously the grievances of the rebel lords because they needed to ensure that any Spanish invasion received no support. This was what the confederates had aimed to achieve in having engaged in foreign intrigues in the first place.

It is suggested here that the confederate leaders remained willing to reconsider their relations with the Spanish monarchs for most of the 1590s. In Hugh Roe's case, he had no option but to look for Spanish assistance from 1600 onwards. By then, the English crown had stopped negotiating with him and was supporting the claims of his rival, Niall Garbh O'Donnell, to power in Tír Conaill instead. Nevertheless, it has often been argued that the confederates were committed to Philip II's friendship from 1596 onwards, following the negotiations between the Ulstermen and the Spanish monarch's representatives that year. By then, O'Clerigh suggested, Hugh Roe had no intention of reaching friendship with Elizabeth because Philip was truthful and would deliver on his promises.⁸⁵⁹ More recently, Hiram Morgan has affirmed that the rebels were 'firmly committed' to seeking Spanish friendship by the spring of 1596, as they despaired of obtaining their desires from the English.⁸⁶⁰ It is undoubtedly true that O'Donnell and his allies had good reason to be uncertain as to whether the crown would ever allow any of their demands. Nonetheless, there was no more cause for them to place all their eggs in one basket by aligning with Spain to the exclusion of all other policy options. Philip II had supplied fiscal assistance but had not provided the military forces he promised as yet. Therefore, there was good

⁸⁵⁹ O'Clerigh, *Life of Red Hugh*, I, 131.

⁸⁶⁰ Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion*, 213; See also McCavitt, *Flight of the Earls*, 16.

reason for the confederate leaders to adopt a cautious policy towards Spain. This did not prevent some pro-crown observers continuing to argue that the Irish were committed to Spanish amity. In June 1598, the Irish Council claimed that Tyrone's main motivation in continuing the war was the 'alteration of government' that he 'hath promised the Spaniards'.⁸⁶¹ It is likely, however, that these politicians overplayed the rebels' attachment to Spain in order to ensure increased military support against them from London.

Nevertheless, the Irish lords were certainly making efforts to obtain direct Spanish support. Tyrone and O'Donnell wrote to Philip in September 1595 offering to become his loyal subjects, while they also repeatedly urged him to appoint his nephew, the Prince Cardinal of Austria, as King of Ireland.⁸⁶² Tadhg O hAnnrachain has accepted at face value the Irish claims that they wanted to replace the English monarchy with the Archduke Albert, but this evidently came with some qualifications.⁸⁶³ As Fenton averred in January 1597, the confederate lords did not want a large Spanish force to 'overtop them' within their lordships.⁸⁶⁴ This would suggest that the last thing the Irish wanted was to replace aggressive English rule with an assertive Spanish government. This impression is strengthened by a reading of the *Annals of the Four Masters* in 1602. The entry for that year observes that even a desperate Hugh Roe wanted Philip III's assurances that he would never send

⁸⁶¹ The Irish Council to the Privy Council, 17 June 1598, *CSPI*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 182.

⁸⁶² Tyrone and O'Donnell to the King of Spain, 27 September 1595, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 122; Tyrone and O'Donnell to the King of Spain, 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 110; David Burke to Conyers Clifford, 5 May 1597, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 286.

⁸⁶³ O hAnnrachain, 'Strategic involvement of continental powers in Ireland', 34.

⁸⁶⁴ Geoffrey Fenton to Robert Cecil, 24 January 1597, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 219. See also 'Intelligences of a discovery of ships upon the north coast of Ireland, by Geoffrey Fenton', 23 August 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar 1600-Oct 1600), 3656, where Fenton reiterates this argument. 223 *AFM*, VI, 2295.

Spanish nobles into Ireland to rule over O'Donnell lords, or threaten their traditional rights.²²³ His request to Philip was perhaps not unrealistic, either, since the Spanish monarchy had not upset the Portuguese noble system following the dynastic union of those two nations in 1580.⁸⁶⁵ However, the point is that Spanish kings were considered attractive allies only so long as they did not seek to send their own officials into Irish lordships to replace English ones. This indicates that any monarch had to accept this if they wished to have Hugh Roe's allegiance.

That said, in 1596 the Irish were delighted to find that Philip II planned to send aid to them after all. The king's interest in doing so was reignited by their success at Clontibret, as well as thoughts of revenge following English attacks on Cadiz in 1596.⁸⁶⁶ A further factor was the French, Dutch and English alliance cemented by the Treaty of Greenwich that year.⁸⁶⁷ This made the Irish appealing allies, as Philip sought to cause Elizabeth trouble where possible to counteract any effects England's new alignment with the Dutch and French might have on the European picture. The result of his interest in aiding the Irish was an exploratory mission by Spanish ships to Ulster in May 1596. Though O'Neill and O'Donnell informed the President of Munster of this and stressed 'their refusal to accept' the Spaniards, it was repeatedly reported that negotiations had gone ahead with the Irish being promised as much aid as they needed.⁸⁶⁸ The confederate leaders' duplicitous

⁸⁶⁵ Christopher Maginn, 'The Gaelic peers, English sovereigns, and Tudor multiple monarchy', *Journal of British Studies*, 50, (2011), 579.

⁸⁶⁶ Kamen, *Philip of Spain*, 306-307.

⁸⁶⁷ Palmer, *The problem of Ireland*, 132; Mary Ann Lyons, *Franco-Irish relations, 1500-1610: politics, migration and trade*, (Woodbridge, 2003), 165.

⁸⁶⁸ Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy William Russell and the Council, 25 May 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 177. See also Baron Delvin to Lord Deputy William Russell, 15 May 1596, SP 63/189, f. 121; Philip II to the Earl of Tyrone (copy), 15 May 1596, *CSPI*, V, (1592-1596), 527. 228 See chapter two, 73-76.

behaviour probably reflected a desire to avoid being punished and to appear loyal in the hope of winning crown concessions. Certainly, this followed in the mould of Manus O'Donnell's dealings with French negotiators and the crown in the 1540s.²²⁸ The main difference is that fairly definitive evidence exists suggesting that formal discussions took place in 1596. Philip II's representative, Alonso Cobos, assured the Irish that England's break with Rome meant the Tudors had forfeited any right to Ireland, which had originally been granted only for the establishment of the Catholic religion there.⁸⁶⁹ Now, the Pope meant to send aid to free the Irish from English rule.²³⁰ As John Norris soon observed, many Connaughtmen liked this line of argument and Ulster lords approved too.⁸⁷⁰²³¹ O'Donnell was soon preparing for Spanish arrivals, purchasing 'lynen and pewter, and all other necessities fitt to entertain' them.⁸⁷¹ Unfortunately, the promised assistance would never arrive, though this was no fault of the Spanish king.

Subsequent events proved that a further factor ensuring the Irish could never wholly throw their weight behind a Spanish alliance was simple luck. The force sent to the confederates' aid by Philip II in 1596 was dispersed in a storm, with 12000 men lost at sea.⁸⁷² In practical terms, it was relatively easy to land small exploratory missions successfully, but more difficult to achieve the same thing with large fleets, as evidenced by the fate of the Armada of 1588. As Padraig Lenihan has recently

⁸⁶⁹ 'Examination of George Cawell as to the interview between Tirone and the Spaniards', 24 June 1596, SP 63/190, f. 217v218.

⁸⁷⁰ 'Examination of George Cawell as to the interview between Tirone and the Spaniards', 24 June 1596, SP 63/190, f. 218. 231 'Instructions given by Sir John Norreys to his brother Sir Henry Norreys, to advertise the Queen and Privy Council of the state of Ireland', 27 July 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 50.

⁸⁷¹ 'Examination of George Cawell as to the interview between Tirone and the Spaniards', 24 June 1596, SP 63/190, f. 220v. See also Lord Deputy William Russell to the Privy Council, 9 November 1596, SP 63/195, f. 12v.

⁸⁷² Sir Robert Sydney to Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, 22 December 1596, *Cal. MSS Salisbury*, VI, (1596), 533. 234 Lenihan, *Consolidating Conquest*, 17.

acknowledged, these ‘tenuous communications by sea...would have made it difficult for the Spanish to hold onto Ireland’, while England wanted to retain control there.²³⁴ This suggests that the Irish could not have seriously entertained Spanish assistance as a long-term strategy for holding off English rule. They may have hoped that the Spanish would be able to help them drive the English away and then leave. However, it is more likely the confederates recognised that the English presence in Ireland was going nowhere and hoped only to achieve better peace terms by utilising the threat of Spanish invasion. However, events in Europe were throwing even this line of thinking into doubt.

Throughout the summer of 1596, as mentioned above, the English were winning notable naval victories against the Spanish at Cadiz and elsewhere. As Geoffrey Fenton observed in August that year, many leading rebels were fully aware of this and it had ‘wrought already a good impression’ in them.⁸⁷³ Indeed, O’Donnell himself was later reported to have angrily decried Philip as too weak to defeat Elizabeth, meaning the Irish should ‘depend no longer on the King’s succours’.⁸⁷⁴ Although this was probably at least partially motivated by a desire to shame the Spanish monarch into some kind of action, there was still reason for the Ulstermen to question whether their would-be allies would be able to defeat the English at sea. Uncertainty about the Spaniards’ strength might explain the confederate leaders’ determination to claim that they had turned some of Philip’s representatives away from Donegal in March 1597. Tyrone had stressed he was then

⁸⁷³ Geoffrey Fenton to William Cecil, 2 August 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 67.

⁸⁷⁴ ‘Declaration by Sir Anthony Brabazon to the Commissioners’, 22 April 1597, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 273. 237
Captain William Warren to Lord General John Norris, March 1597, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 254.

at peace with Elizabeth, while O'Donnell refused to negotiate with the Spaniards alone.²³⁷ Whether their claims to have dismissed the Spaniards without discussion were true or not, these had other effects that the rebels would rather have avoided.

The apparent unwillingness of the confederates to break totally with the English created distrust of them in Spain. Rumours that Tyrone had made peace with Elizabeth were often taken at face-value. Consequently Philip II, perhaps a touch disingenuously, was later said to have been slow to send assistance to the Ulstermen due to their 'wavering and inconstant minds'.⁸⁷⁵ Similarly, Philip III later chose to send only munitions to Ulster in mid-June 1599, having been led to believe the rebels had made peace with Elizabeth.⁸⁷⁶ For their part, the Irish had begun to pursue James VI's aid hard, possibly indicating that they were losing faith that they would ever receive effective Spanish assistance.⁸⁷⁷ Indeed O'Donnell had already, on occasion, lambasted Philip II for failing to provide military aid. In April 1597, Hugh Roe reportedly called Spain 'a deceitful nation', who had promised much but sent 'nothing but a little powder'.⁸⁷⁸ The ultimate effect of this, Fenton stressed in April 1600, was that the confederate leaders were now struggling to convince their followers that assistance would come.⁸⁷⁹ Anglo-Spanish negotiations for peace between 1598 and 1600 did little to lessen this impression, and the English were

⁸⁷⁵ 'Examination of Sir Richard Folan', 16 December 1596, SP 63/196, f. 94-94v; David Burke to Conyers Clifford, Governor of Connaught, 5 May 1597, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 286. These rumours swirled round a lot, and Tyrone wrote to Philip in July and August 1597, urging him not to believe them. See The Earl of Tyrone to the King of Spain, July 1597, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 254.

⁸⁷⁶ Unknown to Sir George Carey, 16 June 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 63-64.

⁸⁷⁷ Tyrone reportedly believed that Philip II had 'broken faith', according to 'Intelligences delivered to the Bishop of Meath', 14 April 1597, SP 63/198, f. 328 and in early 1598 the earl reportedly sought Scottish aid lest Spain fail him, see Geoffrey Fenton to Robert Cecil, 20 January 1598, *CSPI*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 24.

⁸⁷⁸ 'Declaration by Sir Anthony Brabazon to the Commissioners', 22 April 1597, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 273. See also Silke, *Kinsale*, 86, where it is stressed that the rebels were also angry when they received only munitions from Spain in 1600.

⁸⁷⁹ Geoffrey Fenton to Robert Cecil, 26 April 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar 1600-Oct 1600), 124.

confident that this spelled the end of Spain's aid for the confederates.⁸⁸⁰ Thus, distrust reigned and the Ulstermen never were so sure of Spanish aid that they could write off English friendship totally. The efforts of the rebels throughout the war to explore other avenues of aid also pointed to perpetual uncertainty about the Spanish monarchy's willingness to help them.

Scotland had long been a traditional recourse for Irishmen seeking assistance in their local wars and this remained true in the 1590s. Indeed, Lord Justice George Carey remarked in late November 1599 that Scottish help had been far more effective for the Irish than Spanish assistance ever had.⁸⁸¹ Consequently, the English had followed a policy of trying to persuade James VI to restrain his subjects from going to Ireland throughout the 1590s.⁸⁸² In the spirit of the Anglo-Scottish alliance of 1586, English officials expected James to help with this. For his part, James became concerned that a Spanish invasion of Ireland might threaten his chance of taking the English crown when Elizabeth died. Accordingly, he was later willing to offer her aid against the Irish confederates when Spanish forces finally arrived at Kinsale.⁸⁸³ The Scottish king had also encouraged James MacSorley MacDonald to do his utmost to prevent victuals from Scotland reaching Tyrone and O'Donnell.⁸⁸⁴ However, Scotland ultimately remained an active threat to English plans in Ulster,

⁸⁸⁰ 'Extracts of a letter of intelligence written to Geoffrey Fenton', 20 July 1598, *CSPI*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 213; Robert Cecil to George Carew, 24 September 1600, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 445-6.

⁸⁸¹ Lord Justice George Carey to Robert Cecil, 28 November 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 273.

⁸⁸² See, for instance, Queen Elizabeth to Robert Bowes, 9 December 1593, *CDS*, II, (1589-1603), 641; Robert Bowes to William Cecil, 22 December 1593, *CSPSco*, XI, (1593-1595), 246; Queen Elizabeth to King James VI, 4 January 1594, *CSPSco*, XI, (1593-1595), 258; Queen Elizabeth to King James VI, 25 October 1594, *CDS*, II, (1589-1603), 665.

⁸⁸³ The landing is noted in Marin Cavalli, Venetian Ambassador to France, to the Doge and Senate, 12 November 1601, *CSPVNI*, IX, (1592-1603), 477-478. For James' apparent willingness to help Elizabeth against the Spaniards and the rebels, see George Nicolson to Robert Cecil, 22 November 1601, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 2, (1600-1603), 901. James reiterated his willingness to help against 'greedy' Spaniards amidst rumours that O'Donnell would return with aid in September 1602. See George Nicolson to Robert Cecil, 12 September 1602, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 2, (1600-3), 1042-1043.

⁸⁸⁴ J. M. Hill, *Fire and Sword: Sorley Boy McDonnell and rise of Clan Ian Mor, 1538-1590*, (London, 1993), 211, 213.

which prompted Justice Carey to suggest renewal of the oft-mooted scheme of placing pinnaces at Lough Foyle and Lough Swilly to prevent Scots forces landing in the north of Ireland.⁸⁸⁵ This aimed to build upon the success of similar ventures in the North Channel which, Jonathan Bardon argues, had already played a role in causing the earl of Tyrone to train his own people in the art of warfare.⁸⁸⁶ What this emphasises is that, in the minds of many Englishmen, Scotland rather than Spain remained the real threat to Elizabeth's aims in Ulster. In part, such opinions were a result of the fact that some were always uncertain about how far James VI could be trusted in this regard.⁸⁸⁷

In the later 1590s especially, James VI had to routinely fend off allegations that he had promised the earl of Tyrone aid. Such accusations were principally a consequence of the fact that the confederate leaders were determined to make overtures to the Scottish king.⁸⁸⁸ In 1595, Hugh Roe had offered to surrender Tír Conaill to James, hoping to take it 'of his Highnes and to pay a token yearly to his grace' and in October 1598 Tyrone offered Stewart the Irish kingship in return for the aid of 10,000 men.⁸⁸⁹ However, as Philip III would soon be, James was willing only to work for peace between Tyrone and Elizabeth.⁸⁹⁰ This again illuminates how limited the lords' options really were, meaning they could not halt negotiations with

⁸⁸⁵ Lord Justice George Carey to Robert Cecil, 28 November 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 273.

⁸⁸⁶ Jonathan Bardon, *A history of Ulster*, 2nd edition, (Belfast, 2005), 96.

⁸⁸⁷ In October 1601, Robert Cecil also questioned whether even a friendly James could ensure that his subjects would not align with rebels once they landed in Ireland, see Robert Cecil to Lord Deputy Mountjoy, 19 October 1601, *Cal. Carew MSS*, IV, (1601-1603), 153-4.

⁸⁸⁸ Robert Cecil to George Nicolson, 27 April 1598, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 1, (1597-9), 147; George Nicolson to Robert Cecil, 8 July 1598, 237. James was accused of promising to aid Tyrone in a letter from Thomas Jones, Bishop of Meath, to William Cecil, 18 April 1598, *CSPI*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 120.

⁸⁸⁹ 'Occurrents sent to George Nicolson', 1595, *CSPSco*, XII, (1595-7), 103; on Tyrone, see George Nicolson to Robert Cecil, 14 October 1598, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 1, (1597-9), 314.

⁸⁹⁰ George Nicolson to Robert Cecil, 14 October 1598, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 1, (1597-9), 314. See also 'A copy of a letter of the Scotch king to Tyrone', 1597, BL Lansdowne, 84, f. 79, for James' similar response in that year. 254 Hayes-McCoy, *Scots Mercenary Forces*, 312.

the English completely. It is also remarkable that Hugh's commitment to friendship with James extended only to offering what had been held out to Elizabeth. That is, he wanted to complete an agreement similar to surrender and regrant and to pay a small rent in return for acknowledgment of his power in Tír Conaill. Any agreement was dependent on this recognition.

As always, another potential source of aid was the Scottish isles, and particularly the seventh earl of Argyll. However, as Hayes-McCoy has argued, it became 'harder and harder' for the rebels to obtain mercenary aid from Scotland after 1595.²⁵⁴ Indeed, the Ulster lords had found that Argyll rebuffed their offer to pay a traditional pension in return for aid in 1594 on the grounds that he was troubled with internal conspiracies in his lordship and war with the Earl of Huntly.⁸⁹¹ Ross Crawford has recently argued that the confederates could still obtain some help from the Scottish islands so long as they retained the earl's 'benevolent neutrality' in their dispute with Elizabeth.⁸⁹² However, Argyll was not minded to grant the Ulster lords this from the mid-1590s onwards. This was because, following a spell in prison in Edinburgh Castle in 1595, the earl had been ordered by James VI to prevent aid going to the confederates from the Scottish isles. In turn, Argyll entrusted MacLean of Duart with this task.⁸⁹³ Crawford asserts that MacLean was in the ascendant in the Scottish isles at this time. Consequently, by 1596 numerous island chiefs preferred to align with him rather than to consider helping the Ulster lords.⁸⁹⁴ Had the other

⁸⁹¹ 'Advertisements from the camp – a request made in May to Argyll by O'Donnell and O'Neill for the assistance of men in Ireland, and Argyll's answer', 7 October 1594, SP 52/54, f.62iii.

⁸⁹² Ross Crawford, 'James VI and the end of the mercenary trade in the Western Isles', in Miles Kerr Peterson and Steven J. Reid, eds. *James VI and Noble Power in Scotland, 1578-1603*, (Routledge, forthcoming), 2. I am extremely grateful to Ross for allowing me to see a draft of his chapter.

⁸⁹³ *ibid.*, 7-8.

⁸⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 10-11, 13.

islanders gone off to help the confederates, they risked seeing their lands attacked by MacLean in their absence. For his part, MacLean took his mission very seriously because he disliked the Earl of Tyrone intensely, and was now able to deprive the confederates of many potential allies in the Scottish islands.⁸⁹⁵

Despite MacLean's best efforts, some islanders remained willing to assist the confederates in their struggle against the crown. This included men such as Donald Gorme MacDonald and Angus MacDonald of Dunyveg. Nevertheless, these men were hampered in their ability to assist the Ulstermen because they were engaged in ongoing strife with the resurgent MacLeans at home.⁸⁹⁶ The feud between the Antrim and Dunyveg branches of the MacDonald family also stemmed the flow of aid to the confederates.²⁶¹ Even in November 1600, when O'Donnell apparently hoped that a mooted marriage alliance with Argyll would result in MacDonald and MacLean aid, this apparently took little practical effect.⁸⁹⁷ This was probably because it was around this time that Elizabeth finally accepted MacLean's offers of aid against the rebels in Ulster.⁸⁹⁸ This policy, too, replicated those of an earlier age. In the 1540s, Henry VIII had sought aid from Donald Dubh in pacifying Ulster while

⁸⁹⁵ Tyrone had hanged Hugh Gavelach O'Neill, son of Catherine MacLean, in 1590 and thus earned the MacLean's hatred, see John Auchinross, servitor to MacLean of Duart, to Robert Bowes, 25 March 1595, *CSPSco*, XI, (1593-5), 558.

⁸⁹⁶ 'Declaration of Randall MacNecce', 17 February 1594, *CSPI*, V, (Oct 1592-June 1596), 216-17. See Queen Elizabeth to Robert Bowes, 9 December 1593, *CSPSco*, XI, (1593-1595), 238; Robert Bowes to William Cecil, 28 July 1594, *CSPSco*, XI, (1593-1595), 391; 'Advertisements certefyed by letters from Edenburghe', 20 November 1594, *CSPSco*, XI, (1593-1595), 477, for details of Donald Gorme's dealings with O'Neill and O'Donnell, and 'Extracts of two letters from Richard Weston to Geoffrey Fenton', 6 November 1597, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-Dec 1597), 448, for material on Angus MacDonald. See Donald Gregory, *The history of the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland from A. D. 1493 to A. D. 1625*, 2nd edition, (Edinburgh, 1975), 272, 284-5, on the wars between the MacDonalds and the MacLeans in the 1590s. 261 Hill, *Fire and Sword*, 211.

⁸⁹⁷ Hugh Roe O'Donnell to O'Connor Sligo, 16 November 1600, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-31 July 1601), 71; Hayes-McCoy, *Scots Mercenary Forces*, 322.

⁸⁹⁸ Privy Council to George Nicolson, 5 November 1600, *CDS*, II, (1589-1603), 789. MacLean had been pushing for an alliance for five years, see John Auchinross to Robert Bowes, 25 March 1595, *CDS*, II, (1589-1603), 676; John Auchinross, to Robert Bowes, *CSPSco*, XI, (1593-5), 22 July 1595, 647; George Nicolson to Robert Cecil, 5 September 1600, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 2, (1600-3), 706-7. The English had been hesitant to accept MacLean's help, principally through concern that he would ally with rebels upon landing in Ireland, see 'A summary report of the state of the realm of Ireland, debated in council', 5 November 1597, BL Cotton Titus X/III, f. 519-519v.

the English king was on campaign in France.⁸⁹⁹ By cultivating her own faction in Scottish Gaeldom, Elizabeth now sought to subdue Ulster by ensuring the rebels increasingly struggled to obtain aid from the islands.

These problems in obtaining assistance from Scotland explain why the confederates continued to seek Spanish help, hopeless as this seemed at times. The Ulster lords believed they needed help if they were ever to win the war. Indeed Tyrone often stressed, as in April 1597, that he was powerless to maintain war himself.⁹⁰⁰ Though it was rumoured in 1599 that Philip III was ready to aid the Irish at last, still nothing happened.⁹⁰¹ This led the confederates to attempt to pressure him in 1600 by claiming that they could have lived 'in peace' were it not for their desire to fight for God and Spain.²⁶⁷ These themes may have resonated with Philip since some Spaniards, inspired by Tomasso Campanella's writings, believed that the Spanish king's role as the universal monarch was to further his own temporal power and the Pope's spiritual predominance.⁹⁰² Philip showed signs of accepting this responsibility in his willingness to canvass Rome on behalf of nominees the Ulster leaders had put forward for two Irish benefices in February 1601. For their part, Spanish officials took the fact that the confederates had sought these endorsements from Philip as a sign that they were acting 'as Your Majesty's subjects'.⁹⁰³ This was

⁸⁹⁹ Alison Cathcart, 'The Forgotten '45: Donald Dubh's rebellion in an archipelagic context', *SHR*, XCI, (2012), 240-2, 256-7.

⁹⁰⁰ 'Intelligences delivered to the Bishop of Meath', 14 April 1597, SP 63/198, f. 328.

⁹⁰¹ Patrick Strange of Waterford to William Cecil, 3 February 1599, *CSPDom*, Elizabeth, (1598-1601), 159-160. See also 'Proclamation of the Great Adelantado of Castilla' (English translation), 20 April 1599, *CSPDom*, Elizabeth, (1598-1601), 184, wherein it is stated that the Spanish king will try to protect Catholics in England and Ireland. 267 O'Neill and O'Donnell to Philip III, 26 April 1600, *CSPSp*, XVII, (1587-1603), 656.

⁹⁰² Tomasso Campanella, 'An Italian friar and second Machiavel: his advice to the King of Spain for the attaining the universal monarchy of the world', 23, 53. Edward Tenace has argued that these pretensions were 'widely-held' in Spain, see his 'A strategy of reaction: the Spanish Armadas of 1596 and 1597 and the Spanish struggle for European hegemony', *EHR*, 118, (2003), 856.

⁹⁰³ 'Report of the Council of War to Philip III, on the Irish expedition', 9 February 1601, *CSPSp*, XVII, (1587-1603), 684. 270 See chapter two, 65.

a common ploy amongst Irishmen, and Manus O'Donnell had sought favour from James V for similar reasons in the 1530s.²⁷⁰ However, it is notable that Hugh Roe was now in real trouble as English forces, with Niall Garbh O'Donnell's aid, had banished him from Tír Conaill. From this point there was no going back for Hugh Roe O'Donnell. Since the English had sided with Niall, Spanish assistance became imperative regardless of the disappointment that country's monarchs had put him through in the past. Philip III, meanwhile, was readier to help the Irish than at any time since his accession. Negotiations with England were failing by 1600, while the peace with France reached through the Treaty of Lyons in early 1601 allowed him to contemplate an Irish enterprise once more.⁹⁰⁴

The aftermath of Kinsale

After years of waiting, the confederacy finally received effective Spanish aid in September 1601, when a fleet of 30 ships arrived at the south-western port of Kinsale. However, by early October, the Lord Deputy Charles, Lord Mountjoy, had arrived in Munster and ensured the Irish could not help the Spaniards.⁹⁰⁵ Some lords were unwilling to aid the arrivals lest their lordships be spoiled in their absence, but Tyrone travelled to Munster. Meanwhile O'Donnell, who had lost control of Tír Conaill and been exiled, did not stay in the north to fight Niall Garbh as some expected.⁹⁰⁶ By now, as Geoffrey Fenton acknowledged, Hugh Roe was desperate

⁹⁰⁴ Silke, *Kinsale*, 6-7.

⁹⁰⁵ John Meade, Mayor of Cork, to the Privy Council, 22 September 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 81. On Mountjoy, see Captain William Yelverton to Robert Cecil, 9 October 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 634-5.

⁹⁰⁶ On the unwillingness of some lords, see George Carey to Robert Cecil, 15 October 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 127. On O'Donnell, see Thomas Jones, Bishop of Meath, to George Carey, 27 October 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 146, wherein an 'intelligencer' suggests that O'Donnell will not go to Munster for this reason.

and prepared to do more to win Spanish aid than others as a result.⁹⁰⁷ His impatience to remedy his situation perhaps explains why, despite Tyrone wanting to starve the English out at Kinsale, O'Donnell urged battle.²⁷⁵ When this came, it did not go well for the confederates, and George Carew informed Robert Cecil on 26 December 1601 that they had been thoroughly defeated and 200 Spaniards killed or hurt.⁹⁰⁸ The rebel forces fled but, as Morgan argues, O'Donnell had nothing to return to following this loss.⁹⁰⁹

Following the defeat at Kinsale Hugh Roe effectively went into exile in Spain in order to seek aid from Philip III for an invading force to take back to Ireland.⁹¹⁰ In April 1602, it was rumoured that 20,000 men would be sent to Ireland with O'Donnell who 'was in great credit' with the king and Hugh Roe himself wrote home to the effect that Philip III intended to win the island.⁹¹¹ There was certainly some will amongst the Spanish Council of State to help O'Donnell, but aid never materialised. Ultimately, this left Hugh Roe's confessor, Father Florence Conry, to ask Philip in May 1603 for leave to allow Irish lords to make the 'best terms' they could with the English.⁹¹² In the end, Spanish friendship was a bargaining chip which was now played out.

⁹⁰⁷ Geoffrey Fenton to Robert Cecil, 24 November 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 187. John Silke has acknowledged that O'Donnell was effectively out of options by this stage, see Silke, 'Hugh O'Donnell', *ODNB*, paragraph 9 of 16. 275 *AFM*, VI, 2283.

⁹⁰⁸ George Carew to Robert Cecil, 26 December 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 240-1.

⁹⁰⁹ Morgan, 'Real Red Hugh', 6.

⁹¹⁰ *AFM*, VI, 2291; George Carew to Robert Cecil, 14 January 1602, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 275.

⁹¹¹ A. White to Robert Meagh, merchant of Cork, 17 April 1602, *CSPDom*, Elizabeth, (1601-1603), 176; For Hugh Roe's letter, see Hugh Roe O'Donnell to O'Connor Kerry, 24 May 1602, *Cal. Carew MSS*, IV, (1601-3), 239.

⁹¹² Count Carcena to Philip III, 22 April 1602, *CSPSp*, XVII, (1587-1603), 711; Report of the Council of State to Philip III on Ireland, 7 May 1602, *CSPSp*, XVII, (1587-1603), 713-4; Report of the Council of State to Philip III on Irish affairs, 2 November 1602, *CSPSp*, XVII, (1587-1603), 716. On Conry, see Friar Florence Conry to Philip III, 13 January 1603, *CSPSp*, XVII, (1587-1603), 718.

Before this, Hugh Roe had fallen ill and died on his way to Valladolid in late 1602.⁹¹³ His last will, made just before his death, gives an interesting insight into his world-view and concerns just before he died. Addressing Philip III, Hugh was careful to stress his enmity towards the English and that he and his successors were Spanish vassals.⁹¹⁴ However, O'Donnell was also focused on asserting his right to Connaught, which 'lies within my borders' and his travails in regaining it from Elizabeth, who controlled it at the war's inception.²⁸³ Moreover, his ultimate concern was for his own branch of the O'Donnell family. This was expressed in his request that his younger brother, Rory, be protected by Philip in case Tyrone 'should wish to violate the treaties and agreements made and determined' between the earl and O'Donnell.²⁸⁴ Such fears were not unwarranted, since Tyrone was rumoured to be treating with Niall Garbh for an alliance in March 1602.⁹¹⁵ Hugh Roe also beseeched the Spanish king to bind Rory to him by offering him a commission and a salary.²⁸⁶ Thus, concern about the English crown's intentions had not wholly replaced traditional worries in Red Hugh's mind, but had been assimilated alongside old fears to become his primary concern. There was no certainty that Tyrone would be a perpetual friend of his family, Hugh still coveted power over Connaught, and the fate of his branch of the O'Donnells, under Rory, was the most important concern. All this supports Tom Dunne's argument that even the 1590s confederates were principally concerned with, and motivated by, 'traditional dynastic

⁹¹³ John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, 4 November 1602, *CSPDom*, Elizabeth, (1601-1603), 259.

⁹¹⁴ John J. Silke, 'The last will of Red Hugh O'Donnell', *Studia Hibernica*, 24, (1988), 58.
²⁸³ *ibid*, 58. ²⁸⁴ *ibid*, 58.

⁹¹⁵ Sir Arthur Chichester to Robert Cecil, 18 March 1602, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 343. ²⁸⁶ Silke, 'Last Will of Red Hugh', 58.

preoccupations'.⁹¹⁶ That these concerns played a role in shaping Hugh Roe's policies is also observed by Darren McGettigan. However, he does not give them the weight they are due because he is preoccupied with stressing O'Donnell's exceptional behaviour in seeking to throw off English rule in favour of Spanish friendship.⁹¹⁷ Of course, it is true that even on his death-bed Hugh Roe still sought to keep the alliance with Philip III alive. Nonetheless, O'Donnell's efforts in this regard were shaped by his belief that Rory would need this support in order to regain power in Tír Conaill. As it happened, this was not the case.

By the end of 1602, the confederacy had finally been brought low.⁹¹⁸ In 1603, James VI of Scotland became James VI & I, having assumed the English throne when Elizabeth died. With regard to Tír Conaill, James came to favour Rory O'Donnell over Niall Garbh in the struggle for power. In fact, prominent English officials had had their doubts about Niall for some time, as John McGurk has argued.⁹²⁰ In 1601, Henry Docwra had reported that Niall's ambition had led him to state that Tír Conaill's people were his to govern as he saw fit, despite chiding that he held the lordship during Elizabeth's pleasure only.⁹¹⁹ Niall was not punished for this before 1603 because he might react by realigning with the rebels or Spain.⁹²⁰

The need to appease him ended when the Irish Council secured Rory O'Donnell's absolute submission in December 1602. Soon, the Lord Deputy Mountjoy decided to

⁹¹⁶ Tom J. Dunne, 'The Gaelic Response to conquest and colonisation: the evidence of the poetry', *Analecta Hibernica*, 20, 1980, 7.

⁹¹⁷ McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell*, 123.

⁹¹⁸ Tyrone submitted absolutely, demanding no terms or conditions, on 22 December 1602. See 'Copy of Tyrone's submission', 22 December 1602, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 535. 290 McGurk, *Docwra*, 210.

⁹¹⁹ Henry Docwra, Governor of Lough Foyle, to the Privy Council, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-31 July 1601), 23 April 1601, 289290.

⁹²⁰ Henry Docwra to the Privy Council, 2 January 1602, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 262; Henry Docwra to Robert Cecil, 4 January 1602, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 264; Henry Docwra to Robert Cecil, 14 July 1602, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 442.

support Rory against Niall ‘whose insolence has grown intolerable’.⁹²¹ Thus, the new English king elected to make Rory Earl of Tír Conaill, with Niall Garbh expected to be content with his ‘patrimonial inheritance’ in the lordship, around Castle Finn.⁹²² As Niall had expected to assume the lordship of Tír Conaill, he was not pleased with this. However, it is unlikely that Rory was delighted either. The award of the lands around Castle Finn at least gave Niall a base in Cinel Moen from which to cause trouble for Rory, who would almost certainly have preferred to place one of his own allies there. As it was, these arrangements promised to keep the feud between the sons of Hugh McManus and the sons of Con O’Donnell going. Rory could do little about this because; following the defeat of the confederates, control over the lands of Tír Conaill was vested in the crown at last. For his part, James VI & I meant to use these powers to their fullest extent.

Though Rory now had an English title which recognised his position as the elite man in Tír Conaill, James VI & I took the opportunity to diminish the extent of the new earl’s power. Rory’s grant replicated O’Kane’s mid-October 1602 submission, wherein he was regranted some of his castles while others passed to Elizabeth forever.⁹²³ Similarly Rory seems to have willingly accepted the idea that he had lost any claim to Banagh, Fanad, Inishowen and Sligo. These were deemed forfeit because the lords who held them had been involved in the rebellion.

⁹²¹ Lord Deputy Mountjoy to George Carey, 20 December 1602, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 536; The Lord Deputy and Council to Robert Cecil, 9 January 1603, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 553.

⁹²² *AFM*, VI, 2347.

⁹²³ The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 11 October 1602, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-3), 496-7.

Meanwhile, Niall Garbh was to hold his lands from the crown rather than the new earl meaning that James was also claiming control over parts of Cinel Moen too.⁹²⁴ This gave the new king the power to place his own people in fertile areas like Inishowen, as well as the ability to ensure that friendly men controlled coastal areas and havens in the north and south of the lordship. This lessened the chances of foreign aid arriving to assist the Ulstermen in the future. Thus, Derek Hirst's recent argument that the war was largely pointless because Rory's settlement returned his power over all his old sublords is erroneous.⁹²⁷ After 1603, Rory's loss of control over lords whose territories were productive meant he was also expected to pay crown rents with a reduced ability to do so, and the pressure this created played a part in his later decision to go into self-imposed exile.⁹²⁵ From the crown's perspective, all this was a job well done as the power of the O'Donnells over their sublords had been curbed at last. Had Hugh Roe been brought to accept these terms, it is probable that peace would have been reached before this. However, he was simply unwilling to countenance the loss of wealth and political power this would have involved.

While Rory's status was lowered, Brendan Kane's recent suggestion that his surrender and regrant agreement was 'punitive' rather than 'assimilative' like earlier settlements were is also not wholly accurate.⁹²⁶ Firstly, English efforts to lessen the power of O'Donnell lords had been building since the 1540s, when early crown attempts to curb the family's expansionism and interfere in the lordship itself had

⁹²⁴ Richard Hadsor to Robert Cecil, 1 February 1603, *Cal. MSS Salisbury*, XII, (1602-3), 632; On Niall's lands, see Robert J. Hunter, 'The end of O'Donnell power' in William Nolan et al, eds. *Donegal, history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 234. 297 Hirst, *Dominion*, 129.

⁹²⁵ Hunter, 'End of O'Donnell power', 254.

⁹²⁶ Kane, *Politics and culture of honour*, 117.

been rejected by Manus O'Donnell. Moreover, Rory's agreement did temporarily assimilate him into the English system, albeit on the crown's terms. James managed to 'diminish his greatness' in the way Elizabeth had once intended should occur with Hugh Roe. One final point worth discussion is Kane's suggestion that Rory's agreement 'marked the end of an era, as the O'Donnells were the only Gaelic overlords not to have taken part in surrender and regrant under the Tudors'.⁹²⁷ This was not so much of a departure as Kane implies. Though a final formal settlement had never been concluded, there were numerous submissions throughout the period of this study, which effectively gave the family the status of subjects to be defended. Admittedly, these contracts broke down often, but that was also true where lords had officially completed surrender and regrant agreements. That O'Donnell lords were viewed as subjects and chose to be seen as such when this suited them is indicated by their occasional complaints about the crown's failure to defend them. This evidence suggests that they felt entitled to better treatment from what they viewed as their monarch or, at least, their overlord. To dispute this would be to throw the very status of O'Donnell as a 'rebel' during the Nine Years War into question. This study rejects such an interpretation, arguing that he did revolt against what he saw as his queen and her officials, and that his principal aim in dealing with other monarchs was always to obtain a better deal for himself in his negotiations with the English crown.

Conclusion

Hugh Roe O'Donnell's policies during his time as lord of Tír Conaill were shaped by his desire to retain his local authority in the north-west. In this regard, his rule was

⁹²⁷ *ibid*, 117.

principally characterised by its commitment to maintaining old traditions rather than attempting to break with the past. As always, no rival could be allowed to stand in the way of O'Donnell power in the north-west. Traditionally, the biggest threat to this had been posed by the O'Neills of Tyrone. However, by the 1590s, the English monarchy and its representatives in Ireland had become O'Donnell's principal rival for power in his sphere of influence. However, Hugh Roe did not pursue policies based upon an inherent anti-Englishness. His imprisonment in Dublin Castle between 1587 and 1592 did contribute to his wariness towards some English officials thereafter but did not prevent him seeking a *détente* with the crown. Instead, he tried to work with the English, as emphasised by how readily he accepted Fitzwilliam's help in subduing Tír Conaill in 1592. However, O'Donnell ultimately found that Elizabeth would not accede to his wider demands. She sought to reduce his power within Tír Conaill while he pursued a larger sphere of influence encompassing northern Connaught as his predecessors had done. The crown opposed O'Donnell's expansionist policies because it wanted to include new English arrivals and 'inferior' Irishmen amongst those who should hold land henceforth. Furthermore, the confederacy leaders were not really a 'dynastic nation', despite what Kane has argued. Rather they were self-interested elites who were willing to band together temporarily in order to uphold their own local positions. What was exceptional about this grouping was that they remained bound together for a longer period than earlier factions which had shared similar characteristics.

The readiness of the confederates to embrace foreign monarchs in place of Elizabeth must also be qualified. Like their predecessors in the Geraldine League, they appreciated that their unity increased their chances of obtaining foreign aid.

Such assistance was attractive because it offered Irish overlords hope that the threat of invasion might force Elizabeth to accept their provincial authority. There is no evidence that the lords were wholly committed to replacing English government with rule from Spain, unless any new monarch would allow lords to conduct politics as they had always done. Certainly, the confederates did not offer James VI, Philip II or Philip III any more than the token loyalty that they extended to Elizabeth. Finally, the willingness of the Irish to continue to negotiate with the crown for several years until any deal seemed impossible indicates an acceptance that the English presence in Ireland, though it may ebb and flow in intensity, was probably permanent. Thus, Hugh Roe and his allies took a pragmatic approach in their dealings with the English crown as well as other monarchs. In this impulse, as in much else, Hugh Roe O'Donnell was not particularly unique.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE LORDSHIP OF TÍR CONAILL AND ENGLISH FISCAL POLICY IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Historians studying the economic life of Ireland in the sixteenth century have sought to show how English efforts to seize financial control there shaped the policies of Irish elites. Ciaran Brady has recently illuminated how the avarice of English officials helped precipitate the Nine Years War.⁹²⁸ The Tudor monarchs had also repeatedly pledged to stamp out Irish practices like raiding and extortion, which threatened O'Donnell power since much of the family's wealth came from attacks upon Connaught and elsewhere.⁹²⁹ This involved challenging the traditional means by which the family asserted their authority over their sublords. The English meant for Irishmen to move away from this system to one whereby they paid rents into the exchequer in return for grants of their lands. As David Finnegan has argued, some Irish lords who were keen on such fiscal reform ultimately resisted it because they were not offered alternative means of becoming wealthy by the crown.⁹³⁰

Furthermore, attempts to convince Irish elites to embrace change were hampered by certain English policies. As the century wore on, the crown sought to take charge of ecclesiastical territories and their revenues as well as the profits of overseas trade. Meanwhile, English forces in Ireland seized much of the internal wealth of many Irish lordships. Such losses made it more difficult for Irish lords to play the part they were expected to in the new fiscal system. They were required to pay the rents owing for whole lordships but found it hard to do so because economic control over

⁹²⁸ Ciaran Brady, 'From policy to power: the evolution of Tudor reform strategies in sixteenth century Ireland' in Brian MacCuarta, ed. *Re-shaping Ireland, 1550-1700: colonisation and its consequences, essays presented to Nicholas Canny*, (Dublin, 2011), 41.

⁹²⁹ Sean O'Domhnaill, 'Warfare in sixteenth century Ireland', *IHS*, 5, (1946-7), 29-30; Canice Mooney, 'The friars and friary of Donegal, 1474-1840', in Terence O'Donnell, ed. *Franciscan Donegal: A souvenir of the dedication of the Franciscan Church*, (Ros Nuala, 1952), 5.

⁹³⁰ David Finnegan, *Tyrone's rebellion*, (unpublished MA thesis, NUI Galway, 2001), 13.

their territories was slipping out of their hands. For these reasons, fiscal change was something to be resisted unless they could find some way to share in its benefits. In many cases, this was to prove impossible. Accordingly, resistance to English rule grew in opposition to the idea of fiscal reform, as well as being grounded in general political grievances.

All this held true in the example of Tír Conaill too. The crown and its officials were covetous of the lordship's wealth and were pursuing it fully by the century's end. As they seemed to be losing from this arrangement, Hugh Roe O'Donnell and his confederate allies began to voice resistance to fiscal reorganisation in the 1590s. For comparison, Jane Ohlmeyer observes that many Irishmen accepted English norms in the seventeenth century because the crown made more effort to include them when doling out economic rewards.⁹³¹ Proponents of reform who had called for this to be done in the 1530s were largely ignored, as Ciaran Brady has highlighted.⁵ Instead, many Irish lords found that 'minor English officials' received these prizes.⁹³² Therefore, while sharing favour with Irish elites had been envisaged before the seventeenth century, some were excluded as other groupings received preference.

As mentioned, Irishmen sometimes favoured economic reforms where they seemed likely to benefit from them financially and politically. However, this support could be destroyed when the English pursued fiscally aggressive policies. For

⁹³¹ Jane H. Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English: the Irish aristocracy in the seventeenth century*, (New Haven, 2012), 49-50. 5 Ciaran Brady, *The Chief Governors: the rise and fall of reform government in Tudor Ireland, 1536-1588*, (Cambridge, 1994), 169.

⁹³² Steven G. Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors, 1447-1603: English expansion and the end of Gaelic rule*, (London, 1998), 336.

instance, the composition of Connaught of the 1570s and 1580s was initially supported warmly and failed only because the rapacity of English officials made the crown seem like another ‘oppressive overlord’.⁹³³ As Willy Maley has pointed out, this problem was exacerbated whenever English governors in Ireland like Henry Sidney followed economically destructive policies in prosecuting war.⁹³⁴ In such a climate, those deemed loyal were thought most worthy of benefiting from Ireland’s wealth. This usually meant New English officials who, Nicholas Canny argues, enriched themselves at the expense of native lords and made no attempt to effect fiscal reorganisation.⁹³⁵ Such financial losses were rarely, if ever, redressed by Tudor monarchs which did not suggest they were looking after the economic interests of their Irish allies. However, though O’Donnell lords sometimes had scant reason to believe that reform efforts were genuine they remained willing to explore a financial arrangement with the crown throughout the period. This required English recognition of the O’Donnells’ local financial and political rights; as Ciaran Brady argues this was also true of other lords who negotiated with the Tudors.¹⁰ This support had been proffered intermittently for some time after 1541 but had disappeared completely by the century’s end, which helps explain why Tír Conaill joined other lordships in rebellion.

Economic control in Tír Conaill was intertwined with political sway over the lands of the territory’s sublords and the clergy there. Such power afforded elite men

⁹³³ Ciaran Brady, ‘Court, castle and country: the framework of government in Tudor Ireland’, in Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie, eds. *Natives and newcomers: the making of Irish colonial society, 1534-1641*, (Dublin, 1986), 40. See Bernadette Cunningham, ‘The Composition of Connaught in Clanricard and Thomond, 1577-1641’, *IHS*, 24, (1984), 7-8, on the initial success of the composition policy.

⁹³⁴ Willy Maley, ‘The name of the country I have forgotten: remembering and dismembering in Henry Sidney’s Irish *Memoir* (1583)’, in Thomas Herron and Michael Potterton, eds. *Ireland in the renaissance c.1540-1660*, (Dublin, 2007), 67.

⁹³⁵ Nicholas P. Canny, ‘Dominant minorities: English settlers in Ireland and Virginia, 1550-1650’, in A. C. Hepburn, ed. *Historical Studies 12: Minorities in History*, (London, 1978), 62. 10 Brady, *Chief Governors*, 3.

wealth through access to greater shares of Ireland's resources, such as cattle, corn and fish.⁹³⁶ In turn, riches allowed lords to support those groups within Irish society 'such as Brehons, the Bards, and the 'galloglass' mercenaries' who helped legitimise political leaders.⁹³⁷ Accordingly, O'Donnell lords continually sought to retain authority over their adherents and gain more followers where possible. Those who attempted to prevent Tír Conaill's leaders doing this were necessarily attacking the family's economic strength as well as its political power. Ultimately, the English came to covet predominance over Tír Conaill's sublords and the lands of the clergy because the natural resources in their territories might benefit the crown and its allies. If they could not achieve this, an alternative was to settle English people on Irish lands and seize assets that way. Such initiatives were put forward by men like Sir Thomas Smith, who believed that Irish lands would become more productive should English settlers introduce their agricultural practices there.⁹³⁸ Of these two tactics, the crown more often attempted to draw the lordship's sublords away from O'Donnell's faction. Nevertheless both these policies were followed sporadically within Ulster and, on occasion, brought the crown into conflict with O'Donnell lords, as this chapter outlines.

The English also became interested in seizing control of Tír Conaill's external trade. Previously, discussion of this commerce has usually been descriptive rather than seeking to analyse how it shaped the wider policy interests and the political

⁹³⁶ Raymond Gillespie, *The transformation of the Irish economy, 1550-1700*, (Dublin, 1991), 6; Katharine Simms, 'Warfare in the medieval Gaelic lordships', *Irish Sword*, 12, (1975-6), 99.

⁹³⁷ Philip S. Robinson, *The plantation of Ulster: British settlement in an Irish landscape, 1600-1700*, (Belfast, 1984), 37.

⁹³⁸ David B. Quinn, 'Sir Thomas Smith (1513-1577) and the beginnings of English colonial theory', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 89, (1945), 553.

alignments of Irishmen. Thus, Timothy O'Neill highlights trade in corn, cloth, munitions and wine between Ulster and Scotland from the fourteenth century onwards.⁹³⁹ Within Tír Conaill, Kenneth Nicholls stresses that Aran Island, Ballyshannon, Bundrowes and Killybegs were important fishing stations and Darren Mac Eiteagain has recently highlighted a trade in fish, cattle, sheep and oats to Bristol, St Malo, Ayr, Wigtown, Glasgow, and elsewhere.⁹⁴⁰ Foreign fishermen paid Irish lords lucrative tributes for the right to fish in waters they controlled.¹⁶ Accordingly, O'Donnell lords tried to expand into fishing areas in other lordships, such as Sligo, in order to further enrich themselves.⁹⁴¹ This information helps illuminate O'Donnell economic aims, but this chapter seeks to discuss this alongside how English endeavours to muscle into Ireland's trade affected relations with lords in Tír Conaill. A rare example of such analysis saw Standish O'Grady acknowledge that the lordship's 'sea-based chieftains' evaded submitting to the crown in the 1580s, fearing their harbour dues would be seized if they did.⁹⁴²

Generally speaking, the increasing interest of Englishmen in overseas trade has been well charted. Ruth Dudley Edwards has outlined a determination to have the profits of Ireland's trade from the mid-sixteenth century onwards and this included the traffic with Europe in fish and hides.⁹⁴³ Tír Conaill was rich in these

⁹³⁹ Timothy O'Neill, *Merchants and mariners in Medieval Ireland*, (Dublin, 1987), 24.

⁹⁴⁰ Kenneth Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the middle ages*, (Dublin, 1972), 115, 120; Darren Mac Eiteagain, 'The Renaissance and the late medieval lordship of Tír Chonaill, 1461-1555', in William Nolan et al, eds. *Donegal: history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 206. 16 O'Neill, *Merchants and Mariners*, 34.

⁹⁴¹ Mac Eiteagain, 'Renaissance and the late medieval lordship of Tír Chonaill', 207.

⁹⁴² Standish O'Grady, *Red Hugh's captivity: a picture of Ireland, social and political, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth*, (London, 1889), 84.

⁹⁴³ Ruth Dudley Edwards, *An Atlas of Irish History*, 2nd edition, (London, 1981), 206; on desire to have fish and hide trade, see Ada K. Longfield, *Anglo-Irish trade in the sixteenth century*, (London, 1929). 44-5, 59-61.

goods and of interest to Englishmen for this reason. This chimed with wider English fiscal policy, as trading interests were expanding rapidly in the sixteenth century. G. V. Scammell highlights burgeoning commerce with the Atlantic islands, whereby Englishmen imported sugar and wine, and exported fish, woad, woollen cloth and grain in return.⁹⁴⁴ Exotic goods like these could only be obtained in greater quantities if the English controlled more fisheries in Ireland, Iceland, Newfoundland and elsewhere, and there was fierce competition with other European powers in each case.⁹⁴⁵ Thus, the Irish stage was one among many upon which the English sought economic predominance and their determination to succeed there increased as the century wore on.

There has been dispute as to how successful English efforts to win Ireland's trade in this period were. While Ada Longfield once asserted that the growth of north-eastern Irish towns like Carrickfergus was evidence of progress since they relied on England for commerce, Robert Hunter has recently argued that the crown was unable to collect fishing revenues from Tír Conaill until after 1603.⁹⁴⁶ Therefore, English triumphs in this regard were confined to certain areas of Ireland. However, it is likely that the O'Donnells perceived their livelihood to be under threat, since

Longfield's findings suggest a creeping English ascendancy in economic matters in

⁹⁴⁴ G. V. Scammell, 'The English in the Atlantic Islands, c.1450-1650', *Mariners Mirror*, LXXII, (1986).

⁹⁴⁵ Peter E. Pope, *Fish into wine: the Newfoundland plantation in the seventeenth century*, (London, 2004), 11-12, 16-20, 91. See also Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, plunder and settlement: maritime enterprise and the genesis of the British Empire, 1480/1630*, (Cambridge, 1984), 45-6, 56, where he notes that the English faced competition from the Germans for Icelandic fish.

⁹⁴⁶ Longfield, *Anglo-Irish trade*, 198; Robert J. Hunter, 'The end of O'Donnell power', in William Nolan et al, eds. *Donegal: history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 236-7. 23 Darren McGettigan, *Red Hugh O'Donnell and the Nine Years War*, (Dublin, 2005), 46.

Ulster. Moreover, by the 1590s, English officials had had some success in seizing Tír Conaill's internal wealth. As Darren McGettigan observes, this had been achieved by tactics such as 'preying upon the cattle of the inhabitants and taking hostages who were then ransomed'.²³ Thus, it is almost certain that lords could envisage a scenario whereby all revenue streams were lost to them.

This chapter does not quantify Tír Conaill's trade which would be all but impossible due to the scarcity of direct evidence of commerce there. However, use is made of the scattered mentions in the State Papers, Admiralty records and elsewhere which have allowed Nicholas Canny to suggest that Ulster's transactions with Chester were done indirectly through Dublin and Drogheda, and Alice Stopford Green to argue that wine sent to north-west Ireland went via Galway.⁹⁴⁷ The principal concern of the chapter is to highlight the features of Tír Conaill's economy and illustrate that losing control over it was disastrous for the status of O'Donnell lords. It is suggested they were aware of the threat that English efforts to seize control of their wealth posed to their power and sometimes resisted encroachments for these reasons.

The chapter first examines the English crown's sporadic attempts following 1541 to obtain revenues from remote areas through co-operation with local elites, suggesting Brady's argument that this was acceptable to lords where it recognised their local power holds true in the example of Tír Conaill. However, it is suggested that one reason that rental agreements were never regularly adhered to was that the

⁹⁴⁷ Nicholas P. Canny, 'Migration and opportunity: Britain, Ireland and the New World', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 12, (1985), 27; Alice Stopford Green, *The making of Ireland and its undoing, 1200-1600*, (London, 1908), 29.

crown often failed to help the O'Donnell lords uphold their local power, as they expected in return. Furthermore, the aggression of English officials from the 1580s onwards made it very difficult for any fiscal arrangement to endure because they began to take more of Tír Conaill's internal wealth than any crown-O'Donnell agreement legislated for. In doing so, officials utilised extortion and other methods which meant that the O'Donnells could not take English rhetoric surrounding fiscal reform seriously, as the second section discusses. Moreover it is argued that, as the century wore on, the crown began to seek direct control over Tír Conaill's revenues. This brought Elizabeth into conflict with O'Donnell leaders, especially from the 1580s onwards, because they were not willing to pay rents only for their fiscal authority in the lordship to be eroded. The third section examines the crown's growing interest in seizing power over ecclesiastical lands in the lordship. Here it is suggested that the prospective loss of ecclesiastical revenues made the O'Donnells more unwilling to pay rents and prompted calls for religious toleration in the 1590s. Lastly, the question of control over Tír Conaill's external trade is considered and it is affirmed that the crown finally, and successfully, put its full efforts into seizing control over that commerce when the war effort of the 1590s demanded it. As with their loss of control over Tír Conaill's internal economy, this was ultimately to damage the regional power of the O'Donnell lords immeasurably. Taking all this into account, this chapter suggests that one reason crown-O'Donnell relations eventually broke down was because the lords of Tír Conaill feared they were losing their local fiscal prowess and, consequently, their political status.

Crown attempts to obtain revenues from remote lordships with local cooperation, and O'Donnell responses to fiscal reform proposals

In the early sixteenth century, English claims upon Irish revenues went only so far as the occasional demand that lords pay rents for the lands they occupied. At the same time, Robert Dodghson has observed, Scottish monarchs also began linking the payment of rents into their exchequer with lawful possession of territory.⁹⁴⁸ Since the 1510s, English-Irish observers in the Irish Pale had been agitating for remote Irish areas to adopt this model, stressing that the crown lost heavily where lords eluded it.

In 1515, for example, the Palesman William Darcy argued that the earldom of Ulster had previously been worth 30,000 marks a year to English monarchs.⁹⁴⁹ These reformers were somewhat successful, as the Tudors increasingly determined to obtain rents from distant parts of their Irish lordship. Gaelic Irish elites were not actually unhappy with this in principle, as it signified that the crown was willing to recognise their local power and help them uphold it. Indeed, in May 1531 the Lord Deputy, William Skeffington, obtained acknowledgment from Hugh Dubh O'Donnell, lord of Tír Conaill, that he 'held royal lands and domains', and a promise that he would pay 'as much as any other Irishman' for them if Henry VIII decided upon reform.⁹⁵⁰ Thereafter, Englishmen believed that O'Donnell lords should become subject to crown rents someday if they wished to be considered loyalists, though this was not put into practice immediately.

⁹⁴⁸ Robert A. Dodghson, *From chiefs to landlords: social and economic change in the Western Highlands and Islands, 1493-1820*, (Edinburgh, 1998), 105.

⁹⁴⁹ 'Decay of Ireland, by William Darcy', 1515, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 7. See also 'The decay of Ireland, written by Patrick Finglass, one of the barons of the Exchequer, in Ireland', 1515, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), where Finglas argued that Henry was due rents from Ulster and Connaught as heir to both provinces and 'Book by Robert Cowley: The state of the realm of Ireland, April 1538', SP 60/6, f. 116, where Cowley made similar claims.

⁹⁵⁰ 'Indenture at Drogheda', 6 May 1531, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 44.

The crown became increasingly determined after 1534 that Ireland should pay for its own defence, because maintaining a permanent English force there became expensive.⁹⁵¹ However, following the Kingship Act of 1541, the Council of London and Thomas Cusack successfully persuaded Henry VIII not to push remote overlords too quickly regarding rents.²⁹ This was in line with the thinking of Cusack's ally, St Leger, who was against the idea of collecting rents until reform was 'well advanced'.³⁰ In effect, these two were suggesting that fiscal change must wait until political reform had taken hold, lest the Gaelic Irish lords rebel anew. The Council in London had a plan should Henry be set upon obtaining some rents immediately. If the likes of religious revenues must be collected, they suggested, having friendly lords in remote parts undertake the task in return for a share of the proceeds would be the most effective way of obtaining them.⁹⁵² Though this never took effect, the point is that officials were inclined to include Irish lords amongst those sharing in fiscal power. Furthermore, O'Donnell's financial primacy in northern Connaught was recognised in his submission to Anthony St Leger in July 1543, which allowed Henry 'the moiety of the tribute due to O'Donnell' there in return for the crown's defence.⁹⁵³ Manus was prepared to share his local wealth with Henry because it appeared the crown recognised some of O'Donnell's various regional claims and would help him uphold them. Successive O'Donnell lords would not always find the English willing to acknowledge their fiscal privileges like this.

⁹⁵¹ T. W. Moody, 'The Irish Parliament under Elizabeth and James I: A General Survey', *PRIA*, 45, C, (1939-40), 41. 29 Thomas Cusack to the Council in England, 1541, *SP Hen. VIII*, III, part 3, (1538-1546), 330; Henry VIII to the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland, 23 September 1541, *SP Hen. VIII*, III, part 3, (1538-1546), 333. 30 Brady, *Chief Governors*, 28.

⁹⁵² Copy of Report by Council in London to the King, 23 September 1541, *SP* 60/10, f.134.

⁹⁵³ 'Lord Magonius O'Donnell', 15 July 1543, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 208.

While Manus and St Leger enjoyed relatively good relations in the early 1540s, O'Donnell retained some economic grievances. In 1543, the deputy ruled that Manus must pay rents to Conn O'Neill, lord of Tyrone, for keeping his people out of Inishowen in Tír Conaill.⁹⁵⁴ O'Donnell considered Inishowen his and had, indeed, had his authority there recognised by St Leger at the same time.³⁴ Accordingly, the lord of Tír Conaill likely expected English forces to help him defend it, particularly as he had agreed to send '100 oxen or mares to the kitchen of King or his Deputy in Ireland' every year.⁹⁵⁵ This attempt to establish an annual tribute to Henry was apparently unsuccessful, presumably because O'Donnell did not see why he should pay both the English and O'Neill to protect Inishowen. Furthermore, the O'Donnells and the O'Neills had been at war over Inishowen for over a century.⁹⁵⁶ Accordingly, it is unlikely that Manus wanted O'Neill to have any kind of presence there, in the guise of providing defence or otherwise. It is possible that these concerns partially prompted O'Donnell's rumoured contemporaneous efforts to seek Scottish and French aid.³⁷ Certainly, the issue of Inishowen was important enough to Manus that, when in a stronger position in 1545, he secured St Leger's agreement that O'Neill's claim to rent for the territory was void.⁹⁵⁷ The resilient friendship between Manus and St Leger is rendered explicable by acknowledging that he moved reasonably quickly to resolve such concerns. There was no continuing effort to damage O'Donnell's economic power within Tír Conaill and it even seemed like his sway

⁹⁵⁴ 'Earl of Tyrone and Lord Magonius O'Donnell', 14 July 1543, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 206. 34 See chapter two, page 72.

⁹⁵⁵ 'Lord Magonius O'Donnell', 15 July 1543, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 209.

⁹⁵⁶ For more on the benefits of power in Inishowen and the reasons behind the O'Donnell-O'Neill wars over power there, see chapter one, pages 43-46, 50-51. ³⁷ See chapter two, 74.

⁹⁵⁷ 'Conclusion of peace between Tyrone and O'Donnell', 24 August 1545, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 214.

over Sligo might be accepted. The question of payment of rent was not pressed in the early to mid-1540s either.

Life under Edward Bellingham as deputy was somewhat different for O'Donnell. In 1549, Bellingham sought to uphold Calvagh O'Donnell's economic interests against Manus'. Calvagh was rewarded for his perceived loyalty 'with all the profits, fisheries...now in his possession' in the baronies of Laggan and Tirrebressil, although he was still expected to pay rents to O'Donnell from these takings.⁹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, this was still damaging for Manus. For instance, the Laggan lay within Cinel Moen and Bellingham was therefore granting Calvagh financial primacy in an area which St Leger had awarded to O'Donnell some six years before.⁴⁰ In many ways, this merely recognised Calvagh's existing power while still acknowledging Manus' primacy in Tír Conaill. As yet, such interventions were also limited to furthering the economic interests of one powerful O'Donnell against another. Nonetheless, it formalised the idea that the lordship's economic prizes were the crown's to bestow, and Manus would have been loath to relinquish the Laggan which was a particularly fertile area.⁹⁵⁹ O'Donnell did concurrently agree to an annual rent of 20 marks for possession of the Lough Foyle fishery and Derry, which indicated that he was prepared to pay in order to receive the crown's recognition of his power in Inishowen.⁹⁶⁰ But Manus was generally unhappy with Bellingham's meddling and subsequently renewed negotiations for French aid.⁹⁶¹ This did not indicate a general rejection of English fiscal demands. As suggested by

⁹⁵⁸ 'Magonius O'Donnell and his sons'. 8 July 1549, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 220. 40 See chapter two, 72.

⁹⁵⁹ Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion: the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland*, (Woodbridge, 1993), 113.

⁹⁶⁰ 'Magonius O'Donnell and his sons'. 8 July 1549, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 220.

⁹⁶¹ See chapter two, 75-76.

his earlier submissions, Manus accepted that he should pay tribute in return for the crown's defence and friendship but instead Bellingham was helping Calvagh obtain some share of Tír Conaill's riches. Ultimately, the English did little to entrench such economic change in Ulster in the 1540s, but a precedent was set. Eventually, the English sought to undermine the fiscal primacy of the lords of Tír Conaill in the north-west, and to have the rents of inferior men go directly to the monarch rather than overlords in the north. This met with predictable resistance from elite men.

In 1550, though, St Leger returned as deputy with instructions to mollify Manus, who remained willing to seek crown favour since local war with Calvagh was his most pressing concern. As Thomas Cusack had earlier observed, St Leger was popular with native Irishmen because they perceived he 'never toke of them nothing, but would geove apparail and plate to them'.⁹⁶² Now, the crown was again willing to show such favour to O'Donnell and it was decided he should receive a present of 'scarlet clothe or some piece of plate' to ensure he abandoned 'forren acquaintances' that summer.⁹⁶³ Manus' loyalty had been in doubt and this was an effort to show him that friendship with the English could be rewarding; an approach that was generally abandoned later in the century. Furthermore, practical efforts to obtain rents from remote lordships were largely set aside for the next decade and a half. Indeed, while London became ever more impatient with the lack of Irish revenue as the cost of the army continued to rocket, English officials in Ireland were preoccupied with other affairs.⁹⁶⁴ For instance, though the Lord Lieutenant Thomas

⁹⁶² Thomas Cusack to Paget, 28 March 1546, *SP Hen. VIII*, III, part 3, (1538-1546), 563. See also Brady, *Chief Governors*, 71.

⁹⁶³ 'Remeberances for Yrelande', July 1550, *SP* 61/2, f. 131.

⁹⁶⁴ The army had cost £8,000 in 1546, climbing to around £40,000 a year in 1550-1, see Brady, *Chief Governors*, 62.

Fitzwalter, earl of Sussex, was ordered to increase the amount of rent collected in 1560, his energies in the north were almost wholly devoted to war with Shane O'Neill, lord of Tyrone.⁹⁶⁵ In contrast, the period following Shane's death in 1567 was characterised by optimism in government circles that the crown's economic situation within Ireland might finally be improved. Thereafter, efforts to obtain rents from lords throughout Ireland were sustained.

In this new dawn, the then-deputy, Henry Sidney, proposed to raise £5040 in rent from Ulster.⁹⁶⁶ Ciaran Brady has argued that, in pursuing such policies, Sidney had no intention of 'destroying the power of the native lords' but perceived their submissions as one means of increasing revenues.⁴⁹ Certainly, Sidney's attempt to reach a rental agreement with Calvagh O'Donnell in October 1566 went alongside an effort to reinstate, rather than threaten, his local predominance. O'Donnell's authority in Tír Conaill had been utterly smashed by Shane O'Neill in the early 1560s and Sidney's assistance was critical in enabling Calvagh to recover it.⁹⁶⁷ Elizabeth had also lent him money to sustain himself in the meantime.⁹⁶⁸ All this reinforced the idea that she and her officials were Calvagh's best hope of recovering his lordship and made his financial position more bearable. Sidney also ordered Tír Conaill's sublords to pay their accustomed rents to Calvagh, which endorsed his status as their overlord. Consequently, as he demonstrably owed his position to the

⁹⁶⁵ See, for instance, 'Instructions to the Earl of Sussex, on his being appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland', 28 May 1560', SP 63/2, f. 39-42.

⁹⁶⁶ 'Ulster rented and divided into acres...from which the Lord Deputy proposes to raise 5040l', 1567, SP 63/22, f. 190-191. 49 Brady, *Chief Governors*, 125-6, 215.

⁹⁶⁷ For a fuller discussion of Shane's domination of Tír Conaill between 1561 and 1566, and Sidney's efforts to restore Calvagh to power there in the latter year, see chapter two, 98-107, 110-112.

⁹⁶⁸ 'Money lente to O'Donnell', Ada K. Longfield, ed. *Fitzwilliam Accounts, 1560-5, (Annesley Collection)*, (Dublin, 1960), 109; Guzman de Silva, Spanish Ambassador to Englnd, to Philip II of Spain, September 1565, *CSPSp*, XIV, 474; 'A warraunt to the Threasourer and Chamberlains of the exchequer', 4 November 1564, *APC*, VII, (1558-1570), 157.

crown, Calvagh readily agreed to pay £200 a year into the exchequer.⁹⁶⁹ By this means, he accepted he owed Elizabeth something for her acknowledgement of his power within Tír Conaill.

Calvagh, therefore, bucks a trend outlined by Brady whereby some lords evaded rental agreements with the crown because its 'immediate demands' outweighed the potential benefits.⁵³ The threat to O'Donnell power in Tír Conaill was longer-term, as Sidney sought to increase government's control over the economic life of the lordship. In what looks like a proto-composition agreement, the deputy legislated for what Calvagh owed the crown annually, whilst recognising that he was due rent from the likes of Hugh McHugh Dubh O'Donnell.⁹⁷⁰ Therefore, as Bellingham had also done, Sidney attempted to establish the crown as the arbiter of fiscal disputes between the principal men in Tír Conaill. In the process, he made it more explicit that the lands were Elizabeth's and that O'Donnell had to pay rent in order to have his authority over the area recognised. Once again, this primarily set a precedent for subsequent deputies to follow, as Calvagh soon died and the crown's early relations with his successor, Hugh McManus O'Donnell, were tumultuous.⁹⁷¹ The immediate prospect of securing rents from Tír Conaill was limited.

⁹⁶⁹ 'Treaty between the Lord Deputy and Calvart O'Donnell', 20 October 1566, *Calendar of Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery in Ireland*, I, 496; 'Calough O'Donnell', 20 October 1566, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 374. 53 Brady, *Chief Governors*, 270.

⁹⁷⁰ 'Calough O'Donnell', 20 October 1566, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 374; 'The O'Donnells', 20 October 1566, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 374. Derek Hirst has suggested that Sidney attempted to inaugurate composition during his first stint as Irish deputy, terming it 'something close' to an 'official English policy'; see his *Dominion: England and its island neighbours, 1550-1707*, (Oxford, 2012), 83. Though Sidney was probably applying this opportunistically rather than systematically at this juncture, he certainly seems to have been groping his way towards formalised settlements of this kind.

⁹⁷¹ See chapter three, 124-126, 131-141, and 163-164 for fuller discussion of some reasons why Hugh McManus' relations with the crown were not always smooth in the early years of his rule in Tír Conaill.

The Ulster lords returned to the table on the question of rents as a consequence of their opposition to the English settlements inaugurated in Ulster by Sir Thomas Smith and the earl of Essex, Walter Deveraux, in the early 1570s.⁹⁷² Smith's efforts in particular caused Ulstermen to be convinced that 'conquest' was 'impending' and to combine together temporarily in opposition to such schemes.⁹⁷³ For his part, Hugh McManus O'Donnell angrily suggested in November 1573 that the settlements were intended to enrich 'certain peculiar persons', rather than further reform.⁹⁷⁴ Hugh's concerns prompted him to express willingness to pay rent in order to be assured that the crown accepted his authority in Tír Conaill.⁹⁷⁵ As such schemes were not proving successful, Essex was instructed to take O'Donnell's submission in July ⁹⁷⁶, and the queen decided he should be given 'such letters patent as he desired'.⁹⁷⁷ Though Hugh professed belief that Elizabeth had not countenanced the settlement policy, he most probably offered to pay rent to ensure that such initiatives would not be enacted in his territory.⁹⁷⁸ Given that the queen decided to reward him on this occasion, it seems that O'Donnell had correctly guessed what was necessary to secure her favour. In this respect, Hugh's reasoning was similar to that of all O'Donnell leaders after 1541, as he linked the payment of rent with the crown's willingness to acknowledge his local power.

⁹⁷² Robert Dunlop, 'Sixteenth century schemes for the plantation of Ulster', *SHR*, 22, (1925), 117-118. The settlement policy is discussed more fully in the external trade section below.

⁹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 120-1.

⁹⁷⁴ Walter Deveraux, Earl of Essex, to Edward Waterhouse, 2 November 1573, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 446.

⁹⁷⁵ Essex noted the lords' willingness to pay rents to escape this in June 1574, see Walter Devereux, earl of Essex to Burghley, Thomas Radcliffe, earl of Sussex, Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham, 14 June

⁹⁷⁶, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 633.

⁹⁷⁷ The Privy Council to the Earl of Essex, 11 July 1574, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 475-477.

⁹⁷⁸ Walter Deveraux, Earl of Essex, to Edward Waterhouse, 2 November 1573, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 446.

The desire to protect his authority in Tír Conaill caused Hugh McManus to continue seeking a fiscal arrangement with the crown in 1575 when Henry Sidney, returning as deputy, was officially erecting the composition policy.⁹⁷⁹ Composition rent offered the crown the prospect of receiving fixed annual sums from Irish lords, who would also have concrete levies from their sublords and tenants, lessening uncertainty all around.⁹⁸⁰ O'Donnell's interest in participating in this scheme was governed by a wish to be free of the 'exactions of others' in Ulster and so, in June 1576, he agreed to pay £200 a year into the exchequer as well as the arrears which had accrued since 1566.⁹⁸¹ Though this involved accepting the crown's authority in fiscal matters, it is plain that Hugh McManus saw the potential benefits of this reform and hoped it would protect him against the extortion of the region's other powers. However, though Sidney successfully obtained rents from O'Donnell in 1576, collection was ultimately sporadic.⁹⁸² This was not necessarily because Hugh was unwilling to stick to what he had agreed. Rather the crown continued to resist his claims in Connaught, and did little to aid him against his local rivals, Turlough O'Neill and Con O'Donnell.⁹⁸³ As these opponents were unwilling to accept Hugh McManus' primacy within Tír Conaill, it was difficult for him to collect rents from his sublords in order to pay the English. As support in these very circumstances had conditioned O'Donnell's interest in reaching an economic arrangement in the first

⁹⁷⁹ Lord Deputy Henry Sidney to the Lords of the Council in England, 15 December 1575, *Cal Carew MSS*, II, (1575-1588), 30.

⁹⁸⁰ 'Whether the Quenes Ma[jes]tie be to be counselled to governe Irelande after the Irishe manner...or to reduce it...to the englishe governmente', 1571, BL Add MSS, 48015, f. 276b.

⁹⁸¹ Mr Francis Agard to Francis Walsingham, 15 June 1576, SP 63/55, f.169.

⁹⁸² See chapter three, 149.

⁹⁸³ On Connaught, see chapter three, 127; on the lack of assistance afforded to Hugh McManus against these local rivals, see chapter three, 109-110.

place, he was not motivated to keep his side of the bargain when this was not forthcoming.

Nonetheless, Hugh continued to seek English aid and an effort to strengthen his local position also governed his willingness to undertake the expense of maintaining 200 English footmen in March 1584.⁹⁸⁴ This agreement fell apart because of their chronic extortion in Tír Conaill, and Hugh was allowed to pay 700 ‘good, fatt and lardge beeves’ in lieu of accepting soldiers in July 1586.⁹⁸⁵ Though McGettigan suggests the troops were a burden which had been forced upon O’Donnell originally, he was in fact probably willing to see whether using English forces, rather than the sometimes rapacious Scots, could work for him.⁹⁸⁶ Certainly, on the face of it, this policy indicated English efforts to try and supply O’Donnell with the assistance required to boost his regional authority. Had this succeeded, he may well have been able to collect rents to pay to the crown as agreed. He would also have owed his power to do so to this support which could have strengthened the chances of fiscal reform taking hold. Furthermore, in the early 1580s, the then deputy, Lord Grey de Wilton, had recalled troops who had misbehaved in Tír Conaill so taking this chance may not have seemed unduly risky.⁹⁸⁷

Nevertheless, as Hiram Morgan has stressed, Captain Bowen and Turlough Luineach O’Neill plundered Tír Conaill in their efforts to make the people pay for the soldiers.⁷¹ Thus, like those lords in Connaught who had been willing to explore

⁹⁸⁴ ‘Agreement of Sir Hugh O’Donnell’, 20 September 1584, SP 63/112.

⁹⁸⁵ ‘Indenture between the Lord Deputy and Council and Sir Hugh O’Donnell’, 10 July 1586, SP 63/125, f.33-34.

⁹⁸⁶ McGettigan, *Red Hugh O’Donnell*, 37. This point is also touched upon discussed in chapter three of this thesis, 158-159.

⁹⁸⁷ ‘Notes of oppressions and indirect courses held in Tirconnell’, 1594, SP 63/177, f. 170. 71

Morgan, *Tyrone’s Rebellion*, 122.

the potential benefits of economic reform, Hugh McManus was subject to extortion by men ostensibly sent to assist him.⁹⁸⁸ As outlined in chapter four, Hugh Roe O'Donnell's later complaints about this were largely dismissed.⁹⁸⁹ Also contributing to Hugh McManus' discontent, Morgan suggests, was that he found he had to maintain the English troops year-round, in contrast to the seasonal pay afforded to Scottish forces.⁹⁹⁰ Ultimately, therefore, O'Donnell's experience echoed that of those Palesmen whose influence with Dublin fell even as they were expected to contribute more towards their own defence.⁹⁹¹ Irishmen were willing to pay for this, but found that agreements they made to his end carried little weight with greedy officials.

Therefore, the idea of composition rents was becoming linked with increasing English encroachment and extortion.

In the late 1580s and early 1590s the dispute over rents from Tír Conaill hardened. By December 1587, Hugh McManus had paid only 110 cows of the initial 700 agreed, and Lord Deputy William Fitzwilliam vehemently claimed a year later that only force would result in recovery of the rest.⁹⁹² There was something in this, as Irish societal norms required a show of aggression before tributes would be paid, which could explain why lords accepted rental agreements when there was a governmental presence in Ulster but then frequently failed to fulfil their obligations.

⁹⁸⁸ See Nobility of Connaught to the Privy Council, 1 February 1588, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 471, for complaints about this from Connaught in 1588.

⁹⁸⁹ See also chapter four, 199, and Nicholas P. Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650*, (Oxford, 2001), 67, where he notes that this was a general issue for Irish lords.

⁹⁹⁰ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 38.

⁹⁹¹ Ciaran Brady, 'Conservative subversives: the community of the Pale and the Dublin administration, 1556-1586', in P. J. Corish, ed. *Radicals, rebels and establishments: Historical Studies XV*, (Belfast, 1985), 16-17.

⁹⁹² 'Account of John Birmingham, Her Majesty's Pursuivant', 23 December 1587, SP 63/132, f.133-4; Lord Deputy William Fitzwilliam to the Privy Council, 31 December 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 94-5.

Long periods had passed when no officials came north, though this was changing. However, now that functionaries were appearing in Ulster more frequently, they were undermining O'Donnell lords completely rather than supporting them. Indeed, John Perrot's earlier kidnap of Hugh Roe O'Donnell alongside Fitzwilliam's 1588 imprisonment of Owen MacToole O'Gallagher and Sir John O'Docherty in lieu of the rent only served to annoy O'Donnell and make him unwilling to pay.⁹⁹³ Furthermore, Hugh McManus is unlikely to have been pleased with the suggestion he should pay an overlord's share of the rent while being treated as an equal with his son, Donnell O'Donnell, who had been appointed sheriff of Tír Conaill by Fitzwilliam.⁷⁸ Ultimately, this amounted to accepting a levy merely for occupying the lands as support against local enemies was not guaranteed. Hugh's successor tried to re-establish the old agreement upon his assumption of the lordship.

Hugh Roe O'Donnell acknowledged he ought to tender rent in return for the crown's friendship. His submission in August 1592 saw him promise to pay the rent his father had agreed and any arrearages already due.⁹⁹⁴ As Morgan has argued, the crown 'lacked the capability to use force' against O'Donnell that summer, so there was no immediate threat compelling him to make this offer.⁹⁹⁵ In fact, Hugh Roe then coveted English support against recalcitrant lords in Tír Conaill. Like his predecessors, he was ready to pay rent if the crown recognised his position as lord there at the expense of his local rivals. While the rents remained 'slenderlie

⁹⁹³ On Hugh McManus' unwillingness to pay until Hugh Roe was released, see Sir Nicholas White, Master of the Rolls, to William Cecil, 7 April 1589, SP 63/143, f.15. On imprisonment of O'Gallagher and O'Docherty, see Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to the Privy Council, 31 December 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 94. 78 See also chapter three, 175.

⁹⁹⁴ 'Articles ministered to Hugh Roe O'Donnell upon his oath, whereunto he most willingly yielded', 2 August 1592, SP 63/166, f.122.

⁹⁹⁵ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 134.

answered' in March 1593, this was principally because Hugh Roe was worried that there were no guarantees that the extortion of English officials was a thing of the past in Tír Conaill.⁹⁹⁶ In 1594 he sought reassurance on this score from the new deputy, William Russell, and offered to pay composition rent in return for his pardon.⁹⁹⁷ Again, rent was linked explicitly with crown support being extended in return.

All that said, as the rebels' position improved during the war, O'Donnell did seek better fiscal terms. In 1596, he argued that his father was forced to pay more than he could afford and that all debts should be written off.⁹⁹⁸ In stressing this Hugh echoed the 1570s arguments of the earl of Desmond who acknowledged that he should pay cess but complained that the rate was higher than he 'had been led to expect'.⁹⁹⁹ Elizabeth was in fact willing to lower Tír Conaill's rent if Hugh McManus had been 'extorted above reason', but determined that Hugh Roe must pay something if he wanted her favour.¹⁰⁰⁰ No agreement had been reached by 1599. By then, the confederates were in a strong position and it was rumoured that Tyrone wanted the levy of '700 beeves set upon O'Donnell' to be abolished, as it had been agreed under compulsion.¹⁰⁰¹ The implication was that Irish lords did not want to pay rents at all. In fact Hugh Roe was to reach an arrangement which would

⁹⁹⁶ 'An estimate by Robert Legge of Her Majesty's revenues in Ireland', 2 March 1593, SP 63/168, f.185. Hugh voiced these concerns about extortion between 1594 and 1596, see 'Notes of oppressions and indirect courses held in Tirconnell', 1594, SP 63/177, f.170-172v; and Commissioners Robert Gardiner and Henry Wallop to the Lord Deputy Russell and Council, 23 January 1596, *Cal Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 142.

⁹⁹⁷ Hugh Roe O'Donnell to the Lord Deputy and Council, 25 August 1594, SP 63/176, f.23.

⁹⁹⁸ 'Hugh O'Donnell's grievances', 27 January 1596, *Cal Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 153; 'The Commissioners' answers to Hugh Roe O'Donnell's petitions', January 1596, *Cal Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 154; 'A summary of the demands of Tyrone, O'Donnell etc', February 1596, SP 63/186, f.308-308v.

⁹⁹⁹ Anthony M. McCormack, *The earldom of Desmond, 1463-1583: the decline and crisis of a feudal lordship*, (Dublin, 2005), 140.

¹⁰⁰⁰ 'The Queen's answers to O'Donnell's petitions', 1586, BL Add MSS 37536, f. 51v. She reiterated similar sentiments to Russell in May 1596, see Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Russell and the Irish Council, 25 May 1596, *Cal Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 177.

¹⁰⁰¹ 'The substance of the Traitor's propositions', 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 370.

guarantee English friendship, particularly because the foreign manpower which the confederates had been promised had never arrived.¹⁰⁰² The confederates merely hoped their strong position would gain them a more favourable fiscal deal, which was not unrealistic.

Indeed, Elizabeth soon decided that Ulstermen should only be expected to pay such rents as they had before agreed to.¹⁰⁰³ Of course this, too, was subject to revision should the English improve their own negotiating position.

The willingness of O'Donnell and Tyrone to uphold the rental system was signified by their offers to collect the crown's levies in Connaught and Ulster on Elizabeth's behalf.¹⁰⁰⁴ There were precedents for such a model of government in Ireland. The earls of Desmond had previously collected 'crown prerogatives' in the south-west in return for recognition of their palatinate jurisdiction.¹⁰⁰⁵ In the 1540s, the Council in England had also favoured allowing Gaelic elites in remote areas to suppress religious houses and share in the financial benefits which resulted. The balance of power then was such that northern lords did not need to do this in order to retain local fiscal control. However, the confederate leaders' suggestion came in a climate where the execution of Hugh Roe McMahon in 1590 had shown overlords that extorting from their followers would no longer be tolerated.¹⁰⁰⁶ Thus they were displaying that they were, as Raymond Gillespie asserts, willing to adapt to the

¹⁰⁰² See chapter four, 232-246, for fuller discussion of the difficulties the confederates had in obtaining foreign assistance.

¹⁰⁰³ 'Instructions for our Cousin and Councillor, Robert Earl of Essex', 25 March 1599, SP 63/203, f.234. Similar instructions were given to the new Deputy, Mountjoy, in 1600. See 'Instructions for the Lord Mountjoy', January 1600, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 445.

¹⁰⁰⁴ 'Demands of the earl of Tirone, O'Donnell and others', 19 January 1596, SP 63/186, f.81. Hiram Morgan has acknowledged that this suggested a willingness on the part of the Ulster overlords to pay rents if they might be free of the extortion of officials, see *Tyrone's rebellion*, 175.

¹⁰⁰⁵ McCormack, *The earldom of Desmond*, 96-7.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 64.

changed circumstances by offering to collect rents.¹⁰⁰⁷ Performing this task and taking a cut for their efforts could also circumvent the problem of how to fund lordly lifestyles without exactions. Additionally, lower amounts reaching the exchequer might prevent the further creation of English officials who eroded lords' power. Certainly, Ciaran Brady has argued that angry Palesmen linked rocketing cess with the maintenance of government officials.¹⁰⁰⁸ However, observers such as Thomas Jones, Bishop of Meath, were not in favour of employing the confederate leaders to collect rents because he believed they would eventually seize the rents for their own use.¹⁰⁰⁹ Consequently, their offers were ignored. There is no doubt that O'Donnell sought to preserve his economic advantages and meant to continue taking tribute from his adherents one way or another. Nevertheless, Hugh's repeated willingness to negotiate on this and other points resembled the tactics of the earl of Desmond in the late 1570s and early 1580s, which led Anthony McCormack to suggest that the earl sought some form of agreement rather than to topple Elizabeth's government.¹⁰¹⁰

Each O'Donnell lord in the sixteenth century had been willing to pay a conditional rent for their territories, and for military support, to the Tudor monarchs. Therefore, they were open to the idea of certain fiscal reform so long as it worked in their interests as well as those of the crown. In negotiations on this, they acknowledged the monarch as their overlord but expected their local power to be preserved in return.¹⁰¹¹ As this was infrequently performed by English officials,

¹⁰⁰⁷ Raymond Gillespie, 'Explorers, exploiters, and entrepreneurs: early modern Ireland and its context, 1550-1700', in B. J. Graham and L. J. Proudfoot, eds. *An historical geography of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1993), 136.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Brady, *Chief Governors*, 215.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Thomas Jones, Bishop of Meath, to William Cecil, 22 March 1598, *CSPI*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 92.

¹⁰¹⁰ McCormack, *The earldom of Desmond*, 179-80.

¹⁰¹¹ Ciaran Brady notes that this was true of all such agreements with the crown, see *Chief Governors*, 3.

O'Donnell lords were ultimately recalcitrant in fulfilling their side of the bargain. Their interest in coming to a rental agreement was also damaged by other factors. One of these was the fact that English efforts to enact the fiscal reform which was promised were intermittent and ineffective which did not build faith that change would come. Additionally, the crown and its representatives became increasingly intent upon seizing a share of Tír Conaill's revenue streams from under the noses of the O'Donnells and their adherents, as the following sections outline.

The reality of English reform efforts, the crown's drive to obtain direct control of sublords' revenue, and the O'Donnell response

English efforts to reform the Irish economy in the sixteenth century were hindered by the wider struggle for power within lordships. Nevertheless there were sporadic attempts to outline the form that Irish commerce should take. In October 1550, for instance, it was ordered that exports of wool, tallow, butter, and linen yarn be 'stayed' with the items being finished by Irishmen themselves. It was believed that other countries prospered by doing this and Ireland would too.¹⁰¹² Furthermore, Elizabeth demanded in December 1572 that farmers set aside lands for tillage to increase production of 'corn and grain'.¹⁰¹³ Shaping these policies, stresses Steven Ellis, was the comparative cost-effectiveness of agricultural farming in the face of increased population growth throughout the 'Tudor state'.¹⁰¹⁴ The English also shared some perceptions with the seventeenth-century Stuart monarchs of the Three

¹⁰¹² 'Remembrances for Yrelande', July 1550, SP 61/2, f. 131. See also A. J. Sheehan, 'Irish towns in a period of change, 1580-1625', in Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie, eds. *Natives and newcomers: the making of Irish colonial society, 1534-1641*,

(Dublin, 1986), 106, which details efforts to promote industry by having Irishmen learn how to 'finish' the production of raw materials themselves during the 1569-71 Parliament.

¹⁰¹³ 'Instructions for the commissioners in Ireland to be observed in demising and letting crown property', 30 December 1572, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 251.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 253. 100
Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English*, 85.

Kingdoms who, Jane Ohlmeyer observes, thought that Ireland's cattle economy was 'unsophisticated' and ought to be replaced with 'a more commercialised system that favoured settled patterns of farming and promoted urbanisation'.¹⁰⁰ However, English officials in Ireland routinely argued that the continuing power of Gaelic lords stymied efforts to enact such change. For instance, in 1557 the earl of Sussex, Thomas Fitzwalter, suggested that corn-sowing could begin in Clandeboyne only when Scots were expelled from Ulster. Similarly Conyers Clifford, then-governor of Connaught, stressed in 1599 that the English must possess Ballyshannon in Tír Conaill or Sligo before people there would begin practicing husbandry.¹⁰¹⁵ Thus, Clifford attempted to equate O'Donnell influence in those parts with the failure of economic innovation. Nonetheless the truth was that, rather than reforming Irish fiscal practices, English officials had used them in their efforts to subdue the crown's Irish opponents and to seize control of the internal economy.

The English had long insisted that the use of economic warfare and destruction, which was traditionally utilised by Irish lords to compel others to obedience, must cease.¹⁰¹⁶ As early as 1521, an act in the Earl of Surrey's Irish Parliament declared that the burning of corn or houses 'uppon any of the kinges true subiects' was high treason.¹⁰¹⁷ Such pronouncements never did much to change anything, in remote parts of Ireland at least. Indeed, Fermanagh was subdued by Manus O'Donnell in 1541 and Hugh McManus O'Donnell and Shane O'Neill in 1562 by means of burning houses and corn, and these are only two of many

¹⁰¹⁵ 'Opinions of Lord Fytzwauter on the above articles', 1557, SP 62/1, f. 72-74v; Conyers Clifford, Governor of Connaught, 20 January 1599, *CSPI*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 26.

¹⁰¹⁶ Warfare was conducted in a similar way in Scotland, as the destruction of food could be as devastating as killing a lord's forces. See Dodghson, *From chiefs to landlords*, 8, 87.

¹⁰¹⁷ 'Act of the 13th year of King Henry VIII's reign', BL Add MSS 4801, f.79.

examples.¹⁰¹⁸ Linked to this were efforts to abolish Irish exactions which ‘directed to the chiefs the wealth coveted for the royal exchequer’.¹⁰⁵ In 1537, Irishmen had been prohibited from taking ‘any tribute exaction or any other unlawfull imposition’ from ‘the Kinges townes or faithfull subiects’ and calls to ensure such practices were halted were consistent thereafter.¹⁰¹⁹ Exactions were repeatedly blamed for low crown revenues as they encouraged men to become mercenaries rather than farmers, and discouraged those who produced goods only to see them spoiled or seized.¹⁰²⁰ In sum the English believed, as Henry Sidney claimed in 1569, that outlawing exactions would ‘dissolve local military power’, and leave Dublin with more money to boost its own force and assert its will.¹⁰²¹ The abolition of exactions might also see that system’s replacement with the rents the crown craved.

In practice, however, English officials sometimes found it difficult to convince Irishmen of the merits of abandoning exactions. Where the crown managed to have lords agree to cease taking them, this was usually because they were in little position to argue. For instance, Calvagh O’Donnell had reassumed the lordship of Tír Conaill with the crown’s assistance when he agreed not to extort from ‘the Queen’s tenants on his lands’ in October 1566.¹⁰²² However, Ulster in general was

¹⁰¹⁸ *ALC*, I, 331; Shane Maguire to the Lord Lieutenant Sussex, 25 November 1562, SP 63/7, f. 167. Another saw Hugh McManus O’Donnell burn woodland in Strabane in Tyrone in 1583, see Patrick Fitzgerald, ‘Scottish Migration to Ireland in the seventeenth century’, in Alexia Grosjean and Steve Murdoch, eds. *Scottish communities abroad in the early modern period: Studies in medieval and reformation traditions*, v. 107 (Leiden, 2005), 40. 105 Green, *Making of Ireland and its undoing*, 362.

¹⁰¹⁹ ‘Act of the 28th year of King Henry VIII’s reign’, BL Add MSS 4801, f.82. Steven Ellis has noted that Henry VIII wanted to outlaw coign and livery as early as 1520, but realised the earl of Surrey would be unable to pay his troops for any longer than six months if he did not utilise the practice in his coming expedition to Ireland, see *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 121.

¹⁰²⁰ See ‘Robert Cowley’s plan for the Reformation of Ireland’, 1541, *SP Hen. VIII*, III, part 3, (1538-1546), 346, which saw Cowley argue that mercenaries would have to learn a trade if exactions ceased. Patrick Sherlock and Robert Beale later argued that exactions made people unwilling to cultivate crops, see ‘Memorandum by Patrick Sherlock to Elizabeth I for the reform and augmentation of the revenues of Ireland’, 1567-1568, BL Add MSS, 48015, f. 280; ‘Touchinge the plotte Irelande: a discourse by Beale on the establishment for Ireland’, 1578, BL Add MSS, 48017, f. 201b; v.

¹⁰²¹ Valerie McGowan-Doyle, ‘Fall of Princes: Lydgate, Sir Henry Sidney and the Tudor Conquest in the Book of Howth’, in Thomas Herron and Michael Potterton, eds. *Ireland in the renaissance c.1540-1660*, (Dublin, 2007), 80.

¹⁰²² ‘Treaty between the Lord Deputy and Calvart O’Donnell’, 20 October 1566, *Calendar of Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery in Ireland*, I, 496; ‘Calough O’Donnell’, 20 October 1566, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 374. 110 ‘Certain things to be observed for the reformation of Ulster’, 1575, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 915.

marked out as having ignored orders to reform this abuse in 1575.¹¹⁰ The problem was, as one observer noted with regard to Munster, lords did not believe they could defend themselves without ‘men of war’.¹⁰²³ Any shortfall in military support was unlikely to be made up by the English, as officials rarely had the forces necessary to aid those lords who willingly jettisoned the collection of exactions.¹¹² As Finnegan has asserted, the crown also did not offer those who were willing to consider abandoning exactions alternative means of becoming rich or preserving their political power.¹⁰²⁴ Furthermore, there were other reasons for scepticism among the Irish elite as to how far the English really intended to pursue economic reform on the island.

In most parts of Ireland, English officials did little to enforce those laws which stated that traditional Irish economic practices must be abolished. Furthermore, they were only selectively critical of those who continued to enrich themselves through these customary means. For instance, raiding was deemed permissible if a particular Irishman was seen as loyal. Consequently, Hugh Roe O’Donnell’s raids in Monaghan, Longford, Galway and Thomond in the late 1590s and early 1600s provoked anger amongst English officials since he was at war with the crown.¹⁰²⁵ Conversely, Hugh McManus O’Donnell’s attacks upon Shane O’Neill and Turlough O’Neill in 1567 were noted approvingly by Englishmen because Hugh was then thought an ally.¹⁰²⁶¹⁰²⁷ A similar policy usually operated with regard to the

¹⁰²³ ‘Articles for the reformation of Munster’, August 1573, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 400. 112 Hirst, *Dominion*, 93.

¹⁰²⁴ Finnegan, *Tyrone’s rebellion*, 13.

¹⁰²⁵ Captain Thomas Henshaw to Lord Deputy William Russell, 27 July 1594, SP 63/175, f.177-177v; Geoffrey Fenton to William Cecil, 5 May 1595, *CSPI*, V, (October 1592-June 1596), 315; ‘Minute by Sir Conyers Clifford to the Lords Justices, the Lord Lieutenant and the rest of the Council, 18 September 1598, *CSPI*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 312-3; Sir Theobald Dillon to Robert Cecil, 1 July 1600, IX (Mar 1600-Oct 1600), 289.

¹⁰²⁶ Sir William Fitzwilliam to Robert Cecil, 10 June 1567, SP 63/21, f. 17; Sir Peter Carew to the Privy Council, 2 November 1027, SP 63/26, f. 56. See also the pleasure of Captain Humphrey Willis in November 1601 that Niall Garbh O’Donnell had threatened to ruin those Tír Conaill sublords who would not submit to him, Captain Humphrey Willis to Robert Cecil, 15 November 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-1603), 165.

taking of exactions. For example, extorting from the tenants of others had been outlawed in July 1541, but the Lord Deputy and Council could grant exemptions to those men who were required to join an Irish Council hosting.¹⁰²⁸ Moreover, as late as 1602, Henry Docwra readily allowed Niall Garbh O'Donnell to make a 'cutting' on Tír Conaill in order to feed the Derry garrison, because this served the crown's ends.¹⁰²⁹ Willingness to allow the monarchy's allies to go on flouting the law was prevalent in other parts of Ireland too. Indeed, Victor Treadwell has observed that the crown was often reticent to enforce the law regarding the abolition of exactions as this would hurt the favoured Butlers of Ormond in the pocket.¹⁰³⁰ Therefore, a double standard came into operation whereby the crown's friends were permitted to extort people but others were not. This perhaps explains the repeated attempts of even Hugh Roe O'Donnell to befriend Elizabeth, as she might then turn a blind eye to his use of exactions. Alternatively, the crown's support might enable him to continue exercising fiscal control through some other system. However, English determination to diminish the power of the confederate lords ultimately precluded the chance of this being realised.

The impression that the crown was not committed to reform was enhanced by the gusto with which English functionaries aped Irish methods of warfare, particularly by the century's end. As early as 1537, Anthony St Leger had been warned that deputies must cease behaving like 'the masters of extorcion' to convince lords 'that we desired more the weale then their cattall or goodes'.¹⁰³¹ Even

¹⁰²⁸ 'Reformation of Ireland' 12 July 1541, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 182.

¹⁰²⁹ Henry Docwra to the Privy Council, 2 January 1602, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-1603), 262.

¹⁰³⁰ Victor Treadwell, 'The Irish Parliament of 1569-71', *PRIA*, 65, C, (1966), 58.

¹⁰³¹ 'Book addressed to the Commission headed by Anthony St Leger, sent to investigate the state of Ireland', February 1538, BL Add MSS, 48015, f. 251b-254b.

Englishmen acknowledged that these ideals were rarely met. In September 1546 Henry VIII had to order the Irish Council to ‘put away all galloglasse and kerne, with coyne and livery’.¹⁰³² Unfortunately, as Ciaran Brady has argued, Englishmen like Edmund Tremayne later resigned themselves to the idea of temporarily trying to ‘beat the lords at their own game’ by raiding and utilising exactions until such time as they had been overawed.¹²¹ Tremayne’s friend, Henry Sidney, enthusiastically adopted this credo when he was deputy and, Willy Maley stresses, saw no issue in using these methods himself while demanding that natives cease doing so.¹⁰³³ Destructive tactics were also liberally used by crown forces during the Desmond rebellion in the 1580s.¹⁰³⁴ Anthony McCormack has observed that the ‘scorched earth policies’ which destroyed arable farming in Munster at that time damaged the credibility of suggestions that the crown wanted tillage to become more prominent in the Irish economy.¹²⁴ In sum, it was hard for Irishmen to believe that the English were set upon a programme of improving the island’s economy when the crown’s forces were wiping out much of its produce.

Such destruction eventually reached the north on a grand scale, too. As mentioned, English captains had plundered the wealth of Tír Conaill in the 1580s. By the latter half of the 1590s men such as John Talbot and Conyers Clifford favoured destroying Tír Conaill’s corn; a policy eventually pursued by Charles

¹⁰³² ‘Minutes of Council with the King’s Commands’, 24 September 1546, *SP Hen. VIII*, III, part 3, (1538-1546), 584. ¹²¹ Brady, *Chief Governors*, 140-2.

¹⁰³³ Maley, ‘The name of the country I have forgotten’, 67.

¹⁰³⁴ McCormack, *The earldom of Desmond*, 154-5; Maley, ‘The name of the country I have forgotten’, 65. ¹²⁴ McCormack, *The Earldom of Desmond*, 193.

Mountjoy, deputy between 1600 and 1605, in prosecuting the war in Ulster.¹⁰³⁵

Therefore the suggestion of Edmund Spenser that inducing famine would win the war both reflected the mode of warfare in recent decades and informed the thinking of Englishmen towards the end of the century.¹²⁶ An alternative to destruction was to seize Irish produce for English use, as when Conyers Clifford outlined his desire to have Assaroe abbey in Tír Conaill for its corn and cattle in December 1599.¹⁰³⁶ The intent was the same as engendering famine in that the Irish were to be defeated by being deprived of their economic power. The upshot of this was that the rules of war remained unaltered. On this basis, it is probable that Irishmen accepted it was legitimate for the English to raid lordships, but were unlikely to have been convinced that true fiscal reform was meant.¹⁰³⁷ As the aim of English raids was to leave lords without followers or mercenaries, Irish elites had no choice but to retaliate in like fashion if they were to preserve their status.¹²⁹ The Nine Years War, in particular, became one over Ulster's economic resources and resistance was partly predicated on that struggle.

The disquiet within Tír Conaill about English extortion is evidenced by the aforementioned complaints of Hugh McManus O'Donnell and Hugh Roe O'Donnell about it, and the latter's fear that soldiers would keep exacting from the lordship.

¹⁰³⁵ Mr John Talbot to Robert Cecil, 17 July 1595, *CSPI*, V, (October 1592-June 1596), 342; Conyers Clifford to the Privy Council, 20 January 1598, *CSPI*, VII (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 25-6; Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Irish Council to the Privy Council, 9 August 1601, *CSPI*, XI (1601-3), 10-11. ¹²⁶ Canny, *Making Ireland British*, 49-51.

¹⁰³⁶ 'A declaration of my employments, by Sir Conyers Clifford', 20 December 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 333.

¹⁰³⁷ Raymond Gillespie and Bernadette Cunningham have argued that the favourable obituary of Nicholas Malbie in the *Annals of Loch Ce* indicates that English officials were considered honourable if they upheld the 'norms' of 'traditional society'. Raiding would probably qualify as acceptable, even if losses were irritating, as it was standard Irish practice. See 'Sir Nicholas Malbie's obituary, 1584: outsiders in the sixteenth century Irish annals', in Raymond Gillespie and Bernadette Cunningham, eds. *Stories from Gaelic Ireland: microhistories from the sixteenth-century Irish annals*, (Dublin, 2003), 197. ¹²⁹ Captain Thomas Reade to Robert Cecil, 9 January 1599, *CSPI*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 450-1. ¹³⁰ McGowan-Doyle, 'Fall of Princes', 85.

Consequently, abandoning coign and livery would have left O'Donnell lords open to attack, much as Baron Howth claimed had happened in the Pale when lords there had earlier accepted Sidney's demands that they do so.¹³⁰ Therefore, fiscal and strategic concerns had a role to play in explaining the unwillingness of O'Donnell lords to abandon the traditional means of enriching themselves. They had to continue doing so because their local rivals still utilised these methods, as did the English officials who posed the biggest threat to O'Donnell power in the late sixteenth century. In the last decade or so especially, the crown did not provide O'Donnell leaders with the military support which would have allowed them to abandon exactions. Ultimately, the family was unable to prevent government functionaries obtaining financial authority over Tír Conaill as, for instance, Rory O'Donnell complained in 1607 that his people had lost 38 plough-horses, beeves and muttons to Sir Henry Folliott without any recompense.¹⁰³⁸

The crown eventually achieved the weakening of O'Donnell economic strength by seizing control over sublords in the family's sphere of influence. Early efforts to do this were limited to areas outwith the O'Donnells' immediate jurisdiction. In 1543, St Leger compelled Manus O'Donnell and Conn O'Neill to agree to refrain from interfering in other lordships, partly to reserve the economic benefits of places like the Route for the crown.¹⁰³⁹ This, however, took little practical effect, prompting crown officials to re-assert similar demands in the early

¹⁰³⁸ The Earl of Tyrconnell to King James I, *CSPI*, XIII, (1606-1608), 364-74.

¹⁰³⁹ See chapter two, 83, for St Leger's decree that no reform could take place while the Ulster overlords retained power over their inferiors.

1550s. In September 1551, the Lord Deputy, Sir James Crofts, decreed that Maguire of

Fermanagh should be freed from paying rents to O'Donnell or O'Neill.¹⁰⁴⁰ Though this was largely unsuccessful at this time, the aim was to lessen the financial sway that the Ulster overlords held over lesser men in the province by having the latter pay rent direct to the crown. Such thinking would inform later efforts to have Tír Conaill's sublords hold their lands from the monarchy.

Eventually, the English tried to wrest control of Sligo away from the O'Donnells too. Sligo was of interest to both O'Donnell lords and the crown because it had become a 'centre for the export of herring and salmon' in the fifteenth century.¹³⁴ When powerful enough, O'Donnell lords could claim the revenues there. Indeed, the 1539 agreement between Manus O'Donnell and O'Connor Sligo saw O'Connor agree to pay O'Donnell 'every king's cocket that shall come to Sligo...and every cin baile...but that which O'Domhnaill allows him'.¹⁰⁴¹¹⁰⁴² For their part, the O'Connors would avoid paying these exactions whenever possible, as they did not accept O'Donnell overlordship in principle. For some time after 1541, however, the crown tacitly accepted the O'Donnells' economic claims in northern Connaught because it was politically expedient to do so. In 1566, for example, Henry Sidney left the question of Sligo to one side because his immediate aim was to bolster the power of the reinstated lord of Tír Conaill, Calvagh O'Donnell, over his

¹⁰⁴⁰ Thomas Cusack to the Earl of Warwick, 27 September 1551, SP 61/3, f. 153v. 134
S. J. Connolly, *Contested island: Ireland 1460-1630*, (Oxford, 2007), 15.

¹⁰⁴¹ Maura Carney, ed. 'Agreement between O'Domhnaill and O Conchobhair Concerning Sligo Castle', *IHS*, III, (1942-3),

¹⁰⁴² . Carney suggests that 'cin baile' is a 'tax or rent issuing out of land'.

sublords there.¹⁰⁴³

During the reign of Hugh McManus O'Donnell, things changed. He was initially of political use and was often left free to take black rents from Sligo, as in June 1580 when Nicholas Malbie allowed O'Connor to 'bye Odonelles good will'.¹³⁷ By the late 1580s, Hugh McManus was no longer an important ally and the English then sought to make good on their earlier claims of 100 marks in composition rents from Sligo.¹⁰⁴⁴ Now the crown meant to have direct control over the revenues of the western province. This saw George Bingham receive £355 and 19 shillings in rent from O'Connor between 1587 and 1591.¹⁰⁴⁵ Moreover, English success in Connaught was such that MacWilliam of Mayo and Grainne O'Malley were amongst those who had also espoused readiness to pay composition in the mid-1580s.¹⁰⁴⁶ By the mid 1590s, especially, Connaught's revenues were critical to Hugh Roe O'Donnell's war effort and his struggle with the crown became partially about regaining control of these finances.¹⁰⁴⁷ Such economic imperatives are crucial in explaining O'Donnell's stubbornness on the question of his claims in northern Connaught during negotiations with Elizabeth in the 1590s.¹⁰⁴⁸ He needed this wealth in order to sustain his army.

¹⁰⁴³ Lord Deputy Henry Sidney to the Privy Council, 12 November 1566, SP 63/19, f. 89v. Tír Conaill's sublords had warned Sidney that, were O'Connor freed from O'Donnell's exactions, they would expect to escape them too. ¹³⁷ Nicholas Malbie to William Cecil, 11 June 1580, SP 63/73, f. 0130.

¹⁰⁴⁴ 'Composition paid in Connaught and Thomond', 24 October 1581, SP 63/86, f. 116. See also Sir Nicholas Malbie to Francis Walsingham, 4 January 1580, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 204, where Nicholas Malbie discusses his efforts to bring O'Connor Sligo to this deal on composition.

¹⁰⁴⁵ 'Account of the rents of Sligo received by Sir George Bingham', 25 March 1591, SP 63/157, f.92-92v.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Theobald Dillon to Francis Walsingham, 27 January 1583, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 425. In March 1583, Nicholas Malbie claimed he had taken in almost £9000 in composition, see Nicholas Malbie to the Privy Council, 24 March 1583, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 436.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Richard Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, III, (London, 1885-1890), 271.

¹⁰⁴⁸ See, for instance, chapter four, 208-209.

Even if he had reached peace with the queen, O'Donnell would still have required military power in order to defeat his local challengers, such as Niall Garbh O'Donnell. Therefore, Hugh's resistance to English rule was at least partially motivated by fiscal concerns. Unfortunately for him, one consequence of his defeat in the early 1600s was that the O'Donnells lost northern Connaught's revenues for good.

The crown also came to seek fiscal power over sublords in Tír Conaill itself. This conferred certain financial benefits, which O'Donnell leaders were able to continue enjoying until very late in the century. For instance, MacSweeny Fanad was bound to support O'Donnell militarily or pay a penalty of two cows for each galloglass which was not provided.¹⁰⁴⁹ O'Donnell lords also claimed 1200 cows in return for inaugurating new O'Docherty lords of Inishowen.¹⁰⁵⁰ Furthermore, the territories of some sublords were close to rich fishing areas. These included O'Docherty's lands which were flanked by Lough Foyle and Lough Swilly, and MacSweeney Banagh's territory which overlooked Killybegs.¹⁴⁵ O'Donnell lords could hope to gain some share in the harbour dues which these sublords collected from foreign fishermen for the right to bring their catches into these havens. Such wealth governed an O'Donnell's ability to wage war and achieve his political aims since, as Elizabeth observed in December 1593, 'nether the McSwines or the Scottes at any time' came to Hugh Roe if he was unable to sustain them.¹⁰⁵¹ Thus, economic

¹⁰⁴⁹ Katharine Simms, *From kings to warlords: the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later middle ages*, (Woodbridge, 2000), 143.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Katharine Simms, 'Late medieval Donegal', in William Nolan et al, eds. *Donegal, history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, (Dublin, 1995), 191. 145 See map 2, page vii of this study.

¹⁰⁵¹ Queen Elizabeth to the Irish Council, 9 December 1593, BL Add MSS 37536, f. 38v. One observer suggested that the 'entertainment' of the 3 MacSweeny lords cost O'Donnell 2000 cows a year. See 'The description of the Realm of Ireland' by Meredith Hanmer, 1597, SP 63/201, f.376v.

concerns were interlinked with the struggle between the crown and overlords over sublords' political allegiances. It was not automatic that Tír Conaill's sublords would extend fiscal assistance to an O'Donnell leader. They had to be happy with his rule or, alternatively, the O'Donnell had to be powerful enough to compel them to pay tribute. This could be difficult when an alternative power, such as the O'Neill of Tyrone, had influence in Tír Conaill. It became even harder as the English extended their power into the north and undermined the financial primacy of the overlords there.

The crown's desire to establish its economic authority throughout Ulster was also evidenced by its efforts to include freeholders in surrender and regrant agreements. Patrick Sherlock had championed pursuing this approach in Munster in 1567 as a means of ensuring the allegiance of Irish tenants to the crown, by having them depend on Elizabeth for their holdings rather than their overlords.¹⁰⁵² Within Ulster, this policy became reality in the Monaghan Settlement of 1591, when Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam divided that lordship among seven chief men and freeholders, with all to pay fixed rents to the crown for their lands.¹⁰⁵³ The settlement did not actually liberate the freeholders from lords' power, but it did threaten the wealth of the latter enormously since tenants in Monaghan were now required only to pay their superiors only one tenth of the old levies.¹⁰⁵⁴ As Raymond Gillespie has suggested, this scheme had the effect of reversing a trend whereby overlords had utilised agreements with the crown to take more in 'duties' from their inferiors.¹⁰⁵⁵ This was

¹⁰⁵² 'A plotte conceived for the gouernment of the Realme of Irelande', 1567-1568', BL Add MSS, 48015, f. 285.

¹⁰⁵³ Lord Deputy William Fitzwilliam to William Cecil, 14 October 1591, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 427.

¹⁰⁵⁴ On the first point, see P. J. Duffy, 'The territorial organisation of Gaelic landownership and its transformation in Monaghan, 1590-1641', *Irish Geography*, 14, (1981), 12-14. On new levies, see Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 67.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Gillespie, *Transformation of the Irish economy*, 10.

one major factor in provoking the Nine Years War, as lords throughout Ulster had cause to be alarmed about any settlement which threatened their claims, economic and otherwise, over their sublords and tenants.¹⁰⁵⁶ Clearly, those with most to lose were those Irishmen who profited most from the current arrangements. Within Tír Conaill this meant Hugh Roe's branch of the family who were thus most resistant to the proposed extension of this policy throughout Ulster.¹⁰⁵⁷

Though Hugh Roe O'Donnell and the crown attempted to reach a rental agreement throughout the 1590s all efforts had failed, principally because he had never been convinced that English captains would cease extorting from Tír Conaill. Eventually, the queen tired of negotiations and sought instead to smash Hugh Roe's ability to resist English encroachments by winning the financial support of many of his sublords.¹⁰⁵⁸ Now, she sought to deprive O'Donnell of his lordship's wealth and so his local rival, Niall Garbh O'Donnell, was lured across to the English side with promises of being recognised as lord of Tír Conaill.¹⁰⁵⁹ Between 1600 and 1601, Niall went on to seize the likes of Lifford and Ballyshannon Castles before turning them to the queen's use.¹⁰⁶⁰ This gave Elizabeth's army a foothold in the south and east of Tír Conaill, the two most fertile areas of the lordship. It simultaneously lessened the ability of Hugh Roe to feed his own forces. This probably explains why Niall was also able to compel the likes of MacSweeney Banagh to submit in 1601, and why MacSweeney Doe continually flitted between joining the English and

¹⁰⁵⁶ Sir William Weston to William Cecil, 28 August 1593, *CSPI*, V (June 1592 – September 1596), 141-2.

¹⁰⁵⁷ The solicitor-general, Roger Wilbraham, was amongst those pushing for the extension of this policy, see Mr Solicitor Roger Wilbraham to William Cecil, 4 December 1591, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 441-2.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Gerald Hayes-McCoy, 'Gaelic Society in Ireland in the late sixteenth century', in Gerald Hayes-McCoy, ed. *Historical Studies*, IV, (Dublin, 1963), 57.

¹⁰⁵⁹ See chapter four, 228-229.

¹⁰⁶⁰ See chapter four, 230-232.

confederate factions between 1600 and 1602.¹⁰⁶¹ Now, Hugh Roe could no longer rely on the military support of the MacSweeneys and others, and a primary reason for this was Elizabeth's growing fiscal authority in Tír Conaill. This was, therefore, critical to the defeat of O'Donnell power.

A further change in the queen's policy towards Tír Conaill was that she was now determined to keep power over some of these productive territories after the war, as is evidenced by the grant of the lordship made to Niall Garbh in 1601. This removed his right to profits from Ballyshannon and the Erne's fishing on the southern borders of the territory, as well as reasserting Elizabeth's right to nominate men to ecclesiastical benefices in Tír Conaill.¹⁰⁶² It is important to stress that it was only now that the queen resolved to follow the policy of taking direct control of Tír Conaill's wealth in this way. Previously, she had not moved with the speed that avaricious officials like Ralph Lane would have liked in this regard, but she was now set upon ensuring that fertile parts of the lordship were in the crown's gift.¹⁰⁶³ As with many earlier agreements between the crown and lords of Tír Conaill, English officials were unable to force the terms on the Irish immediately but a precedent was set.

Following the war, with Hugh Roe defeated and in exile, Rory O'Donnell was created Earl of Tír Conaill.¹⁰⁶⁴ Rory's grant specified that he was not entitled to revenues from Niall Garbh, Inishowen, Sligo, Tirawley, Moylurg, Dartry and

¹⁰⁶¹ See chapter four, 227-232.

¹⁰⁶² 'Grant to Niall Garbh O'Donnell, chief of his name', 18 March 1601, 'Fiants Elizabeth' *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 17th report, (Dublin, 1885), 165.

¹⁰⁶³ On Lane's exhortations that lands on Tír Conaill's southern border be seized, see chapter four, 207-208.

¹⁰⁶⁴ See chapter four, 249-250, for more on the reasons why Rory, rather than Niall Garbh, was granted power there after Hugh Roe's defeat.

Fermanagh, but still must pay the overlord's share of the rent as before defined.¹⁰⁶⁵

His efforts to regain these rents were thwarted by the new deputy, Arthur Chichester, who promised to aid sublords against Rory.¹⁰⁶⁶ This loss of income precipitated a slide into poverty for O'Donnell, who joined others in experiencing 'growing indebtedness', which allowed English-Irish and New English speculators to buy Irish elites' lands from under them.¹⁶² Indeed, Nicholas Canny has argued that Donegal's lands became 'so alienated into several hands, mortgaged, or otherwise entangled' that Rory's income was only £300 a year.¹⁰⁶⁷ The typical rent levied on an O'Donnell lord had been £200 since 1566, leaving Rory with little to maintain the power his predecessors had enjoyed. This problem stemmed from his sublords falling under

English fiscal control, as the support of lesser men had contributed massively to the O'Donnells' earlier wealth. Certainly, the Irish Council acknowledged in 1578 that Hugh McManus O'Donnell had stated that his difficulties in paying composition rents were attributable to his followers refusing to contribute. The Council do not seem to have questioned the idea that Hugh needed these followers to pay their share in order to raise the money.¹⁰⁶⁸

It was not inevitable that the lords of Tír Conaill would lose political control over their sublords in this way. Nevertheless, O'Donnell leaders must have known that if they ever did, a drastic fall in their economic means would follow as financial

¹⁰⁶⁵ Sir George Carey to Charles Calthorpe, His Majesty's Attorney General, or John Davis, His Majesty's Solicitor General, 20 January 1604, *CSPI*, XII, (1603-1606), 139-140. See Rory's later complaints about some of the losses this entailed at The Earl of Tyrconnell to King James I, *CSPI*, XIII, (1606-1608), 364-74.

¹⁰⁶⁶ The Earl of Tyrconnell to King James I, *CSPI*, XIII, (1606-1608), 364-74; Hunter, 'End of O'Donnell Power', 229. See also 'Rory, Earl of Tyrconnell', 1605, CP 193/55, where he had earlier voiced some of these complaints. ¹⁶² Gillespie, *Transformation of the Irish Economy*, 22.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Nicholas P. Canny, 'The Flight of the earls, 1607', *IHS*, 17, (1971), 389-90.

¹⁰⁶⁸ The Council in Ireland to Queen Elizabeth, 12 September 1578, SP 63/62, f. 25.

and political muscle had always been closely intertwined. As illuminated in the following two sections, the confederates complained in the later 1590s about the removal of ecclesiastical revenues from their authority and the ability of Irishmen to trade freely. Some of this power had rested with their sublords and clerical followers, which was why the O'Donnells had constantly fought to have influence over lesser men. As outlined in this section, the crown's efforts to wrest control of these sublords and the financial rewards of their territories away from their overlords was one more reason why the O'Donnells grew hostile to English rule. The same was true of the extortion of English officials in the north-west, which was economically damaging to the lords of Tír Conaill and their followers. Both these things were partly responsible for the refusal of the later O'Donnell lords to pay rents and, for that reason, have some role in explaining why fiscal reform did not take place in Tír Conaill in the sixteenth century. By 1600, Elizabeth had also become set upon a policy of denying Hugh Roe O'Donnell the financial support of his sublords in his home lordship, which ensured that the war became a fight to the finish between the two parties. This was because it was not possible for Hugh to retain his authority in the north-west without the assistance of his inferiors, which meant he was determined to regain his regional predominance.

The role of ecclesiastical power and revenues in explaining the mounting discord between the O'Donnells and the crown

Another source of friction between the lords of Tír Conaill and the crown during the sixteenth century was control over church lands, which had its own fiscal benefits. As Brendan Bradshaw and Kenneth Nicholls have both observed, ecclesiastical positions had for centuries passed down through hereditary succession,

making power in the Gaelic church a clan interest.¹⁰⁶⁹ Within Tír Conaill, some of the principal families who traditionally had a stake in the church were the O'Donnells themselves,¹⁰⁷⁰ the O'Boyles,¹⁰⁷¹ the O'Dochertys,¹⁰⁷²¹⁰⁷³ and the O'Gallaghers.¹⁰⁷⁴ In the sixteenth century, the O'Gallaghers, the O'Donnells and O'Clerys in particular remained clerical dynasties as well as political ones.¹⁷⁰ As overlords of the territory, O'Donnell leaders were expected to ensure ecclesiastical men were upheld in these positions. When this power was threatened, they would seek to defend it as far as they could. Indeed, Bernadette Cunningham has argued that the O'Donnells and their followers became more closely aligned with the papacy during the sixteenth century in order to protect themselves from religious persecution by New English adventurers.¹⁰⁷⁵ There was certainly a lot for the people of Tír Conaill to preserve.

The church lands of Tír Conaill were substantial and productive. Indeed, Philip Robinson has estimated that around twenty per cent of the land in west Ulster 'was under ecclesiastical control in the early seventeenth century'.¹⁰⁷⁶ One of the two most important clerical positions in Tír Conaill was the Bishopric of Derry, the

¹⁰⁶⁹ Brendan Bradshaw, 'The reformation in the cities: Cork, Limerick, and Galway, 1534-1603', in John Bradley, ed. *Settlement and society in medieval Ireland – studies presented to F. X. Martin*, (Kilkenny, 1988), 446; Nicholls, *Gaelic Ireland*, 91.

¹⁰⁷⁰ 'Mandate to Maurice Odomnall, Canon of Raphoe', 4 April 1412, *CPR*, vol 6, (1404-1415), 255; 'Provision to Maurice McMeanman Idhomhnail', 7 August 1429, *CPR*, vol 8, (1427-1447), 151; 'Mandate to John OFaelen, canon of Ferns, to assign to Bernard McMeanman Ydohnmayll, priest, of Raphoe', *CPR*, vol 13, (1471-1484), 840; 'Mandate to John Odomhnail, perpetual vicar of Fathaynmura', *CPR*, vol 12, (1458-1471), 729-30.

¹⁰⁷¹ 'Mandate to assign the rectory of Leamkaill in the diocese of Derry to Cuconacht OBryll, clerk of the diocese of Derry', 12 January 1411, *CPR*, vol 6, (1404-1415), 264; 'Mandate to the prior of St Mary's in the diocese of Derry', 9 May 1464, vol 11, (1455-1464), 508.

¹⁰⁷² 'Mandate to the Bishop of Volterra, the prior of Loch Derg in the diocese of Clogher, and the official of Derry', 14 April

¹⁰⁷³, *CPR*, vol 6, (1404-1415), 265; 'To the abbot of the monastery of Cella Negra, Derry, and Donatus Odochartaigh, canon of Derry, 20 February 1470, *CPR*, vol 12, (1458-1471), 748.

¹⁰⁷⁴ 'Mandate to Magonius Odrobelaydh, canon of Raphoe', 6 December 1426, *CPR*, vol 7, (1417-1431), 493; 'To Cornelius Olasci, Bernard Ogallcabair, and Nicolas Omyaghan, canons of Raphoe', *CPR*, vol 13, (1471-1484), 759. 170 *AFM*, v, 1467, 1479, 1517.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Bernadette Cunningham, 'Native culture and political change, 1580-1640', in Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie, eds. *Natives and Newcomers: essays on the making of Irish colonial society*, (Dublin, 1986), 170.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Robinson, *The Plantation of Ulster*, 24.

territory of which lay partially in O'Donnell's lordship and partially in Tyrone. The other prominent role was the Bishopric of Raphoe, which covered the rest of Tír Conaill, including the fertile area of Cinel Moen. In the early seventeenth century George Montgomery, then the Bishop of both Raphoe and Derry, possessed considerable amounts of land.¹⁰⁷⁷ In 1609, the Bishopric of Derry directly held 428 acres of land in Donegal and the Bishopric of Raphoe possessed 3,728 there. Meanwhile the erenagh and termon lands of Derry which lay within Donegal amounted to 17,619 acres and those of Raphoe accounted for 6,378 acres in the lordship. The bishop could expect payment of rent on these lands.¹⁰⁷⁸ Erenagh and termon lands were also traditionally held by families within the lordships. Termon lands were held by coarbs, who were normally chosen on a hereditary basis and were 'regarded as the spiritual heir...of the original saintly founder of the monastery'.¹⁰⁷⁹ These lands were sited upon the grounds of abandoned monasteries, and coarbs paid rent for them to the Bishop.¹⁷⁶ They were sometimes lucrative, as in the parish of Glencolumbkille in Tír Conaill, where the coarb received half the proceeds of the fishing trade.¹⁰⁸⁰¹⁰⁸¹ Erenaghs, meanwhile, would 'maintain and manure and occupie' ecclesiastical lands and pay rents to Bishops, with such families in Tír Conaill including two branches of the O'Donnells, and the O'Nahans and O'Nolans.¹⁰⁸²

¹⁰⁷⁷ 'The present state of the primacy of Armagh', undated, BL Cotton Titus B/XII, f. 671-671v.

¹⁰⁷⁸ 'Quantity of Bishop's demesne and mensal lands of erenagh and termond lands within escheated counties in Ulster', 16 March 1609, Cal. Carew MSS, V, (1603-1623), 38.

¹⁰⁷⁹ St. John D. Seymour, 'The Coarb in the medieval Irish church, circa 1200-1550', *PRIA*, 41, (1932-4), 219. 176 Ibid, 219-20.

¹⁰⁸⁰ James Hardiman, ed. *Inquisitionum in Officio Rotulorum Cancellariae Hiberniae asservatarum Repertorium*, ii, (London, 1881), app v, 'Donagall'.

¹⁰⁸² Hardiman, ed. *Inquisitionum in Officio*, app v, 'Donagall'.

Therefore, from the Bishoprics at the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy down to coarbs and erenaghs below, there were financial benefits to be had by securing possession over religious lands. Accordingly, the Gaelic Irish jealously protected their hold over ecclesiastical positions and had previously ignored any calls, such as that made by Henry II of England at the Council of Cashel in 1171, to have the Irish church follow English succession procedures.¹⁰⁸³

Another feature of religious life in sixteenth century Tír Conaill was the prominence of monastics, which had increased in the century or so before 1536. As J. A. Watt has observed, founders sponsored monasteries as ‘a major spiritual investment’ and ‘a place of refuge’ in later life.¹⁸⁰ The O’Donnells and their sublords embraced this in a big way, founding houses at Donegal town, Magherabeg, Killybegs, Balleeghan, Ballymacswiney, Ballysaggart and Killydonnell between 1430 and the 1530s.¹⁰⁸⁴ These had several uses. Donegal Abbey’s graveyard was a prestigious burial ground, where Hugh Dubh O’Donnell was buried in 1537 and Rory O’Donnell, Bishop of Derry, was interred in 1550.¹⁰⁸⁵ The old Columban monastery at Kilmacrennan, meanwhile, was used as the inauguration site for new O’Donnell lords.¹⁰⁸⁶ The Columbans, Third Order Franciscans,¹⁰⁸⁷ Cistercians,¹⁰⁸⁸ and Augustinian monastic orders all had a presence in Tír Conaill.¹⁰⁸⁹ Like castles, it

¹⁰⁸³ John A. Watt, *The church in medieval Ireland*, (Dublin, 1972), 34-5, 109, 130. 180

¹⁰⁸⁴ Ibid, 194.

¹⁰⁸⁴ ‘List of Irish religious houses, their founders and years of foundation’, undated, BL Add MSS. 4814, f. 3v-4; Aubrey Gwynn and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses: Ireland*, (London, 1970), 267-8; Mac Eitegain, ‘Late Medieval Lordship of Tír Chonaill’, 215.

¹⁰⁸⁵ McGettigan, *Red Hugh*, 26; Simms, ‘Late Medieval Donegal’, 194. On the burial of Hugh Dubh and Rory, see Charles P. Meehan, *The rise and fall of the Irish Franciscans*, 5th edition, (Dublin, 1877), 7 and *AFM*, v, 1517 respectively.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Lughaidh O’Clerigh, *Beata Aodha Ruaidh ui Domhnaill*, I, trans. Paul Walsh, (Dublin, 1948), 39.

¹⁰⁸⁷ ‘Mandate to the dean of Raphoe’, 31 May 1471, *CPR*, vol 12, (1458-1471), 463.

¹⁰⁸⁸ ‘Mandate to the Archdeacon of Derry’, 2 June 1432, *CPR*, vol 8, (1427-1447), 452-3.

¹⁰⁸⁹ ‘Relaxation of penitence to those who give alms for the repair of the Augustinian monastery of St Columba, Derry’, 3 November 1423, *CPR*, vol 7, (1417-1431), 275-6.

was also important to the O'Donnell lords that their friends were resident in these places for strategic reasons. For instance, Donegal Abbey was close to the chief house of the O'Donnells at Donegal Castle. If the abbey was lost to an enemy, as happened in 1601, it gave that foe somewhere from which to strike at the central power base of an O'Donnell lord.¹⁰⁹⁰ Power over monastic houses could also have economic benefits too. For instance, it is evident that the area around Assaroe Abbey in the south of Tír Conaill was rich in corn and cattle.¹⁰⁹¹ Thus, there were several incentives compelling the O'Donnells to ensure that monastic lands remained in the hands of their allies too.

As well as a desire to protect the interests of their kinsmen, Irish elites also had mercenary reasons for maintaining the existing religious system. Some lords were beginning to increase their influence over it and turn its proceeds to their own ends more effectively. In Tír Conaill, Manus O'Donnell was to initiate a practice of seizing ecclesiastical revenues 'againste the church men's willes' in order to pay for the services of Scottish mercenaries.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, it was in the lords' interests to keep these monies to themselves, and Darren Mac Eitegain has suggested that 'clerical revenues...were enormous' in Tír Conaill.¹⁰⁹² Certainly, the 1609 survey of Donegal indicates that the annual intake of the Bishopric of Raphoe from clerical rents and tithes amounted to 8 marks, £56 and nine shillings, 321 meathers of butter, 428 meathers of meal and half of the fishing profits in some parishes.¹⁹¹ The value of these benefices, as Mac Eitegain implies, was made evident by the 'intense

¹⁰⁹⁰ See chapter four, 230

¹⁰⁹¹ 'A declaration of my employments, by Sir Conyers Clifford', 20 December 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 333. 189 Hardiman, ed. *Inquisitionum in Officio*, app v, 'Donagall'.

¹⁰⁹² Mac Eitegain, 'Late Medieval Lordship of Tír Chonaill', 210. 191 Hardiman, ed. *Inquisitionum in Officio*, app v, 'Donagall'.

competition' for them in Raphoe and Derry in the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁰⁹³ This is well illustrated by the fact that fifteen men were soliciting Rome in 1561 for the Bishopric of Raphoe.¹⁰⁹⁴ Over time, however, the crown came to covet some share in the wealth of these religious lands too and this was to create friction between the English and the lords of Tír Conaill.

The English had first become interested in obtaining revenue from the Irish church in the 1530s, having successfully achieved the same thing in England. Following Henry VIII's break with Rome, he was anointed 'supreame head of the church of England' in 1534, and claimed the ecclesiastical rents which had formerly been paid to the Pope.¹⁰⁹⁵¹⁰⁹⁶ In 1535, Henry initiated a policy of dissolving English monastic houses, which brought £100,000 into the royal coffers, as well as yearly rents worth £32,000.¹⁹⁵ By this means, then, the king had turned former churchlands into a source of yearly income for the exchequer. Henry became interested in securing a similar bounty from Ireland, and had the Dublin Parliament proclaim that he was 'the onely supreme head' of the Irish church in 1537 in order to legitimise pursuing such policies there.¹⁰⁹⁷ The king also claimed sole power to grant religious benefices, as well as 'the first frutes and profitts for one year' when he made new appointees to these positions.¹⁰⁹⁸ Additionally, Henry was granted a yearly rent

¹⁰⁹³ Mac Eitegain, 'Late Medieval Lordship of Tír Chonaill', 210.

¹⁰⁹⁴ David Wolf, S. J. to Cardinal Moroni, 12 October 1561, *CSPRome*, I, (1558-1571), 50.

¹⁰⁹⁵ BL Harley MSS 2408, f. 112v. For more on the reasons behind the break with Rome, see E. W. Ives, 'Henry VIII, (1491 -

¹⁰⁹⁶), King of England and Ireland', *ODNB*, online, paragraph 43 of 156, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12955?docPos=1>, paragraph 43 of 156, accessed 13 July 2013. ¹⁹⁵

BL Harley MSS 2408, f. 113.

¹⁰⁹⁷ 'Act passed in the 20th year of the reign of King Henry VIII, that he and his successors shall be "reputed the oneley supreame head on earthe of the holie church of Irelande", undated, BL Add MSS 4801, f.80.

¹⁰⁹⁸ 'Act passed in the 20th year of the reign of King Henry VIII, that he and his successors shall be "reputed the oneley supreame head on earthe of the holie church of Irelande", undated, BL Add MSS 4801, f.81. The 'first fruits' referred to the whole profits obtained from a spiritual living for in the year a new appointment was made. Usually, the crown took only a tenth or a twentieth of the profit each year thereafter.

‘amountinge to the twentieth parte of all the revenues’ of Irish benefices.¹⁰⁹⁹

Furthermore, a bill had already been enacted in 1536 for the suppression of ‘twelve religious houses’ in Ireland.¹¹⁰⁰ Though these changes had an immediate impact in the English Pale, where English rule was strongest, the effects in Ulster were for now limited.¹¹⁰¹ This was despite the fact that the policy was intended to reach the north, as is suggested by the commission given to the Irish Council to suppress ‘all religious houses in Ireland’ in April 1539.¹¹⁰²

Nevertheless, given that members of the Geraldine League were worried about the extension of political change into the north, they may well have wondered whether their ecclesiastical lands and perks might soon be threatened too.²⁰² Certainly, Robert Cowley reported in July 1538 that Irishmen were seeking, and securing, benefices ‘by the bishop of Rome's authority’ in ever increasing numbers.¹¹⁰³ Therefore, there was a perceived need amongst ecclesiastics to have their positions reaffirmed by the papacy, and the most obvious instigator of such concern was Henry’s fiscal policy towards religious lands. Darren Mac Eitegain has suggested that those clerics who expressed anxiety about English ecclesiastical

¹⁰⁹⁹ ‘Act passed in the 20th year of the reign of King Henry VIII, that he and his successors shall be “reputed the oneley supreme head on earthe of the holie churche of Irelande”, undated, BL Add MSS 4801, f.83v.

¹¹⁰⁰ Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, volume 1, 301.

¹¹⁰¹ R. D. Edwards observed that ‘no consistent effort’ was made to enforce these changes outside the Pale, see his *Church and State in Tudor Ireland: a history of penal laws against Irish Catholics, 1534-1603*, (Dublin, 1935), 75-77. Nonetheless, some dioceses in Armagh experienced dissolution in the early 1540s, see Henry A. Jefferies, *Priests and prelates of Armagh in the age of reformations, 1518-1558*, (Dublin, 1997), 140. Furthermore, it is evident that there was some attempt to dissolve some church land in Monaghan. For this, see *AFM*, v, 1455.

¹¹⁰² ‘Commission to John Alen, Chancellor; George, Bishop of Dublin, William Brabazon, vice-treasurer; Robert Cowley, Master of the Rolls and Thomas Cusake’, 7 April 1539, *LP Hen. VIII*, xiv, part 2, (August-December 1539), 363; *AFM*, v, 1455. 202 Historians have been split on this point. Canice Mooney and Brendan Bradshaw have been amongst those who believe that the lords were supporting Tír Conaill’s friars, who feared the loss of their monasteries given the dissolutions in the Pale. See Mooney, ‘The Friars and Friary of Donegal, 1474-1840’, 8; Brendan Bradshaw, *The dissolution of the religious orders in Ireland under Henry VIII*, (London, 1974), 210. Conversely, the likes of Mary Ann Lyons and Michael O Siochru believe that lords in the 1530s opportunistically emphasised religious grievance in order to win foreign support against Henry VIII. See Mary Ann Lyons, *Franco-Irish relations, 1500-1610: politics, migration and trade*, (Woodbridge, 2003), 198. See also Michael O Siochru, ‘Foreign Involvement in the rebellion of Silken Thomas’, *PRIA*, 96, C, (1996), 49, 57-9. It was probably a combination of these factors.

¹¹⁰³ Robert Cowley to Thomas Cromwell, 19 July 1538, *LP Hen. VIII*, xiii, part 1, (January-July 1538), 524. 204 McGettigan, ‘Late Medieval Lordship of Tír Conaill’, 214.

policy were merely helping Manus O'Donnell and others drum up local assistance for a raid on the Pale.¹¹⁰⁴ However, garnering allies for their temporal benefactors offered clerics succour from English encroachments too. The lords had a stake in all this as well. Though they were principally concerned about the possibility that their local power might be under threat, this did entail control over ecclesiastical territories and their profits too. Indeed, Manus was very keen on furthering his authority over church lands in the north-west. This is evidenced by the fact that he used the opportunity afforded by this situation to fuel his own expansionism by securing the papal appointment of his nominee, Art O'Friel, to the Archbishopric of Tuam in October 1538.¹¹⁰⁴ If he could see this followed through, Manus stood to gain some benefit from the ecclesiastical revenues of Connaught. Ultimately, though, O'Donnell was in fact to accept Henry's jurisdiction over the religious sphere.

Manus' submission to St Leger in August 1541 saw him renounce the Pope's authority and accept Henry VIII as 'supremet lorde of the Church of Ireland'.¹¹⁰⁵ O'Donnell did so because, alongside the political benefits he seemed likely to obtain in submitting to Henry, the question of power over ecclesiastical benefices was ignored.¹¹⁰⁶ Therefore, Manus had cause to believe that he was expected only to acknowledge the king's religious supremacy without the prospect of losing control over Tír Conaill's religious lands and revenues.¹¹⁰⁷ Soon, Henry was also to express willingness to grant the Bishopric of Elphin to O'Donnell's chaplain, Cuchonnacht

¹¹⁰⁴ 'Note that...the Pope appointed Arthur Offugel, canon of Raphoe, to the metropolitan church of Tuam in Ireland', 7 October 1538, *LP Hen. VIII*, xiii, part 2, (August-December 1538), 217.

¹¹⁰⁵ 'Submission of O'Donnell', 6 August 1541, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 183-4.

¹¹⁰⁶ Bradshaw has observed that most agreements with Ulster's 'lesser chiefs' set aside this issues for now, see his *Dissolution of the religious orders in Ireland*, 177.

¹¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Alan Ford has argued that this was all Henry sought and that he made no real attempt at doctrinal change either. See his 'The Protestant Reformation in Ireland', in Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie, eds. *Natives and Newcomers: essays on the making of Irish colonial society, 1534-1641*, (Dublin, 1986) 50.

O’Friel.¹¹⁰⁸ By this means, the king displayed willingness to allow Manus to expand his power over ecclesiastical lands into northern Connaught, an area the O’Donnells tried to claim suzerainty over whenever possible. Having submitted, Manus also escaped the effects of an English policy aimed at suppressing monasteries in areas where lords had been unwilling to acknowledge the king’s sovereignty.¹¹⁰⁹ Thus, Henry’s policies in the years immediately following 1541 tended to support, rather than threaten, O’Donnell’s ecclesiastical dependents and his hold over clerical territory. Despite the king’s desire to have some share of the ecclesiastical revenues of Ireland, he set this policy aside in Tír Conaill for now. Consequently, Manus was not alarmed by Henry’s religious policies, and so readily renounced the pope and recognised the king’s temporal authority over the Irish church. This situation held for some time, though there was briefly friction in the mid-1540s over Henry’s tardiness in finally awarding the Bishopric of Elphin to O’Friel.¹¹¹⁰¹¹¹¹ It was not until the 1560s that English officials again became interested in procuring ecclesiastical lands in Tír Conaill for the crown.

Calvagh O’Donnell’s submission to the crown in October 1566 saw him agree that Elizabeth had the right to nominate ‘all the bishops of Connell, and the presentation to all benefices to which she has title’.²¹² In effect, Calvagh had accepted that the crown had full power over ecclesiastical positions and fiscal

¹¹⁰⁸ King Henry VIII to the Lord Deputy and Council, 8 October 1542, *SP Hen. VIII*, iii, part 2, (1538-1546), 430.

¹¹⁰⁹ ‘Commission to St Leger, Alen, Aylmer, and Brabazon to sell friars’ houses in Ireland’, 1 September 1541, *LP Hen. VIII*, xvi, (1540-1), 537. See also Lord Deputy and Council to King Henry VIII, 28 July 1541, *SP 60/10*, f. 74-74v, where the Council requested this commission.

¹¹¹⁰ For more on this, see The Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland to the Council in England, *SP Hen. VIII*, III, part 3, (1538-

¹¹¹¹), 470-1. Anthony St Leger’s efforts prevented this becoming a full-blown schism, see Henry VIII to the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland, 5 July 1544, *LP Hen. VIII*, xix, part 1, (January-July 1544), 526. Colm Lennon has observed that St Leger did his utmost to support Manus on these questions of ecclesiastical benefices. See Colm Lennon, *Sixteenth-century Ireland: the incomplete conquest*, (Dublin, 1994), 160. Ultimately, Manus would renounce papal authority again in 1543, see ‘Earl of Tyrone and Magonius O’Donnell’, 14 July 1543, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 208. 212 ‘Calough O’Donnell’, 20 October 1566, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 374.

revenues in the lordship. He may have thought that his clerical followers would be left unmolested in their positions, as had happened when Manus O'Donnell had acknowledged Henry VIII's religious supremacy in the 1540s. However, Elizabeth's explicit claims to power over Tír Conaill's benefices and religious houses was something which English officials were now interested in enforcing. The queen had also claimed the power to place garrisons wherever she chose in Tír Conaill.¹¹¹² Although done ostensibly to aid O'Donnell, the monastery of Derry was soon commandeered to allow the English to make war on Shane O'Neill.¹¹¹³ It is extremely unlikely that O'Donnell wanted anything more than a temporary English presence there, not least as it put an alien force between wider Tír Conaill and Inishowen beyond it.¹¹¹⁴ Anger at even this transient occupation of Derry probably increased when the monastery accidentally exploded, leaving the cherished building in ruins.¹¹¹⁵ However, the English had no intention of giving up their new claims to such places.

The Lord Deputy, Henry Sidney, meant other religious buildings to be put to similar use and had described Donegal monastery as 'large and stronge...with small coste verie fortifiable'.²¹⁷ Similarly, Secretary William Cecil was keen on installing a garrison at Assaroe Abbey, which was identified as one place which would 'yeld grete reuene' if put to 'better purposes'.¹¹¹⁶ No O'Donnell leader would willingly cede control of these places on the southern borders of Tír Conaill. As

¹¹¹² 'Calough O'Donnell', 20 October 1566, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 374.

¹¹¹³ 'Calough O'Donnell', 20 October 1566, *Cal. Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 374; Lennon, *Sixteenth Century Ireland*, 319.

¹¹¹⁴ See Map 2, page vii, of this study.

¹¹¹⁵ William Cecil to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 9 May 1567, *CSPI*, revised edition, II, (1566-7), 176. 217

Lord Deputy Henry Sidney to the Privy Council, 12 November 1566, SP 63/19, f.88.

¹¹¹⁶ 'Notes touching the propriety of placing garrisons at Ballyshannon, Belleek, Asherow', 1568, SP 63/26, f.171.

Cecil appreciated, these areas were fiscally important. For example, Assaroe was rich in corn and cattle, and also lay upon a haven where foreign goods were imported.¹¹¹⁷ Furthermore, control over southern Tír Conaill was critical if the O'Donnells were to pursue expansion into northern Connaught. It was probably as a consequence of these new English claims, and uncertainty about how the crown would use them, that the Bishop of Derry, Redmond O' Gallagher, visited Rome in 1571 and obtained 'many mandates'.¹¹¹⁸ It is likely that this gave O'Gallagher the authority to confirm men in ecclesiastical benefices. He was certainly looking to Rome for support of some kind, and it is evident that Tír Conaill's clergy no longer imagined that the governments in London or Dublin would support them. Despite the crown's efforts to win control over clerical lands and revenues in north-east Ulster and Connaught in the 1570s, however, the English were ultimately unable to further such claims in the north-west again until two decades later.¹¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, it is clear that the English believed that Elizabeth should have power over nominations to ecclesiastical benefices in Ireland and meant to make this a reality eventually.

By the late 1580s, the English were particularly plagued by fear that Ireland would be invaded by Elizabeth's continental enemies. In recent memory, there had been scares of foreign aid for Desmond's rebellion of the late 1570s and early

¹¹¹⁷ 'A declaration of my employments, by Sir Conyers Clifford', 20 December 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 333. See also map 5 on page x of this study, for a representation of some of the major and minor ports of Ireland.

¹¹¹⁸ 'Note of the confederates in Ireland, by William Herle', *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-5), 16.

¹¹¹⁹ See 'Offers of Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex, touching the inhabiting in the north of Ireland', 26 May 1573, SP 63/40 f. 152v for details of the determination of Walter Devereux, first earl of Essex, to claim 'spirituall promotions' in the North East in the mid-1570s. See 'The effect of the orders to be signified for Connaught', 1579, SP 63/66 f. 157v on Elizabeth's declaration that this policy should be initiated in Connaught, and Lambert MacKenna, ed. *The Book of O'Hara*, (Dublin, 1951), xxx, for evidence it was put into practice.

1580s.¹¹²⁰ Also significant was the 1586 Babington Plot, which was aimed at securing the release of Mary Stewart from English captivity while instigating a Catholic rebellion in England, Ireland and Scotland.²²³ Lastly, despite its failure, the Spanish Armada of 1588 and the subsequent rumours of further Spanish attempts led by Sir William Stanley also convinced English officials that there was a Catholic conspiracy against Elizabeth.¹¹²¹ This caused the queen to listen anew to those who sought to cajole her into more forceful action against Catholic clerics throughout Ireland. One such person was Miler Magrath, a Gaelic Irishman who had converted to Protestantism, and who suggested in October 1582 that religious houses in Ulster and Connaught ought to be suppressed so that the revenues would no longer be allowed to enrich the Pope's Irish friends.¹¹²² If enacted, this would of course have fiscal implications for the lords of Tír Conaill.

By the mid-1580s, as Ciaran Brady has suggested, the religious question was linked in many Irish minds with the 'loss of their ancient constitutional liberties' including the power over church revenues.¹¹²³ Attitudes on this point had changed since the 1540s, when lords in remote areas like Tír Conaill had readily acknowledged Henry VIII's spiritual authority because it had not entailed the loss of ecclesiastical profits. Though Elizabeth had reiterated in 1582 that she wanted only recognition of her temporal authority over the Irish church, few Irishmen now believed that they would not incur economic penalties in doing as the queen

¹¹²⁰ In particular, Dr Nicholas Sanders had claimed that English and Scottish Catholics would assist Desmond, see Sanders' letter to Ulick Burke, 27 October 1579, *Cal. Carew MSS*, II, (1575-1588), 159. As to Scotland, it was thought aid could come from there due to the influence of the French Catholic arrival, Esme Stewart, over the young King James VI, see William Palmer, *The problem of Ireland in Tudor foreign policy, 1485-1603*, (Woodbridge, 1994), 110. 223 Mary, Queen of Scots, to Anthony Babington, 17 July 1586, *CDS*, I, (1509-1589), 998.

¹¹²¹ Queen Elizabeth to Sir Richard Grenville, 14 September 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 37; 'Information against Sir William Stanley', July 1589, *CSPDom*, Eliz., (1581-90), 612.

¹¹²² 'Certain motions and requests of the Archbishop of Cashel to the Privy Council', 12 October 1582, SP 63/96, f. 44.

¹¹²³ Brady, 'Conservative Subversives', 29.

requested.¹¹²⁴ Certainly Ulstermen who watched as the largely disliked English official, Richard Bingham, was awarded the house of Athlone ‘with the ward there, abbeys, tithes, and all other commodities’ were unlikely to have been convinced that the ecclesiastical lands in their territories were safe.¹¹²⁵ From the crown’s perspective, meanwhile, it was convenient to grant these places to a man like Bingham. As he shared the queen’s religion, he was prepared to acknowledge her temporal authority in ecclesiastical matters and to pay a set rent for the lands he had been given. Therefore, Bingham was a model tenant, while Irishmen who would not accept such fiscal reforms were not. As a result of his political and religious stances, Bingham was also more likely to receive the crown’s help when he needed to defend himself. This made him happier to pay rent. It was a virtuous cycle. For their part, of course, Irish lords were bound to protect their clerical kinsmen wherever the crown attempted to install such Englishmen upon church lands. By the end of the 1580s, the ecclesiastical buildings and revenues in Tír Conaill itself were again being targeted by English officials.

In 1588, Lord Deputy William Fitzwilliam’s troops seized the Franciscan monastery in Donegal town in 1588 and utilised it as a garrison for the next four years.¹¹²⁶ Darren McGettigan has emphasised that this had an ‘immense’ effect on Tír Conaill’s people since it ‘was probably the most prestigious building in the entire lordship’.²³⁰ From an O’Donnell perspective, there were other intolerable effects of

¹¹²⁴ ‘Instructions to Sir Nicholas Malbie, new Governor of Connaught’, 1578, BL Add MSS. 4786, f.3. Elizabeth then sought to have Connaughtmen recognise her temporal authority because she was in the process of nominating her appointees to benefices there.

¹¹²⁵ The Queen to the Lord Deputy, November 1587, *CSPI*, III, (1586-July 1588), 439-440.

¹¹²⁶ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: Ireland*, 240, 247; McGettigan, *Red Hugh O’Donnell*, 45, 47. 230 McGettigan, *Red Hugh O’Donnell*, 45.

this. It gave the English a foothold in the south of the lordship, which was traditionally most fully under O'Donnell control. This threatened their power over shipping and trade entering Lough Eske on the bay of Donegal and gave the English a base from which to strike at O'Donnell's chief house at Donegal Castle. Further, it put those kinsmen who took part in the monastic life out of their livings.

Meanwhile, Sir John O'Docherty's submission to the crown in that same year reserved control over Inishowen's abbeys to Elizabeth.¹¹²⁷ In making this agreement, O'Docherty effectively accepted that the queen would be able to grant these lands to whoever she wished, and that their rents would fall to her rather than O'Docherty or O'Donnell. It seems that the English had by then decided that the best way to ensure that fiscal reform took place was to claim rents directly from the sublords of Tír Conaill in return for promising them freedom from O'Donnell rule. As is evidenced by John Perrot's arguments at this time, this indicates that the English were losing faith that Hugh McManus would ever commit to fiscal reform.¹¹²⁸ For their part, the O'Donnells would have found the idea that Inishowen might fall under English authority intolerable for a few reasons. As well as the potential loss of some part of the revenues from ecclesiastical lands, it was strategically important for O'Donnell lords to retain control over the likes of Derry. This could allow them access to wider Inishowen, as well as providing a location on Lough Foyle from where to receive Scottish mercenary assistance. It was also preferable not to have an alien presence to

¹¹²⁷ 'Grant of the territory of Inishowen to Sir John O'Docherty', 28 June 1588, 'Fiants Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 16th report, (Dublin, 1884), 74.

¹¹²⁸ See also chapter three, 172, for suggestions Perrot had lost trust in O'Donnell.

the north of O'Donnell's own holdings in eastern Tír Conaill. It was probably partially in response to the prospect of losing these ecclesiastical territories that the Bishop of Derry, Redmond O'Gallagher, sought aid from the papacy in late 1588.¹¹²⁹ Inishowen fell under O'Gallagher's jurisdiction and he may have been concerned that Elizabeth would install her own nominee there. The struggle for power over clerical lands and revenues was certainly to play role in shaping the policies pursued by Hugh Roe O'Donnell towards the crown between 1592 and 1603.

Some discussion of the motivations of the Ulster lords in their 'rebellion' in the 1590s has suggested that ecclesiastical matters were unimportant. For the contemporary, Fynes Moryson, the uprising was fuelled by the personal ambition of the earl of Tyrone, Hugh O'Neill, with religion being a mere 'cloke' for this.¹¹³⁰ In 1912, meanwhile, Ernest Hamilton argued that O'Neill primarily emphasised ecclesiastical concerns in order to gain native Irish and Spanish support for his war effort.²³⁵ More recently, Hiram Morgan suggested that the confederates accentuated clerical matters in order to gain the leverage necessary to win 'concessions from the crown in other areas'.¹¹³¹ Suggestions that ecclesiastical grievances were merely used by the confederate leaders as a convenient means of furthering other agendas appear to be founded upon a tendency to take the arguments of contemporary, hostile, English observers at face value.¹¹³² In fact there is reason to think that demands for liberty of conscience were genuine, given English actions in this period. That said this study rejects suggestions that religion or a nascent nationality based

¹¹²⁹ Patrick Eulane to Sir Henry Bagenal, 14 October 1588, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 63.

¹¹³⁰ Graham Kew, ed. *The Irish Sections of Fynes Moryson's Unpublished Itinerary*, (Dublin, 1998), 27. 235
Ernest Hamilton, *Elizabethan Ulster*, (London, 1919), 256-7.

¹¹³¹ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 198.

¹¹³² See some examples on page 312 below.

upon faith was the main cause of the war.¹¹³³ It is more accurate to say that Ulstermen were concerned about the loss of political power and authority over the ecclesiastical sphere, and grouped together to avoid this.

That these factors could interlink to create discontent with English rule has been recognised by Brendan Bradshaw. He argued that Counter Reformation Catholicism made some inroads in the Pale in the 1590s because lords there were concerned about losing their power over religious patronage since the crown was inserting 'English-born ecclesiastics into the local ecclesiastical structure'.²³⁹ This was a quite separate issue from the lack of English effort to convert Irishmen to Protestantism.¹¹³⁴ Acknowledging this renders Hugh Roe O'Donnell's demands for religious toleration in the 1590s explicable. There were attempts made to seize the wealth of monasteries in Tír Conaill as well as to remove some prominent clergy from their positions. As overlord of the territory, O'Donnell had to defend his ecclesiastical adherents as well as his political ones. Failing to do so would leave him bereft of clerical allies as well as the revenues of their holdings, critically undermining his local power.

It is certainly likely that the loss of ecclesiastical territory was an active concern for Ulster lords in the early 1590s. In 1591, the Queen's Commissioners

¹¹³³ On the idea that religion was the sole driver of the confederates' war effort see, for instance, Philip O'Sullivan Beare, *Ireland under Elizabeth: chapters towards a history of Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth, being a part of the history of Ireland*, translated by M. J. Byrne, (London, 1970), xxvi, 2-3, 48-50; Thomas D'Arcy McGee, *A popular history of Ireland from the earliest period to the emancipation of the Catholics*, volume 2, (Glasgow, 18--), 68; Edwards, *Church and State in Tudor Ireland*, 281; Edmund Curtis, *A History of Ireland*, 2nd edition, (Dublin, 1936), 211; see Enrique Garcia Hernan, *Ireland and Spain in the reign of Philip II*, trans. Liam Liddy, (Dublin, 2009), 4, 13-14. On the idea that there was an combined national and religious identity or ideology rising in opposition to English rule, see Eleanor Hull, *A history of Ireland and her people*, volume 1, (London, 1926), 463; Hunter, 'End of O'Donnell Power', 237. 239 Bradshaw, 'Reformation in the cities', 467.

¹¹³⁴ See Bradshaw, 'The reformation in the cities', 465; Jefferies, *Priests and prelates*, 147-8, 158; Nicholas Canny, 'The ideology of English colonization: from Ireland to America', in David Armitage, ed. *Theories of empire, 1450-1800*, (Aldershot, 1998), 200.

recommended that the termon lands of Monaghan be granted to Englishmen, and in March 1592 Henry Bagenal was granted forever such holdings in Mucknoe in Monaghan.¹¹³⁵ This was accompanied by Elizabeth's proclamation in July 1592 that Jesuits and seminaries were encouraging people to disavow her and ought to be apprehended.¹¹³⁶ One of those ecclesiastics who were reassuring would-be rebels with promises of foreign aid was James O'Hely, Archbishop of Tuam. O'Hely was soon reported to be aligned with Hugh Roe O'Donnell, who stood accused of being behind 'Romish practices' in Connaught.²⁴³ This combination of clerics and lords almost certainly had multiple aims. As outlined above, some ecclesiastical lands in Connaught had fallen into the hands of the Bingham and the likes of O'Hely no doubt sought their recovery. Meanwhile, Hugh Roe may well have harboured concerns about the fact that ecclesiastical lands elsewhere in Ulster were now passing into the hands of English officials like Bagenal. Certainly, this came hard on the heels of Hugh Roe's overthrow of the English occupation of Donegal Abbey, which he wished to ensure was never repeated.

O'Donnell's alignment with these clerics brought opprobrium from English observers, even though he was merely trying to protect his adherents' rights to their religious benefices. However, English officials thought Hugh Roe's alliance with the clerics went against his promise to Fitzwilliam not to 'harber releve...or keepe any

¹¹³⁵ 'Certificate by Her Majesty's Commissioners for the division of the termon lands in Monaghun', 1591, SP 63/161, f. 73-74; 'Grant to Sir Henry Bagenal', 6 March 1592, 'Fians Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 16th report, 205. Again, the likes of Bagenal were ideal tenants for the crown; willing to pay rent and acknowledge the queen's temporal authority in a way the Irish increasingly were not.

¹¹³⁶ 'Instructions from the Queen to the Lord Deputy and Council, via Fenton', 28 July 1592, BL Add MSS 4786, f.33. 243 Sir Richard Bingham to William Cecil, 15 June 1592, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 523; William Fitzwilliam to William Cecil, 7 July 1592, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 538.

Popish Romysh Bishops' in Tír Conaill.¹¹³⁷ It may be that O'Donnell hoped that he and his clerical allies could reach an agreement with the crown in order for their various interests to be protected. For their part, many clerics would have accepted this situation if they were left unmolested in their benefices. Indeed, precedents during Manus O'Donnell's reign suggested this was the case while some clergy indicated as late as 1601 that this arrangement suited them too.¹¹³⁸ However, this was not an option which was then open to them. Accordingly, O'Donnell and Bishop

Edmund McGauran sent O'Hely to Rome and Spain seeking aid in early 1593.¹¹³⁹ Following this, the English Privy Council became convinced that Tyrone, O'Donnell and their allies were acting 'Popishlie againste her Majestie' and demanded that Hugh Roe arrest or banish several leading ecclesiastics including the Bishops of Derry and Raphoe. If he failed to do so, he would be deemed 'undutifull'.¹¹⁴⁰ O'Donnell was being pushed into a position where he must choose between friendship with the queen or his religious friends and dependents. From Hugh Roe's perspective, abandoning these clerics could only hurt his chances of retaining the lordship of Tír Conaill. The English had proven to be far from unreliable allies while the clerics were amongst those who were helping him to uphold his rule. Furthermore, there was reason for him to think that Elizabeth would seize the lands of the Bishops of Raphoe and Derry if O'Donnell captured these men. If this

¹¹³⁷ 'Articles ministered to Hugh Roe O'Donnell upon his oath, whereunto he most willingly yielded', 2 August 1592, SP 63/166, f. 122v.

¹¹³⁸ See discussion of the willingness of clerics around Ballyshannon to submit to the crown in 1601 on page 315-316 of this chapter.

¹¹³⁹ George Bingham to Richard Bingham, 3 January 1593, *CSPI*, V, (October 1592-June 1596), 71-2.

¹¹⁴⁰ Privy Council to Lord Deputy and Irish Council, 7 July 1593, *APC*, xxiv, (1592-3), 365. On the latter point, see Privy Council to the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland, 8 February 1592, *APC*, xxiv, (1592-3), 56; Privy Council to the Lord

happened, Hugh Roe would no longer be able to benefit financially from these clerical territories either. Both these things conspired to ensure that Hugh remained bound fast with his ecclesiastical allies in the confederacy.

The English, for their part, could not see that O'Donnell or his clerical friends had any reason to complain upon religious grounds. Officials believed, as was reiterated in 1592, that Irishmen were being treated leniently with regard to ecclesiastical issues because they were required only to give the outward appearance of following the reformed faith.²⁴⁸ This underestimated the importance that the confederate lords placed upon the ability to preserve the clerical livings of their kinsmen. Further, as Hiram Morgan has argued, the local authority of the Gaelic lords depended upon having their supporters control the church and so the prospect of Ulster being 'over-run by Protestant careerists from England and Wales' was deeply unattractive.²⁴⁹ Within Tír Conaill, this prospect had been made real by the queen's claims of Inishowen's religious lands in 1588, not to mention the occupation of Donegal Abbey between 1588 and 1592.

Deputy and Council of Ireland, 8 February 1593, *APC*, xxiv, (1592-3), 60. The clerics named were McGauran, O'Hely, Niall O'Boyle (the new Bishop of Raphoe), and Redmund O'Gallagher, Bishop of Derry.

248 'Articles containing sundry things to be considered of by the Lord Deputy and Council in Ireland, and to be answered to Her Majesty', May 1592, *CSPI*, IV, (August 1588-September 1592), 503-4. 249 Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, 216.

Fears surrounding this were no doubt revived by the events of 1595. In that year George Bingham, cousin of Richard Bingham, governor of Connaught, attacked Rathmullan monastery in MacSweeney Fanad's country and seized 'the vestments, chalices and other property'.¹¹⁴¹ Bingham also assailed the Columban monastery on Tory Island, which had been founded by Colum Cille in the sixth century.²⁵¹ Alonso

¹¹⁴¹ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: Ireland*, 291; *AFM*, v, 1967-9. 251

Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: Ireland*, 46; *AFM*, v, 1967-9.

Cobos' November 1596 report to Philip II indicates that English forces had also assaulted the Franciscan monastery at Donegal the previous year. This involved the theft of religious monuments and the friars looked to Philip 'to give something to repair the monastery, some chalices and ornaments'.¹¹⁴² Thus, English forces had struck at ecclesiastical lands in both north and south of the lordship in a short space of time. Therefore, there was some indication that this was becoming a systematic English policy towards Tír Conaill's clerical territories and revenues. This impression is lent weight when a commission granted to Richard Bingham in November 1593 is considered. This allowed him to take measures to 'correct any heresies, schisms, and offences which by any ecclesiastical authority may be redressed', even in 'remote parts'.¹¹⁴³ As 'merchants and others' kept 'vestments, chalices, idols, crosses, and other superstitious relics, to the maintenance of popery', Bingham was authorised to 'search ships, shops, houses' in order to 'seize such articles'.¹¹⁴⁴ In all likelihood, George Bingham was acting with the authority of this commission in 1595. Moreover, this indicates fully that English thinking was that denying Irishmen the possession of ecclesiastical vestments made it more difficult for them to maintain their religion. These attacks had all the appearance of an attempt to suppress Tír Conaill's monasteries and prevent their further use. Certainly, the wealth of the monasteries was being seized to English use, and Hugh Roe O'Donnell and his clerical allies were undoubtedly angered by this.

¹¹⁴² 'Despatches by Captain Alonso Cobos to the Pardo', 20 November 1596, *CSPSp*, xvii, (1587-1603), 640.

¹¹⁴³ 'Commission to Adam Loftus, Henry Bagenal, Richard Bingham and others', 17 November 1593, 'Fiant Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 16th report, 242.

¹¹⁴⁴ 'Commission to Adam Loftus, Henry Bagenal, Richard Bingham and others', 17 November 1593, 'Fiant Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 16th report, 242.

It was against this backdrop that O'Donnell and his allies began to make religious demands when negotiating with the crown in early 1596. R. D. Edwards has stated that, in these discussions, 'the great stumbling block...was the religious question'.¹¹⁴⁵ Other factors held negotiations up too, but calls for spiritual tolerance were certainly genuine. However, these should be understood in terms of a desire to have the crown agree that ecclesiastical territories, goods, and the clerics themselves would henceforth be left unmolested and under the power of the lords. Unfortunately, English officials always reported the confederates' spiritual demands under the broad heading of calls for 'liberty of conscience in religious matters', as in January 1596.¹¹⁴⁶ Simon Adams has suggested that liberty of conscience should be defined as 'freedom from an inquisition or heresy proceedings, but not the exercise of an alternative religious service'.¹¹⁴⁷ This appears to have been how English officials viewed it, as they tended to respond to the Irish in ways which emphasised the fact that they were not being forced to convert to Protestantism and had therefore nothing to gripe about.

This perspective was not necessarily shared by Irishmen given that they continued to complain on these grounds. Therefore, this might be a case where historians are hamstrung by the fact that English officials interpreted the nature and scope of Irish demands in their own way. However, monasteries in Tír Conaill had certainly been looted in 1595, and this was very definitely something which Hugh Roe had reason to lament. This conclusion is lent weight when the dealings of

¹¹⁴⁵ Edwards, *Church and State in Tudor Ireland*, 285.

¹¹⁴⁶ 'Hugh O'Donnell's grievances', 27 January 1596, *Cal Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 153 ; see also 'A summary of the demands of Tirone, O'Donnell, Maguire etc', February 1596, SP 63/186, f. 308, dated February 1596, where O'Donnell reiterated this demand on behalf of all Tír Conaill.

¹¹⁴⁷ Simon Adams, 'Elizabeth I and the sovereignty of the Netherlands, 1576-1585', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14, (2004), 316.

Commissioners Gardiner and Wallop with the confederates in January 1596 are considered. It was then suggested that submission upon ‘reasonable conditions’ would see O’Donnell granted ‘the spiritual lands of Tír Conaill’ in return.¹¹⁴⁸

Morgan has stressed that the confederates themselves asked for confirmation of these holdings ‘to prevent further encroachment and to reverse the process where it had occurred’.¹¹⁴⁹ Therefore English officials knew that O’Donnell was worried about losing these lands and sought to reassure him on this point. Hugh’s concern was the result both of the generally expropriative behaviour of English officials towards clerical lands and the attacks of the Binghamms upon monasteries in Tír Conaill.

In the event, the offers to recognise O’Donnell’s ecclesiastical claims were retracted at the end of January 1596, when Tyrone was told that the demand for ‘all spiritual land’ was an obstacle to peace.¹¹⁵⁰ This was reinforced by Elizabeth’s letter to Hugh Roe regarding liberty of conscience, which stated that ‘no subiect shall have libertie graunted to willinglie breake the lawe’.¹¹⁵¹ The queen argued that no-one had been punished for their religious beliefs before, and that she was likely to continue in that policy but would not go as far as to countenance an alternative faith.¹¹⁵² In effect, this meant that she would give no guarantees that clerics would be left in their benefices to practice the Catholic religion and receive the livings there. Accordingly, O’Donnell and others continued to agitate for religious toleration as there was every chance that the recent sustained attacks on their ecclesiastical territories might

¹¹⁴⁸ ‘Commissioners’ answers to Hugh O’Donnell’s petitions’, January 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 154.

¹¹⁴⁹ Morgan, *Tyrone’s Rebellion*, 196.

¹¹⁵⁰ Commissioners Robert Gardiner and Henry Wallop to the Earl of Tyrone, 24 January 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 146.

¹¹⁵¹ ‘The Queen’s answers to O’Donnell’s petitions’, 1596, BL Add MSS 37536, f. 50v.

¹¹⁵² ‘Instructions to those of the Council in Ireland sent to meet with Tyrone and O’Donnell’, 11 March 1596, *Cal. Carew MSS*, iii, (1589-1600), 154.

become a more permanent feature of their dealings with the crown. Anxiety about such issues was most likely behind O'Donnell's letter to Philip II later in 1596, wherein Hugh Roe complained that the English were 'taking their patrimony from them and perverting them from the Roman Catholic faith'.¹¹⁵³ Though he had other reasons for seeking Spanish aid, there were also genuine grounds for Irish discontent about English policy in the spiritual sphere. Now, O'Donnell sought help from anyone who might support the lords of Tír Conaill and their allies in their efforts to retain power over the lordship's political, ecclesiastical and fiscal structures.

Many English officials, however, believed that the rebels were insincere in their commitment to religion and utilised it to enable them to obtain wider support. Writing in September 1596, the Irish Council informed the Privy Council that rebellious lords emphasised ecclesiastical grievances only to create unrest in Munster.¹¹⁵⁴ Similarly, in 1601, George Carew insisted that this was a mere pretext to win over 'the meaner sort of this kingdom'.¹¹⁵⁵ The view that Irishmen had no cause to be seeking religious tolerance was based on an apparently wilful ignorance amongst officials as to the extent to which attacks upon ecclesiastical persons and territories were contributing to a wider unhappiness with English rule. The Bishop of Cork and Ross, William Lyon, wrote in July 1596 that Irishmen should not be 'oppressed, extorted, or unjustly dealt withal', though religious laws must be enforced.¹¹⁵⁶ Such proclamations were of little comfort to churchmen in Tír Conaill who had already been subject to oppression and extortion. Similarly, in December

¹¹⁵³ O'Clerigh, *Beata Aodha Ruaidh ui Domhnaill*, I, 123.

¹¹⁵⁴ Lord Deputy William Russell and the Irish Council to the Privy Council, 17 September 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (July 1596-December 1597), 110.

¹¹⁵⁵ 'A discourse of Ireland, by George Carew, sent to Robert Cecil', 1601, *Cal. Carew MSS*, IV, (1601-1603), 168.

¹¹⁵⁶ William, Bishop of Cork and Ross, to Lord Hunsdon, 6 July 1596, *CSPI*, VI, (Jul 1596-December 1597), 14-15.

1597, Thomas Jones, Bishop of Meath, reported that Tyrone had been quizzed as to why there was a need for 'a general liberty of religion' when Irishmen 'were suffered as they had been'.¹¹⁵⁷ Again, to men whose lands had only recently come under sustained attacks from English officials, it did not feel as if they were being treated as they had always been. Nevertheless, Jones' views led him to chastise O'Donnell in April 1598 for his 'unreasonable demands' in asking for religious liberty.¹¹⁵⁸ Thus, some English officials still believed that Irishmen had no cause to ask for spiritual tolerance since they had never officially been pressed to convert to Protestantism. But Irishmen felt persecuted for their religion anyway since, as in the example of Tír Conaill, their revered buildings were being smashed to pieces and their clergymen forcibly removed from their livings. This severely hampered their ability to fully celebrate their beliefs and threatened their livelihoods.

Official English policy would never become any more lenient because fears surrounding the prospect of a foreign invasion of Ireland persisted. These were fuelled by suggestions that the pope had helped the rebels set up a new Earl of Desmond in Munster, and that Spain would assail Ireland in the hope of preventing Elizabeth from sending English forces to attack Philip III's possessions in the Indies.²⁶⁹ One observer stated that the Spanish were welcome in Ireland because all men expected 'to be a Don, and every parson a Bishop' if an invasion succeeded.²⁷⁰ This accurately depicts what those Irishmen who coveted Spanish aid hoped that the king would do for them, namely; secure both religious and political figures in their

¹¹⁵⁷ Thomas Jones, Bishop of Meath, to William Cecil, 28 December 1597, *CSPI*, VI, (Jul 1596-December 1597), 487.

¹¹⁵⁸ Thomas Jones, Bishop of Meath, to William Cecil, 18 April 1598, *CSPI*, VII, (January 1598-March 1599), 113. 269 John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, attendant on the Governor at Ostend, 8 November 1598, *CSPDom*, Eliz., (1598-1601), 118; Patrick Strange, of Waterford, to William Cecil, 5 February 1599, *CSPDom*, Eliz., (1598-1601), 159-60. 270 Patrick Strange, of Waterford, to William Cecil, 5 February 1599, *CSPDom*, Eliz., (1598-1601), 159-60.

accustomed roles and perhaps even promote them. In short, some Irishmen were considering the prospect of living under a Spanish monarch. However, this was never their settled choice, but became more appealing when all negotiations with the crown had failed. The English, for their part, were unwilling to be any more tolerant towards Irish religious dissidents, for fear that this might symbolise an acceptance of their relations with these Catholic powers in Europe.

The confederate leaders also received encouragement from Rome in early 1600. In April, the pope granted plenary indulgences to all Irishmen who 'shall assist Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, who was termed the 'Captain General of the Catholic Army'.¹¹⁵⁹ This papal endorsement was probably a response to news of deepening religious commitment amongst Ulstermen. As figurehead of the rebels Tyrone had, in November 1599, issued the fullest set of ecclesiastical demands yet. Catholicism was to be 'openly preached and taught throughout' Ireland, with the Irish church coming under the pope's power.¹¹⁶⁰ In effect, this meant reversing the English crown's claims over ecclesiastical territory in Ireland. Tyrone also asked that all religious houses and their tithes should be restored to Catholic churchmen, with no Englishman to be appointed to a clerical position in Ireland thereafter.²⁷³ This addressed the main concerns that Irishmen had about the ecclesiastical sphere. They wanted their kinsmen to remain in charge of religious benefices and hoped to continue gaining from this arrangement too. They now also expressly linked this with the practice of the Catholic faith to make it doubly clear that Protestantism,

¹¹⁵⁹ 'Plenary indulgence, granted by Pope Clement VIII, to those who shall assist the Earl of Tyrone', 8 April 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (March 1600-October 1600), 83. A plenary indulgence absolves people of the temporal punishment for actions which would otherwise be considered sins. In this case, sins which were undertaken while assisting Tyrone's war effort were to be ignored.

¹¹⁶⁰ 'Articles intended to be stood upon by Tyrone', November 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (April 1599-February 1600), 280. 273
'Articles intended to be stood upon by Tyrone', November 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (April 1599-February 1600), 280.

which seemed to entail the removal of Irish clerics and the destruction of ecclesiastical buildings, was not welcome. While these demands were labelled a 'Ewtopia' by Robert Cecil, they did reflect what Irishmen really wanted as far as religion went. The experience of the previous sixty years told Ulstermen that they could lose their church lands to the crown's nominees. For reassurance that they would avoid this fate, lords demanded the reversal of English incursions into religious lands as Hiram Morgan has suggested.

That the clergy too hoped for this outcome is indicated by John Bolles' report in March 1601 that priests around Ballyshannon had sworn they would embrace peace if they could have 'their consciences free, and...enjoy the livings they have'.¹¹⁶¹ Notably, that same month, Elizabeth reasserted her claim to control over 'grants of bishoprics... [and]...presentations of benefices' in Tír Conaill in the grant of the lordship made to Niall Garbh O'Donnell.¹¹⁶² The churchmen referred to by Bolles evidently displayed willingness to accept this reality and to befriend the crown in return for recognition of their positions. This highlights how holy men had their own interests which governed their decisions regarding their alignments. To some degree, it is likely that fear played a significant role in encouraging them to profess willingness to reconcile with the crown. Tír Conaill's clergy were treated roughly in 1601 and Hugh Roe was no longer able fulfil the role of overlord by protecting them. In March, Henry Docwra had troops kill the Bishop of Derry,

¹¹⁶¹ Sir John Bolles to Robert Cecil, 7 March 1601, *CSPI*, X, (November 1600-July 1601), 206.

¹¹⁶² 'Grant to Niall Garbh O'Donnell, chief of his nation', 18 March 1601, 'Fiants Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 17th report, 165.

Redmond O’Gallagher, and ‘twenty of the principal priests in all Ulster in a church’.¹¹⁶³ Of course, the English had wished for O’Gallagher to be driven from Tír Conaill for some years, but this almost certainly intimidated other clerics in the lordship too. The Governor of Lough Foyle also had men seize Rathmullan Abbey in MacSweeny Fanad’s country in March 1601 and in August would send others to take Assaroe.¹¹⁶⁴ By this means, Docwra had taken power over prominent ecclesiastical buildings in the north and south of the lordship. Now, appointments to these truly were in the gift of the English crown and its officials. Consequently, the power of the Ulster lords over their clerical followers was damaged. This was experienced concurrently with O’Donnell’s loss of control over his political adherents, some of whom had aligned with Docwra having been promised freedom from Hugh’s overlordship.²⁷⁸ Thus, Hugh Roe was no longer able to exercise lordship in Tír Conaill because he did not have the political or financial means to do so.

The confederate lords would never regain power over the clerical revenues of the province. By 1605, James VI and I had appointed George Montgomery as the Bishop of Derry, Raphoe and Clogher. Within Tír Conaill Rory O’Donnell was stripped of rents from church lands, and his requests for a patent for the ‘abbeyes and their estates’ in 1604-5 were ignored.¹¹⁶⁵ It is evident from Rory’s demands that spiritual revenues be returned to him that this economic loss was not insubstantial and worked to the detriment of O’Donnell power within Tír Conaill. By 1606,

¹¹⁶³ ‘Extract of a letter sent to Lord Deputy Mountjoy from the army’, 12 March 1600, *CSPI*, X, (November 1600-July 1601), 248.

¹¹⁶⁴ Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council, 10 March 1601, *CSPI*, X, (November 1600-July 1601), 213; Henry Docwra to the Privy Council, 10 August 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-1603), 23. 278 See chapter four, 226-232.

¹¹⁶⁵ Hunter, ‘End of O’Donnell Power’, 233-4, 241.

Tyrone was asking James VI to have the Bishop of Derry and Clogher content himself with the 'cheife rente' from the earl's religious lands rather than agitating for possession of all abbeys and monasteries within it.¹¹⁶⁶ As with Rory O'Donnell's requests, Tyrone's appeals fell on deaf ears.

In the 1540s, Henry VIII had been happy to set the question of ecclesiastical lands and livings to one side so long as Manus O'Donnell acknowledged the king's temporal authority in religious matters. This was acceptable to Manus too and, in this vein, he was happy to seek Henry's support for ecclesiastical nominees. At the end of the century, such options were not open to Hugh Roe O'Donnell who was instead expected to banish his ecclesiastical friends from their livings. He was unwilling to do this for two main reasons. One was that these men were his kin, and had helped him uphold his political power far more effectively than any Englishman ever had. A second was that he stood to lose financially if his allies lost their ecclesiastical lands and livings. Given that the crown by then seemed to be set upon a policy of dissolving Tír Conaill's monasteries and granting religious lands throughout Ulster to English officials, this prospect seemed likely. Consequently calls for religious toleration grew, and lords and ecclesiastics continued to resist English encroachments into the north. It did not matter to them that they had not been pressed to convert to Protestantism, as their fears over possession of religious lands gave them cause enough to complain. Ultimately, therefore, the squabble over ecclesiastical territory must be given its place in explaining the breakdown of relations between the O'Donnells and the English crown by the end of the sixteenth

¹¹⁶⁶ The Earl of Tyrone to James VI & I, 16 June 1606, PRO 31/8/99, f. 109v.

century. Elizabeth and her officials were set upon denying Hugh Roe his ancient rights to power over the religious sphere and the financial benefits that went along with it. Furthermore, the English success in achieving this was accompanied by efforts to dictate what external trade Irish lordships conducted and into whose hands its benefits fell, as the next section discusses.

The crown's efforts to seize control over external trade in O'Donnell territory and the lords' responses

An important feature of Tír Conaill's economy was the trade through its ports in goods like wine and fish, and Englishmen wanted some profit from this. Their efforts to achieve this fitted into a broader competition with other European powers over worldwide commerce. In this sphere, too, Spain was considered a particular enemy and the one-time President of Munster Humphrey Gilbert, writing in 1572, wanted its fishermen to be excluded from Irish trade so that English merchants could benefit instead.¹¹⁶⁷ In 1566, Gilbert had also proposed that the English attempt to find a speedy route to Molucca, India and Cathay via the 'northside of Labrador' in North America, in order to enrich England by procuring gold, silver, precious stones, silks and spices.¹¹⁶⁸ Richard Hakluyt joined Gilbert in believing the use of settlers in important trading areas to be imperative to success, particularly in efforts to secure the cod trade in North America and Newfoundland from French, Portuguese and Spanish opponents.¹¹⁶⁹ Though settlement in the north of Ireland was limited in the sixteenth century, this struggle for trade and resources was replicated there too. The

¹¹⁶⁷ 'Humphrey Gilbert's Report: a Discourse of Ireland', 1572, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 423.

¹¹⁶⁸ Humphrey Gilbert, *A Discourse of a discoverie for a new passage to Cataia*, (London, 1576). Another influential figure was Richard Hakluyt, who also pushed for England to seize Asian trade from Spain and Portugal, see Peter C. Mancall, *Hakluyt's promise: an Elizabethan's obsession for an English America*, (New Haven, 2007), 4, 36, 80.

¹¹⁶⁹ Mancall, *Hakluyt's promise*, 4, 79, 87-8; Gilbert, *A new passage to Cataia*. 284 Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 295.

Dublin government had made moves, in the 1569 Parliament, to banish ‘strategically dangerous trade by Spanish ships’.²⁸⁴ For their part, Spanish officials periodically encouraged Philip II to take fuller control of the benefits of Irish soil, corn, fish and timber and even Tír Conaill’s havens by aiding those who were unhappy with English rule.¹¹⁷⁰ John Silke also suggests that the Spanish were partially motivated to invade Ireland in 1601 in order to reactivate the fishing trade which had declined due to war with England.²⁸¹¹⁷¹¹¹⁷² By then, the crown and its officials were determined that these benefits should fall to them.

In fact, though efforts were not sustained, the English had long wanted to control Ireland’s natural resources, most notably its fisheries. During Henry VIII’s reign, it was suggested that he lost out on 100,000 marks a year from that trade.¹¹⁷³ By 1535, it was decreed that ship’s masters must pay customs for their catches thereafter, as it was unacceptable that Spain, Brittany, Normandy and Scotland took Irish fish ‘whereof the kynge hath noo profit’.¹¹⁷⁴ This indicates that the crown was beginning to have an eye towards obtaining some form of fixed revenue from trade throughout Ireland. However, a bill intended to bring the customs of remote ports under Henry’s control was ‘dropped’ in the Irish parliament in 1536 and effectual attempts to benefit from Ulster’s fishing were limited to granting John Travers the profits of the fishing at the River Bann in June 1535.²⁸⁹ The Dublin government later

¹¹⁷⁰ Antonio de Guaras to Zayas, 30 June 1570, *CSPSp*, XV, (1568-1579), 256; Geurau de Spes to Philip II, 15 October 1570, *CSPSp*, XV, (1568-1579), 281; ‘Relation brought from Ireland by the Ensigns Domingo Jimenez and Cristobal Montero, *CSPSp*, XVII, (1587-1603), 626-7; ‘A declaration of the great army which the King of Spain and the Pope make’, March 1580, *CSPF*, Elizabeth, XIV (1579-80), 207; Roger Bodenham to William Cecil, 1 June 1580, *CSPF*, Elizabeth, XIV (1579-80), 285-1171.

¹¹⁷² John J. Silke, *Kinsale: the Spanish intervention in Ireland at the end of the Elizabethan wars*, (Dublin, 2000), 78.

¹¹⁷³ ‘Descriptio Hibernie Incipit Sic’, undated, BL Lansdowne 159, f. 1. Steven Ellis observes that Irish customs had been worth £1400 to the crown in 1280, but only £100 a year by 1420. So there was certainly more the crown could seize if the effort were made. See *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 179.

¹¹⁷⁴ ‘Articles or heads of Acts to be passed by the Parliament of Ireland for the king’s advantage’, 6 June 1535, SP 60/2 f. 120. 289 Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 144.

followed this up by securing an agreement from the two nearby lords, MacQuillin of the Route and O’Kane of Coleraine, that Travers could use Coleraine Castle as a base for this purpose.¹¹⁷⁵ Therefore, one model which was under consideration as a means of obtaining a share of Ulster’s resources was the establishment of an official¹¹⁷⁶ English presence in productive areas. However, the fact that Anthony St Leger had to send forces to defend the MacQuillins against O’Kane and O’Donnell attacks between 1542 and 1544 suggests there was resistance to English attempts to secure this revenue stream.²⁹¹ Indeed, as Mac Eitegain argues, O’Donnell lords tried to have the Bann’s fisheries for themselves when at the peak of their powers.²⁹² That said, had Manus’ authority in the area been recognised it is likely he would have willingly shared the proceeds of the fishing there as he had agreed to do in Tír Conaill.²⁹¹¹⁷⁷¹¹⁷⁸¹¹⁷⁹

In the 1540s, the crown again began displaying an interest in seizing control of Irish havens which were then in native hands. Though Steven Ellis has argued that Henry VIII was disinterested in obtaining those in ‘remote and barren parts held by savages’, he certainly had his eye on obtaining Tír Conaill’s ports.¹¹⁸⁰ In March 1543, St Leger was instructed to investigate which Ulster havens were frequented by ‘straungers’ and to seize these for the crown. The Lord Deputy reported that Lough Foyle, Aran Island, Donegal and Assaroe in Tír Conaill were visited by Scots,

¹¹⁷⁵ ‘Grant to John Travers, gentleman, of the whole water or river of the Banne’, 3 June 1535, *Calendar of Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery in Ireland*, I, 12; ‘Submission of McCuyllen and O’Cahan’, 6 May 1543, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574),

¹¹⁷⁶ . See also Lord Deputy Anthony St Leger and the Irish Council to King Henry VIII, 24 August 1542, *SP Hen. VIII*, III, part 1177, (1538-46), 407-408, where it was noted Travers had earlier seized Coleraine from O’Kane to obtain ease of fishing at the Bann.

¹¹⁷⁸ See also chapter two, 83-84, and Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, I, 266.

¹¹⁷⁹ Mac Eitegain, ‘Renaissance and the late medieval lordship of Tír Chonaill’, 207. 293

See footnote 296 below.

¹¹⁸⁰ Steven G. Ellis, ‘Crown, Community, and Government in the English territories, 1450-1575’, *History*, 71, (1986), 189.

Spaniards and Bretons who traded wine, salt, iron, and munitions to O'Donnell.¹¹⁸¹

Ultimately, the English interest was then restricted to having Manus agree to give Henry half of any herring or 'garbushe' caught in Tír Conaill's waters.¹¹⁸² This arrangement amounted to a sort of tax upon the fishing trade in the lordship.

Alongside the crown's tacit acknowledgment of Manus' hold of Sligo's fishing revenues, this indicates that Henry decided that the best approach then was to work with remote lords to obtain a share of the spoils. However, after the king's death, subsequent regimes rekindled the interest in seizing Ulster's ports, with officials in Ireland ordered to secure power over the Bann, Lough Foyle and other places at various points between 1550 and 1556.¹¹⁸³ Though little was actually done to win these targets for the crown, it is remarkable that officials were keen to seize control of them from an early stage after 1541.

Tír Conaill increased in attractiveness to English officials as they learned more about its resources. Both Thomas Cusack in May 1552 and Henry Sidney in November 1566 stressed that O'Donnell's best houses were situated so close to water that merchant ships could land almost upon them. Later, Fynes Moryson calculated that there were fourteen large 'Commodious Havens' between Galway in Connaught and Killybegs in the south-west of Tír Conaill.¹¹⁸⁴ Others noted that, further north,

¹¹⁸¹ King Henry VIII to the Lord Deputy and Council in Ireland, 5 March 1543, *SP Hen. VIII*, III, part 2, (1538-1546), 440; Anthony St Leger to King Henry VIII, 6 April 1543, *SP Hen. VIII*, III, part 2, (1538-1546), 446-448; King Henry VIII to the Lord Deputy and Council, 5 March 1543, *Calendar of Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery in Ireland*, I, 99. The French element of this trade, at least, was still in existence in 1601. See Captain Charles Plessington to the Earl of Nottingham, the Lord High Admiral and Robert Cecil, 3 September 1601, *SP* 63/209/1, f.148v.

¹¹⁸² 'Lord Magonius O'Donnell', 15 July 1543, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 209.

¹¹⁸³ 'Instructions to Sir Anthony St Leger, Deputy, and Council', July 1550, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 227-8;

'Instructions to Sir James Crofts, Deputy, and Council', May 1551, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 231; 'Instructions to Sussex and Council', 28 April 1556, 255.

¹¹⁸⁴ 'Book by Sir Thomas Cusake: the state of the realm of Ireland', 8 May 1552, *SP* 61/4, f. 143v; Lord Deputy Sidney, Gerald Fitzgerald Earl of Kildare, Nicholas Bagenal and Francis Agard, to the Queen, 12 November 1566, *CSPI*, revised edition, II, (1566-7), 129; Kew, ed. *The Irish sections of Fynes Moryson's unpublished Itinerary*, 71, 82-3.

MacSweeny Fanad's castle at Rathmullan near Lough Swilly was revered for its herring and salmon fishing, while Assaroe Abbey near Ballyshannon in the south was famous for its salmon too.¹¹⁸⁵ The dues obtained for the fishing in these areas remained resolutely in the hands of the O'Donnells and those adherents whose lands overlooked the rivers. Ultimately, these natural resources made power over Tír Conaill's sublords and clergy attractive to English officials and this also explains why O'Donnell lords were loath to release it.

The difficulty for interested Englishmen was finding a way to wrest control of Tír Conaill's external trade away from the O'Donnells, even though English merchants were already active in the north-west. For instance, a ship from Plymouth was at Lough Swilly in 1556 trading Gascon wine, salt, kersey, broad cloth pieces, raw silk and saffron for salmon.¹¹⁸⁶ Henry Sidney also observed that Englishmen had traded out of Donegal town, and merchants of Bristol frequented Assaroe and Lough Foyle in the 1570s and 1580s.¹¹⁸⁷¹¹⁸⁸¹¹⁸⁹ However, the O'Donnells, rather than the crown, continued to receive the customs from this commerce. Some efforts were made to legislate to bring trade into the hands of inhabitants friendly to the crown in the mid-1550s. The earl of Sussex was ordered to pass an act in May 1556 decreeing that markets should not be held outside loyal towns, but this was largely ignored in

¹¹⁸⁵ 'The compass of Clandeboye', 1574, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 736; 'List of, and notes on, the havens of Ireland', undated, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-1603), 676.

¹¹⁸⁶ 'Deposition of John Clarke of Sudbury, Bristol, mariner, pro parte Richard Bayneham, Robert Clough and others, and Nicholas Fitzsimmons', 19 February 1566, John C. Appleby, ed. *Calendar of material relating to Ireland from the High Court of Admiralty examinations, 1536-1641*, (Dublin, 1992), 11; 'Deposition of Jacobus Hookye, mariner', 19 February 1556, HCA 13/11, f. 46v-47.

¹¹⁸⁷ Lord Deputy Sidney, Gerald Fitzgerald Earl of Kildare, Nicholas Bagenal and Francis Agard, to the Queen, 12 November

¹¹⁸⁸ , *CSPI*, revised edition, II, (1566-7), 129; John Smith, of the Ards, to William Cecil, 18 July 1573, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 392; 'Paper endorsed by Burghley: 'seven piracies whereof no justice could be had in France', 24 March

¹¹⁸⁹ , *CSPF*, Elizabeth, XX, (Sep 1585-May 1586), 475; 'Petition of William Gyttings, of Bristol, to the Privy Council of England, 30 August 1584, *CSPSco*, VII, (1584-5), 305.

Ulster.¹¹⁹⁰ This is emphasised by a 1557 entry in the *Annals of the Four Masters* stating that, when in camp, Shane O'Neill's followers bought and sold 'mead, wine, rich clothing, and all other necessities' which illuminates that lords simply continued to do business as before.¹¹⁹¹

Ultimately, the crown had difficulty enforcing its will in this regard for most of the century because it lacked control in the north-west.¹¹⁹² More specifically, English efforts to seize remote ports were hampered by the absence of the necessary administrative apparatus for the task. This meant that, unless the lords who currently controlled the area's resources could be induced to share the proceeds with Englishmen, there was no prospect of the profits of the north-west reaching the exchequer in any systematic way. For instance, in 1572 it was stressed that the crown lost out on the yarn trade because there were 'no officers to demand duty' in haven towns.¹¹⁹³ The same was true of efforts to obtain revenue on wine imports.¹¹⁹⁴ The main reason for this, outlined by Steven Ellis and Christopher Maginn, was that other issues took precedence over erecting customs officials.¹¹⁹⁵

¹¹⁹⁰ Queen Mary to the Earl of Sussex, 13 May 1556, BL Cotton Titus B/XI/2 f.413v.

¹¹⁹¹ *AFM*, V, 1551.

¹¹⁹² Longfield, *Anglo-Irish trade*, 44-5.

¹¹⁹³ 'Memoranda of the causes that may move the queen to grant the licence for transporting Irish yarn to England', 1572, *CSPI*, revised edition, IV, (1571-1575), 152.

¹¹⁹⁴ The 1569-71 parliament had seen a formal impost on wine imports enacted, and this was renewed in 1578 and in the 15856 Parliament, see Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Sidney, 12 August 1567, *CSPI*, I, (1509-1573), 343, where the queen ordered the deputy to see a levy of three shillings per tun of wine pushed through. See also 'Proclamation for continuing the impost of wines in Ireland', 18 December 1578, II, (1574-1585), 148; Brady, 'Court, Castle and Country', 34; Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 321. However, despite initial success in collecting the impost, Edward Waterhouse noted in 1575 that it was difficult to collect the impost as there was a lack of officials employed for the task, see 'Suggestions for improving Irish revenue yields, Irish secretary of state, c. 1575', BL Add MSS, 48015, f. 125b. Steven Ellis has noted that, by 1575, 'massive evasion' had reduced the impost collected to £575IR after relative success of the policy in its first few years. See *Ireland in the Age of the Tudors*, 184.

¹¹⁹⁵ Steven G. Ellis, 'Historical revision XIX: The Irish Customs Administration under the early Tudors', *IHS*, 22, (1980), 271, 277; Christopher Maginn, *William Cecil, Ireland and the Tudor State*, (Oxford, 2012), 114.

That said there were fledgling efforts to install some commercial administrators in Ulster and Connaught during the 1550s, 1560s and 1570s. In September 1556, Richard Bethell and William Piers were given land at Culmore in Inishowen and expected to collect customs from the town.¹¹⁹⁶ It is uncertain whether they were an effective presence there, but Nicholas Canny has shown that they collected wine impost and other revenues at the Bann.³⁰⁹ Thus, there was at least a precedent for the presence of such functionaries in the north. Moreover, in March 1576 Dominic Lynch, a merchant of Galway, was entrusted with collecting wine impost at havens throughout Connaught, and this role passed consecutively to Edward Waterhouse, Lewis Brisket, and Dudley Norton.¹¹⁹⁷ The presence of customs officials at Sligo in particular probably made O'Donnell efforts to collect their dues from that area more difficult. Furthermore, while this must remain speculation, it is likely that O'Donnell lords looked on warily lest the English again seek to establish similar bureaucrats in Tír Conaill. Certainly, the longer-term trend was towards establishing such administrators where possible. However, the crown was not systematically erecting customs officials in Ulster in the middle decades of the sixteenth century and sought then to use different tactics to obtain the north's resources.

An alternative policy was to erect English settlements in an attempt to secure control over Irish commerce. This too signified an unwillingness to rely on lords to send a share of customs receipts on to Dublin. The first effective attempt to settle

¹¹⁹⁶ 'Grant of the town of Culmore to Richard Bethell and William Piers', 12 September 1556, 'Fiants, Mary and Philip', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, ninth report, (Dublin, 1877), 71. 309 Canny, *Making Ireland British*. 87.

¹¹⁹⁷ 'Commission to Dominic Lynch, merchant of Galway, to be customer and collector of Her Majesty's impost in the port of Sligo and elsewhere', 7 March 1576, 'Fiants Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 12th report, (Dublin, 1880), 169; 'Commission to Edward Waterhouse to be customer and collector of Her Majesty's impost in the port of

Ulster at the Bann, Nicholas Canny observes, was led by Henry Sidney's government in 1565-6.³¹¹ This was aimed at securing the benefits of the trade there for the crown. Tír Conaill was of interest to English officials for similar purposes. The earl of Sussex proposed in 1562 that Lough Foyle become a walled town and regional port for goods delivered north of Galway, with O'Donnell paying towards the costs of this.³¹² Richard Bagwell suggests that the earl also expected some part of the cost to be met through 'the salmon fisheries of the Foyle, Bann and the Bush'.³¹³ Sussex's scheme emerged at the height of Calvagh O'Donnell's need for English defence, which may explain why the Lord Lieutenant thought this policy would be

Sligo and elsewhere', 5 February 1579, 'Fiants Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 13th report, (Dublin, 1881), 111; 'Commission to Lewis Brisket to be general controller of the custom on wines at Sligo and elsewhere', 12 June 1579, 'Fiants Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 13th report, 117-8; 'Commission to Edward Waterhouse to be customer, collector, and receiver of the impost on wines at Sligo and elsewhere', 'Fiants Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 13th report, 180; 'Commission to Dudley Norton to collect impost on wines at Sligo, Galway and elsewhere, 31 January 1597, 'Fiants Elizabeth', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 17th report, (Dublin, 1885), 46.

311 Canny, 'The ideology of English colonisation', 181.

312 'Report of the Earl of Sussex on the State of Ireland', 1562, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 332. 313 Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, I, 398.

palatable to Calvagh. However, Brady stresses that the plan foundered because

Sussex failed to prevent the Scots' incursions into Ulster, while Ellis has called the earl's idea an 'impossibly expensive operation'.¹¹⁹⁸ Still, these concerns did not stem the flow of similar ideas from other sources.

By July 1567, Francis Knollys was proposing that 'havon townes' be erected at both the Bann and Lough Foyle. These would be peopled with English husbandmen, ploughrights, smiths, artisans and fishermen, with Humphrey Gilbert to preside over all as President of Ulster.¹¹⁹⁹ The threat such schemes posed to

¹¹⁹⁸ Brady, *Chief Governors*, 96; Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 272.

¹¹⁹⁹ 'Mr Vice-Chamberlain Knolly's opinion', 7 July 1567, SP 63/21, f. 129.

O'Donnell power is indicated by a 1560 report that he was 'best lord of fish in Ireland, and he exchangeth fish always with foreign merchants for wine'.¹²⁰⁰ In short, a town at Lough Foyle subverting O'Donnell control over the fishing there would be a major curb on his income and affect his ability to trade for luxuries in the manner of an important lord. Settlements were not then erected in the northwest, but fears about the crown's fiscal intent may have helped shape Hugh McManus' then-current local policy. An alliance, albeit fragile, was cemented between O'Donnell and Turlough O'Neill in the late 1560s and the threat to each lord's economic interests likely played some role in prompting it. Certainly, Richard Bagwell suggests, O'Donnell and O'Neill 'divided the customs of Lough Foyle and the rent of Inishowen between them' during this period.³¹⁷ It was preferable to share these, rather than risking losing all to the encroaching English.

In the 1570s, the trend was towards encouraging private enterprisers to settle in Ireland to secure its economic benefits and to pass some share of the proceeds onto the crown. One scheme saw Thomas Smith suggest that settlers should have 300 acres of land each.¹²⁰¹ Their workforce would come from Irish 'churls' seeking to escape their overlords' exactions, and ready to pay rents to live under adventurers instead.¹²⁰² Tillage would increase, meaning corn could be exported from Ulster to England, France, Spain and elsewhere to bring in a good custom.¹²⁰³ Similarly, the

¹²⁰⁰ 'Notes of Ulster, Connaught, Leinster and Munster', 1560, *Cal Carew MSS*, I, (1515-1574), 308. 317 Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, II, 127.

¹²⁰¹ Smith, Sir Thomas, and Thomas Smith, Esquire, *A letter sent by I. B. Gentleman Vnto His Very Frende Maystet R C. Esquire Wherin in conteined a Large Discourse of the Peopling & Inhabiting the Cuntry Called the Ardes and other Adiacent in the North of Ireland*, (London, 1572).

¹²⁰² Smith, *Discourse of the peopling and inhabiting the Cuntry called the Ardes*.

¹²⁰³ Smith, *Discourse of the peopling and inhabiting the Cuntry called the Ardes*.

earl of Essex, who led a settling expedition into the north-east in 1573, envisaged seizing all spiritual and fishing revenues, and erecting markets with privileges.¹²⁰⁴ In their emphasis on establishing tillage and market towns, both these plans carried a semblance of the economic reform that Englishmen often professed commitment to. As already noted, however, Hugh McManus O'Donnell was amongst those angry with these settlements because he believed that their aim was to enrich certain Englishmen at the expense of local lords.¹²⁰⁵ It is certainly the case that Smith intended to become wealthy by exporting the resources of north-east Ulster, regardless of the claims of the Gaelic Irish who already lived there. By seizing power over the 'churls', he also aimed to lessen the lords' ability to continue enriching themselves. As Morgan has argued, the effect of these schemes was to show O'Donnell and others that their tenure was 'insecure', which encouraged them to band together to protect their territories.¹²⁰⁶ This unity was in fact to ensure that the efforts of Smith and Essex to win control of the commerce in the north would fail. Furthermore, Hugh's pressure eventually convinced Elizabeth to acknowledge his power in Tír Conaill in return for the payment of a rent. This arrangement pleased O'Donnell, as it seemed to suggest his lordship would be safe from English encroachments thereafter. This also implied that he would retain control over the havens in the north-west, and the proceeds of the trade which passed through them. However, Hugh's payment of rent was sporadic because he could not rely on the crown's support in his local struggles in the late 1570s and early 1580s. Nevertheless, some form of fiscal arrangement remained desirable in the 1580s

¹²⁰⁴ 'Offers of Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex, touching the inhabiting in the north of Ireland', 26 May 1573, SP 63/40, f. 152152v.

¹²⁰⁵ This has also been mentioned on page 269 above.

¹²⁰⁶ Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion*, 23. See also Dunlop, 'Sixteenth century schemes for the plantation of Ulster', 120-1.

because the English had resumed seizing lands from those who were deemed utterly unwilling to embrace change.

The most obvious example of this followed the attainder of the earl of Desmond in 1584. This led to the Munster plantation, which envisaged areas overseen by English undertakers being made up of nine parishes, with eight used for tillage and one as a 'market town....furnished with merchants, victuallers, and artificers of all sorts'.¹²⁰⁷ Though this plantation was not an unmitigated success, it showed lords in Ulster what the English intended should such attempts ever get off the ground there. Ciaran Brady stresses that plantations were supposed to demonstrate to Irishmen 'the material benefits' which would follow upon their adoption of English reforms. However, in actuality many Munstermen found instead that their timber and other resources were seized by neighbouring English undertakers who wanted to trade these goods away.¹²⁰⁸ To the likes of Hugh McManus, the policies that the crown was pursuing in Munster must have looked like a reprisal of the attempts to settle north-east Ulster in the late 1560s and 1570s. It was possibly for this reason that O'Donnell chose to accept the introduction of the composition policy into Tír Conaill in the mid-1580s. In essence, the alternative appeared to be accepting the prospect of permanent English settlements in his lordship and losing power over its resources completely. Indeed, Nicholas Canny has persuasively argued that the arrival of English captains like Humphrey Willis in south Ulster in the early 1590s also convinced northern lords that such expropriative policies

¹²⁰⁷ 'The general plat summarily set down, for the transporting of some English colonies into Ireland', December 1585, *CSPI*, II, (1574-1585), 589.

¹²⁰⁸ Brady, *Chief Governors*, 53; On the latter point, see Canny, *Making Ireland British*, 153-4.

were being finally extended into their territories.¹²⁰⁹ That said, it should be acknowledged that Tír Conaill's experience was to be different, in that there was no state-sponsored attempt to settle the lordship at that point. Instead, the crown continued to work with O'Donnell lords to obtain an annual rent out of the territory. Even in the 1590s and the early 1600s, this remained the case despite the efforts of Captain Nicholas Dawtrey and others to push the idea that towns ought to be created in Ulster in order to benefit from its natural resources and to collect the customs of the trade there.¹²¹⁰ In fact, it was mainly strategic necessity which finally saw the crown take economic power in the north.

The eventual success of the English in seizing control of Tír Conaill's commerce went hand-in-hand with the need to win war against Hugh Roe O'Donnell.³²⁸ This caused efforts to take the lordship's resources into the crown's hands to be stepped up in the late 1590s and early 1600s. When he arrived at Derry in 1600, Henry Docwra was expected to secure the plentiful corn and fish there for his own use and soon earned a rebuke from the Privy Council for his early failure to do so.¹²¹¹ Docwra's answer was to raid the neighbouring lords, like O'Docherty of Inishowen, to bring about their submissions. This aggression was ultimately successful and, by October 1600, O'Docherty expressed willingness to sell

¹²⁰⁹ Canny, *Making Ireland British*, 102.

¹²¹⁰ On Dawtrey, see Hiram Morgan, 'A Booke of questions and answers concerning the warrs or rebellions of the kingdome of Irelande', *Analecta Hibernica*, xxxvi, (1995), 102, 110. A 1602 observer also pushed for the creation of towns in order to seize power over the fishing, hide and corn trades, see 'Reasons why the English should settle in Ulster', 1602, CP 139/141. 328 This link has been made by Donald Woodward with regard to the emergence of Lough Foyle as a prominent port in the English trade in the early 1600s, see his *The Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, (Hull, 1970), 24.

¹²¹¹ Privy Council to Henry Docwra, 10 August 1600, *APC*, XXX, (1599-1600), 579. Despite his successes, it is evident that Docwra still needed subsistence from the crown even in late 1601, see Privy Council to Henry Docwra, 1 November 1601, XXXII, (1601-1604), 333. See also Gerald Hayes-McCoy, 'The Army in Ulster, 1593-1601', *Irish Sword*, I, (1949-1953), 112, where it is noted that Conyers Clifford had remarked on how much corn there was in South Donegal, even in time of war. 330 Captain Humphrey Willis to Robert Cecil, 29 October 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar 1600-Oct 1600), 535.

Inishowen's goods to the English at decent prices in return for peace.³³⁰ As John McGurk has observed, Inishowen was so rich in natural resources that this alliance gave Docwra access to 'a veritable granary and livestock' which was crucial in keeping English soldiers at Derry fed.¹²¹² Docwra also soon boasted that he had 'wholly gained' the fishing trade near the garrison for the following year.¹²¹³ As Inishowen overlooked Lough Foyle and Lough Swilly, this is likely to have included the fishing there. This was important because, as Timothy O'Neill has stressed, the fishing dues collected by the O'Donnell lords were by this stage critical in allowing Hugh Roe to 'equip and train substantial armies'.³³³ Therefore, Docwra obtained power in the north because he had grasped control over parts of its economy. Ultimately, Inishowen stayed under his control for the duration of the war, and O'Donnell power was defeated. This again indicates that economic control over sublords played a significant role in upholding political power within Irish society.

The result of Docwra's endeavours was that the English now had a degree of control over trade in Ulster, evidence for which comes from the customs records of Lough Foyle at the turn of the century. In 1600-1, goods such as herring and hides went from Lough Foyle to Chester and Flemish soap, vinegar, drinking glasses and other luxuries made the opposite journey.¹²¹⁴ This trade probably already existed, but now there was evidence of it in English port books which indicates that customs were reaching the crown at last. Similarly, the English sent victuals such as bacon,

¹²¹² John McGurk, *Sir Henry Docwra, 1564-1631: Derry's second founder*, (Dublin, 2006), 108.

¹²¹³ Sir Henry Docwra to Robert Cecil, 2 November 1600, *CSPI*, X, (Nov 1600-Jul 1601), 12-13. 333 O'Neill, *Merchants and mariners*, 131.

¹²¹⁴ 'Chester Port Books, 1600-1601', TNA, E190/1327/28, f.2, f. 4v, f.6v.

peas, cheese, beer and other necessities to feed the Derry garrison.¹²¹⁵ Between 1600 and 1603, Lough Foyle rose to become the second most prominent port in Ireland in the trade of Chester.³³⁶ This came alongside English political success and Irish lords had always known their eclipse in that sphere would mean economic defeat too.

Docwra's success also allowed the English to drive unwanted traders out of the north and solidified the crown's hold upon commerce there. Since the period of the Desmond rebellion in the late 1560s, the English had striven to stop Spanish and Portuguese merchants working with Irish rebels.¹²¹⁶ This animosity stepped up a gear in 1585 when Philip II seized English ships in Spanish waters and placed an embargo upon Anglo-Spanish trade, which brought the countries to a war footing.¹²¹⁷ By the following decade, English officials were promoting efforts to prevent Spanish goods reaching Ulster lords on the grounds that this commerce allowed them to continue making war.¹²¹⁸ Similarly, it was suggested in late 1601 that new Irish coin should be kept from rebels in order to exclude them from the European munitions trade.¹²¹⁹ In short, only parties with interests sympathetic to England were to be allowed to do business in Ireland, and rebellious Ulstermen were to be cut off from external markets if at all possible.

¹²¹⁵ 'Chester Port Books, 1600-1601', TNA, E190/1327/28, f.7v, f.8v. Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, 19, 336 Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, 23.

¹²¹⁶ Treadwell, 'Irish Parliament of 1569-71', 60.

¹²¹⁷ Pauline Croft, 'English Commerce with Spain and the Armada War, 1558-1603, in Simon Adams and M.J. RodriguezSalgado, eds. *England, Spain and the Gran Armada: essays from the Anglo-Spanish conferences, London and Madrid, 1988*, (Edinburgh, 1991), 238

¹²¹⁸ A.K. Longfield, 'Anglo-Irish trade in the sixteenth century as illustrated by the English customs accounts and port books', *PRIA*, 36, C, (1921-1924), 318; Croft, 'English Commerce with Spain and the Armada War, 1558-1603', 241-2, 258. One measure taken by Elizabeth was the banning of trade between Ireland and Spain in 1591, see Hernan, *Ireland and Spain in the reign of Philip II*, 255.

¹²¹⁹ 'Memorandum on the benefits conferred on Ireland by the new standard', December 1601, *CSPI*, XI, (1601-1603), 247.

Similar efforts were undertaken to move Scotland's trade with Ulster out of rebels' hands and into English ones. From 1595 onwards, Scottish traders from Glasgow and elsewhere were angrily denounced for selling munitions to Ulster rebels.¹²²⁰ English officials came up with various ideas to halt this, including Geoffrey Fenton's 1595 suggestion that Englishmen go to Ayr and Glasgow to buy powder to prevent it reaching Tyrone. James VI later affected to support this policy by allowing Elizabeth's representatives to buy munition in Scotland for use in Ireland.¹²²¹ The Scottish king was also reputed ready to punish Scots who traded with Irish rebels and in May 1602 proclaimed that provosts and bailies from Glasgow, Renfrew, and elsewhere must explain why munitions continued to go to Ulster.¹²²² The fact that James had to reiterate that trading with Irish rebels must be stopped, though, indicates that Tyrone's earlier confidence that he could always have 'powder out of Scotland' whatever measures the king took was not then misplaced.¹²²³ However, this was not to be a longer-term truth.

As English control over Ulster increased from late 1600, Scottish merchants sought to keep their participation in the trade route alive. Lord Deputy Charles Mountjoy was aware of this and proposed to allow Scottish ships to frequent Ulster

¹²²⁰ Geoffrey Fenton to William Cecil, 10 March 1596, *CSPI*, V, (October 1592-June 1596), 489, 'An Irish soldier in Tyrone's army to Geoffrey Fenton', 3 January 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 390; Sir James MacConnell to Robert Bowes, November 1597, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 1, (1597-99), 122; George Nicolson to Robert Cecil, 23 February 1600, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 2 (1600-3), 627.

¹²²¹ Geoffrey Fenton to Robert Cecil, 26 August 1595, SP 63/182, f.251v; 'Licence, signed by King James, permitting Harie Lie, to buy arms in Scotland', 26 February 1600, *CDS*, II, (1589-1603), 781.

¹²²² 'Proclamation of King James against sending aid to the rebels in Ireland', 27 May 1602, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 2, (1600-1603), 996.

¹²²³ Geoffrey Fenton to Robert Cecil, 8 October 1598, *CSPI*, VII, (Jan 1598-Mar 1599), 283.

so long as they traded with ‘the subject’ rather than rebels, which appealed to some Scots.¹²²⁴ Steven Ellis has observed how such English policies meant that ‘Irish Gaeldom’s traditional but growing reliance on Scottish mercenaries and sea power proved inadequate’ in preventing crown encroachments.¹²²⁵ Certainly, following the English success at Kinsale, Scottish merchants saw which way the political wind was blowing and by March 1602 Tyrone was reputed to be unable to obtain powder and lead from Scotland.¹²²⁶ Moreover, as James VI stressed in September that year, Scottish merchants had been trading with Elizabeth’s ‘good subjects’ since Docwra won power at Lough Foyle and Lough Swilly in 1600.¹²²⁷ Trade was now finally coming into English hands and the Irish government felt able in March 1603 to decree that merchants working in the north-west had to obtain permission from the deputy or the governor of Lough Foyle to trade with Spain.¹²²⁸ Control of ports in the north was finally passing from the hands of Ulster’s overlords into the crown’s possession.

Following the war, this new reality was reflected in the ability of James VI & I to award fishing at Ballyshannon and Killybegs in southern Tír Conaill to Henry Folliott and George Montgomery.¹²²⁹ Meanwhile, Rory O’Donnell’s requests for the return of Tír Conaill’s fishing duties went unheeded and these had now been lost forever, just as the revenues from ecclesiastical territories had been claimed by the

¹²²⁴ ‘Instructions from Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to Henry Docwra, for Lough Foyle’, March 1600, *Cal Carew MSS*, III, (1589-1600), 375; George Nicolson to Robert Cecil, 7 November 1600, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 2, (1600-3), 726.

¹²²⁵ Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, 263.

¹²²⁶ Privy Council to Lord Mountjoy, 25 March 1602, *Cal Carew MSS*, IV, (1601-1603), 217.

¹²²⁷ George Nicolson to Robert Cecil, 6 September 1602, *CSPSco*, XIII, part 2, (1600-1603), 1039.

¹²²⁸ ‘A proclamation by the Lord Deputy and Council’, 10 March 1603, *Cal Carew MSS*, IV, (1601-1603), 437.

¹²²⁹ ‘Rory, Earl of Tyrconnell’, 1605, CP 193/55; The Earl of Tyrconnell to King James I, CSPI, XII, (1606-1608), 364-74; Hunter, ‘End of O’Donnell Power’, 236-7.

crown.¹²³⁰ Henceforth, there was an increase in recorded instances of English fishing boats operating on Tír Conaill's coasts and taking their wares to the likes of Madeira before returning to London, presumably with goods from the Iberian Peninsula.¹²³¹ Others took La Rochelle salt to Ireland and sought to return from Aran Island in Galway Bay or Killybegs with herring.¹²³² These trends probably reflect earlier patterns of trade, which was now more fully under the crown's control as many had desired for some decades.

Though the bulk of this occurred after 1600, it is apparent that some of the associated trends were underway before this. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Ulster lords were concerned about losing economic strength. In 1599 Tyrone, speaking on behalf of O'Donnell and his other allies as so often, asked that they be permitted to retain all the 'privileges' that their predecessors had traditionally enjoyed.¹²³³ In financial terms, this meant that they should have all the rents and tributes they had had from sublords over the centuries, and retain control over religious revenues and other customs. This suggests the confederate leaders were fully cognizant that these economic powers could slip out of their hands.

Tyrone also demanded that Irishmen have the ability to trade freely in England and 'with foreigners or in foreign countries'.¹²³⁴ This again suggests a recognition that English officials wanted to exclude rebel leaders from the benefits of

¹²³⁰ 'Articles of demands made by the Earl of Tirconnell in England, and apostiled by the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland', 1605, *CSPI*, XII, (1603-1606), 296-8.

¹²³¹ Deposition of William Hallidie, of London, merchant, 15 July 1606, Appleby, ed. *Calendar of material relating to Ireland in the High Court of Admiralty examinations*, 109-110; Deposition of Timothy Marten of Limehouse, mariner, February 1607, Appleby, ed. *Calendar of material relating to Ireland in the High Court of Admiralty examinations*, 111.

¹²³² Deposition of William Auwick, of East Smithfield, London, 1607, Appleby, ed. *Calendar of material relating to Ireland in the High Court of Admiralty examinations*, 113-4.

¹²³³ 'Articles intended to be stood upon by Tyrone', November 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (April 1599-February 1600), 280.

¹²³⁴ 'Articles intended to be stood upon by Tyrone', November 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (April 1599-February 1600), 280.

this commerce, to weaken them and render them more susceptible to English rule. Certainly, by 1600, the customs official Henry Broncard was being ordered to collect wine impost from all Irish ports and not to alienate this task to ‘any of the mere Irish without special license’.¹²³⁵ This indicates deliberate efforts to prevent Irishmen receiving the benefits of this revenue, though it is unclear how successful he was in this. There had also been suggestions that recalcitrant Irishmen be excluded from the fishing trade, with one observer suggesting in 1600 that only English soldiers and loyal subjects be permitted to fish for salmon on Irish rivers.¹²³⁶ However, the fact that confederates had made their exclusion from commercial activity a focus of their complaints in 1599 indicates that some Irishmen were already being cut out of it or, at least, that they knew what the English ultimately intended.

Finally, Tyrone asked that ‘all Irishmen...may learn, and use all occupations and arts whatsoever’.³⁵⁸ This was a response to English efforts to change the nature of the Irish economy and to decree which trades were and were not ‘civilised’. Irish elites made their riches in a certain way and wanted to uphold that system before considering innovations which also had to work in their interests. By now the English had no intention of allowing any of this. Nevertheless, its importance to the confederate leaders indicates that fiscal resentment had a prominent role in explaining Irish discontent with English rule, by the end of the century at least. As Ciaran Brady has observed with reference to the example of cess in the Pale,

¹²³⁵ ‘Commission to Henry Broncard to have the customs and imposts of wines brought into any port or creek in Ireland’, 6 May 1600, ‘Faints Elizabeth’ *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland*, 17th report, 123; See also ‘Commission to the Lord Deputy to grant Henry Broncard the customs and subsidies of foreign wines imported into Ireland’, 1594, CP 204/11.

¹²³⁶ ‘Memoranda on the state of affairs in Ireland’, 19 April 1600, *CSPI*, IX, (Mar 1600-Oct 1600), 106-7. 358
‘Articles intended to be stood upon by Tyrone’, November 1599, *CSPI*, VIII, (Apr 1599-Feb 1600), 280. 359
Brady, *Chief Governors*, 240.

economic grievances too could bring about a ‘unifying grievance which transcended all factional and territorial distinctions’.³⁵⁹ Along with their other concerns, these issues too played a role in ensuring the continuing resistance of the confederate leaders to English rule in the last years of the century.

In conclusion, it is suggested that fiscal concerns played a prominent part in explaining the breakdown in crown-O’Donnell relations by the end of the sixteenth century. So long as their local interests were upheld, each O’Donnell lord had been willing to pay a fixed tribute to the crown and thereby acknowledge its sovereignty in Ireland. English monarchs had intermittently shown such support for Manus and Calvagh O’Donnell, but assistance was almost non-existent for O’Donnell leaders from the late 1580s onwards. Despite this, O’Donnell lords continued to enter into economic agreements with the crown as their alternative options were limited. Even Hugh Roe O’Donnell sought a *détente* along these lines. He espoused willingness to act as Elizabeth’s representative, collecting her rents in his sphere of influence, if his political power was recognised. His hopes, however, were to be frustrated.

In fact, the crown often struck directly at the O’Donnells’ financial power instead, causing Hugh McManus and Hugh Roe O’Donnell in particular to reject Elizabeth’s officials. In pursuing efforts to bring Tír Conaill into line with English wishes, the queen’s representatives destroyed or seized its economic assets from the 1580s onwards. This was particularly evident in the 1590s when resources such as corn were burnt or taken into English hands, and religious houses were desecrated and looted. As suggested by Nicholas Canny, this made suggestions that the English were intent on fiscal reform seem hollow. Moreover, while the English expected

O'Donnell lords to sustain themselves in more 'civilised' ways, little was done to offer alternative routes to wealth that would have allowed this. This meant that O'Donnell power continued to rest upon the dues they could extract from their political and clerical followers, and which the monarchy increasingly sought to have for itself. This included a growing desire to have the ecclesiastical lands and their revenues in the lordship for the crown and its allies, a policy which was being pursued elsewhere in Ulster in the 1590s. Control over O'Donnell's sublords also offered the English the prospect of obtaining customs from external trade. In the 1540s, Manus O'Donnell had expressed willingness to share the proceeds of Sligo's and Tír Conaill's commerce, which was then under his power. Therefore, O'Donnell lords were prepared to deal with the crown on these points if the circumstances were favourable to them. Nevertheless, by the time the struggle for fiscal authority in the north reached fever pitch in the 1590s, the English and Hugh Roe O'Donnell were engaged in a winner-takes-all war. When he needed the financial support of his sublords most in 1600, many began aligning with Henry Docwra instead. The ecclesiastical lands of the lordship were also to slip out of his hands soon after, when his clerical friends were effectively purged by Docwra's forces. Hugh Roe's fiscal and political power in Tír Conaill was now smashed.

It is clear that overt English policies aimed at winning control over Ireland's economy had long been unpopular with O'Donnell lords. Indeed, Hugh MacManus O'Donnell was very suspicious of the economic motives of those Englishmen who were behind plantation schemes in north-east Ulster in the 1570s. In the late 1590s, the rebel grouping felt the need to demand recognition of their economic privileges

and the ability to trade freely with other countries. Further, they also saw reason to ask that religious toleration be extended to them, because they perceived that at least some Englishmen sought to take their ecclesiastical lands from them. They relied on the income from these territories and had clerical kinsmen to protect. Consequently, it is argued here that in the later decades of the sixteenth century, unhappiness about the nature of the fiscal policies pursued by the English in the north underscored the general disaffection with crown rule in Tír Conaill. By the late 1590s, as it became apparent that commercial powers were slipping out of the hands of Ulster's overlords, financial complaints had joined others in ensuring that the confederate leaders continued to defy Elizabeth until their resistance was finally defeated in 1603.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the reasons why the O'Donnell lords of Tír Conaill were never fully reconciled to the crown during the sixteenth century and why relations between the English and Hugh Roe O'Donnell broke down completely in the 1590s. In doing so, it has argued that it is best to view the reasons for O'Donnell resistance through the prism of their efforts to exercise lordship in the north-west of Ireland. Adopting this microhistory approach is effective for analysing the interests of the men who held the position of lord of Tír Conaill. Their particular concerns would give them a very different view of English rule to that which was held by others in Irish society. Such a perspective provides a more nuanced understanding of the political, ecclesiastical and fiscal powers which were critical in upholding O'Donnell rule and the ways in which the English sparked dissent by ultimately undermining the local authority of the family and attempting to seize this influence for the crown.

Within the political sphere, as was highlighted by the comparative approach utilised in chapters two to four, each O'Donnell lord was willing to align with the crown as long as their authority in Tír Conaill and their claims in northern Connaught were accepted. Relations were good for some years after 1541 as the crown often accepted this but, over time, the English came to challenge O'Donnell power first in Connaught and, by the 1580s, in Tír Conaill itself. In the 1590s Hugh Roe O'Donnell decided he would only accept peace with Elizabeth if she acknowledged that overlordship in these places was vested in the lords of Tír Conaill. The queen was not prepared to do this, with regard to Connaught in particular. It was for this reason, rather than national fervour, that Hugh Roe waged war against the English; only when Rory O'Donnell willingly accepted the crown's

restrictions on his authority in the north-west was peace reached.

In the spiritual arena, O'Donnell leaders had expected the crown to acknowledge their influence over clerics, religious buildings and ecclesiastical revenues all of which were important in ensuring the lords of Tír Conaill retained fiscal power within the lordship. The wealth this brought played a part in enabling the O'Donnells to pay their armies, which in turn made further expansion possible. That English efforts to seize benefices and religious houses across Ireland would meet with resistance was foreshadowed long before the 1590s. Manus O'Donnell had joined with others in the Geraldine League of the 1530s rebelling, in part, upon ecclesiastical grounds. The dissolution of the monasteries in the Pale had left men in Ulster concerned as to whether such initiatives would reach the north. Nevertheless, Manus and Henry VIII were able to reach peace in 1541 because the king was willing to accept O'Donnell's authority over the church, amongst other things. As a result, the lords of Tír Conaill and their clerical kinsmen maintained their hold over their spiritual revenues within the lordship. When the English began attacking religious figures in Tír Conaill from the late 1580s, however, this met with resistance. In seeking 'liberty of conscience' in the mid-1590s, Hugh Roe sought to protect his clerical adherents and ensure that church lands remained in Irish hands. By behaving as he did, Hugh Roe was again acting as Manus O'Donnell had done previously, as the comparison of their policies makes clear. This was simply what was expected of lords of Tír Conaill.

General fiscal issues also have their role to play in explaining growing

O'Donnell resistance to English rule. Initially, the crown was prepared to accept that O'Donnell lords, as Tír Conaill's leaders, would pay some share of the lordship's revenues to the exchequer in the form of rent. In return, the monarchy pledged to defend the lords' local authority, though this pledge was frequently neglected. Eventually, however, the crown openly demanded rent from Hugh McManus O'Donnell while supporting his English and Irish challengers against him. In other parts of Ulster, Elizabeth was also granting lands to English officials who were now to receive the financial rewards of those territories. The fear that this policy would be extended throughout the north was one more reason why the confederates resisted English encroachment into Ulster in the 1590s. By the century's end, the crown and its representatives were also seeking to deprive the confederate leaders of the natural resources and external trade of their lordships. It is evident that this too caused disaffection as, in the 1590s, Hugh Roe O'Donnell expressed anger about the fact English officials had repeatedly seized cattle from Tír Conaill since the mid-1580s. The confederate lords' demands to be allowed to trade with whoever they wished highlights the anger aroused by initiatives curtailing the ability of Ulstermen to conduct foreign trade too. This damaged their ability to exercise lordship by denying them access to munitions and mercenaries, as well as any share in the profits of trade which passed through their territories. Thus, one factor which explains the continuing resistance of the confederates at the end of the century was the desire not to lose economic and, by extension, political power.

These conclusions have been reached by utilising various approaches, each of which has contributed to an understanding of why crown-O'Donnell relations broke down. The principal method was to focus on how the need to exercise lordship

effectively influenced the O'Donnell response to English rule. By pursuing such an approach this survey enhances the wider historiography of sixteenth-century Ireland, adding to other local studies such as David Edwards' work on the Ormonds of Kilkenny and Ciaran Brady's examination of Shane O'Neill. Both studies emphasise how individual Irish lords and lordships could experience English rule in very different ways. Indeed, such local investigations are necessary because they are the best way to understand the divergent interests of lordships, and the men within them, in what was a highly regionalised society.¹²³⁷ This method allows the re-evaluation of well-known sources to assess what they meant when viewed through the eyes of particular lords, an advantage observed by Brendan Smith.² This is useful in understanding how successive O'Donnell leaders reacted to certain events and policies which could look very different from Tír Conaill than from London or Dublin, because of the varying interests of the parties.¹²³⁸

Just as Smith has highlighted the lack of any uniform experience in the fourteenth century, neither was there a general response to English authority in the sixteenth century. Accordingly, like Edwards, Brady and others, this thesis has taken the view that in order to understand how various lords experienced crown rule events must be viewed from their particular regional perspective. For example, Edwards and Bernadette Cunningham have shown how the earls of Ormond, Clanricard, and Thomond were able to compromise with the crown to ensure the changes brought about by reform did not result in their eclipse. This study has examined the

¹²³⁷ Brendan Smith, *Crisis and survival in late medieval Ireland: the English of Louth and their neighbours, 1330-1450*, (Oxford, 2013), 2. 2 *ibid*, 2.

¹²³⁸ *ibid*, 20.

O'Donnell experience of English policy, and has found that crown-O'Donnell relations took a very different course. In this case, there was no room for a bargain. The crown was set on diminishing O'Donnell power by the end of the century but, in Hugh Roe O'Donnell, met with a leader equally determined to avoid this outcome.

This local approach has other advantages. It has highlighted that the O'Donnells' regional aims were the principal factor in shaping their reactions to English rule. Importantly, Smith observes that local politics entailed lords boosting their own position at the expense of their rivals.¹²³⁹ This study has emphasised that, when the crown helped individual O'Donnell lords to augment their regional power against their challengers, they were more willing to align with the English. Conversely, O'Donnell leaders responded negatively to English initiatives which tended to damage their local authority. When Hugh Roe O'Donnell went to war with the crown, it was because the English were the biggest threat to his regional power. Thus, this thesis has argued that local issues remained of central importance in determining how O'Donnell lords reacted to other political actors, in this case the English crown. This again illuminates how important it is to provide the crucial regional context to any discussion of crown-O'Donnell relations.

All this is significant because it highlights that O'Donnell lords could have worked with the crown if they had been permitted to retain their local authority. Indeed, in this respect they were similar to the seventeenth century Marquis of Antrim, Randall MacDonnell, who, Jane Ohlmeyer argues, 'sincerely wanted to

¹²³⁹ *ibid*, 20.

succeed in, and to be accepted by, two very different worlds'.¹²⁴⁰ O'Donnell rulers had often been as keen to receive English titles and recognition of their local power as those Irish lords who managed to reach an accommodation with the crown. In the end, however, there was never the will amongst English officials to patronise or support O'Donnell lords fully, even when they were useful as a counterweight against the O'Neills of Tyrone. Thus, the lords of Tír Conaill were forced to err on the side of retaining local support as the most reliable way of retaining their authority in the north-west.

The study has also utilised a long-term approach in comparing the policies pursued by O'Donnell leaders over time. This perspective is crucial because the policies of Hugh Roe O'Donnell have often been investigated in isolation hitherto, resulting in emphasis being placed upon his 'exceptional' or 'revolutionary' character. When considered alongside his predecessors, however, such assessments become less tenable. By examining the policies of O'Donnell leaders over time, this study has shown that each one tried to reach an accommodation with the English after 1541. In doing so, they demanded recognition of their predominance in Ulster and northern Connaught. When they were struggling to obtain their desires from the crown, each sought aid from monarchs throughout Europe in a bid have the English crown rethink its stance. Thus, it is evident that Hugh Roe's interests and the tactics he used to pursue them represented a continuation, rather than a break, with the past.

¹²⁴⁰ Jane H. Ohlmeyer, *Civil War and restoration in the three Stuart kingdoms: the career of Randal MacDonnell, Marquis of Antrim, 1609-1683*, (Cambridge, 1993), 8.

Hugh, also, often has been credited with nationalist fervour or with foreign policy innovations, but is instead revealed to have been traditional in outlook. What had changed by the 1590s was crown policy: Elizabeth had finally decided Tír Conaill must fall under her power and O'Donnell must accept a reduction in the territory he held sway over. The idea was not new, as even Henry VIII and Anthony St Leger had advocated lowering the power of Ulster's overlords as the way to ensure that lesser men accepted English reform. The difference, by the end of the century, was that Elizabeth and her representatives finally saw this policy through to its conclusion. Like other O'Donnell leaders, Hugh Roe was unwilling to relinquish his regional supremacy and was forced to oppose the crown in order to retain it. Unlike Hugh, his predecessors had not been called upon to go to war with the crown to preserve their local power. They had, however, been compelled to fight continuously against the O'Neills of Tyrone to preserve O'Donnell power in the north-west. Therefore, in seeking to resist English encroachment, Hugh Roe merely behaved as his ancestors had done against all those local Gaelic rivals who had tried to subdue the O'Donnell lords of Tír Conaill for centuries. This leads to the conclusion that apparently 'revolutionary' characters should not be studied in isolation, but assessed in comparison with others who had held similar roles in order to ascertain just how far they differed from their antecedents.

While the local approach was crucially important in the conduct of this study, the course of crown-O'Donnell relations cannot be understood with reference to the regional picture alone. Just as the O'Donnell leaders were compelled to follow certain policies by the actions of their local rivals, the wider context also affected the moves made by both the lords of Tír Conaill and the crown. For instance, it has been

important to chart how events in Scotland could have an effect upon the policies of both the English crown and the O'Donnell lords. This is critical because the broader interests of the Scottish and English monarchs could shape their reaction to the calls of the O'Donnells for political support. In turn, an awareness of this is necessary if historians are to understand the full range of policy options open to the lords of Tír Conaill at particular junctures. Consequently, it was imperative to include aspects of the New British History in order to examine how the policies of other actors in the Atlantic archipelago could shape the relations between the crown and the O'Donnells. The implication of this is that no local study can afford to neglect the wider context of events in the British Isles and Ireland if historians hope to understand the policies pursued by Irish lords towards the English crown, and vice versa.

Nevertheless, as has been argued, overreliance on the New British History model can cause historians to prioritise examination of the relations of the peoples of the Atlantic archipelago at the expense of the wider European context. One serious ramification of this, outlined in this study, is that it can lead to faulty assessments of the nature of the relations between certain Irish lords and European monarchs. In particular, some have argued that the confederates of the 1590s were wholly wedded to the idea of replacing the English crown with a Spanish monarch. An examination of the European context has shown that an effective Iberian intervention in Ireland was rarely a sure thing. The Spanish monarchs had concerns throughout Europe, and the possibility of assisting Irishmen was only one of these. For this reason, the argument that Irish confederates planned to put all their eggs in one basket simply is not tenable. In fact, their continued negotiations with the crown suggest they did no

such thing and remained open to any arrangement that would preserve their local power. In short, the wider European context must always be studied closely alongside events in the Atlantic archipelago if the true range of policy options open to the political actors under discussion is to be fully understood. Local historians must also consider these perspectives alongside their regional focus.

Other approaches have been found to be of less use in the case of sixteenth-century Tír Conaill. Of significance in Irish historiography has been the question of the growth of English colonial thinking and how this was applied to Ireland. This is not a particularly useful method of analysis when considering the reactions of the sixteenth-century O'Donnells to English rule because the extreme north-west of Ireland was not subject to settlement in the sixteenth century. The most that can be said is that some O'Donnell leaders, such as Hugh McManus and Hugh Roe, had cause to fear that it might happen one day. Permanent settlement within Tír Conaill was not part of their experience and they were not reacting to it. Instead, in resisting English rule, the lords of Tír Conaill were primarily responding to the aggressive actions of soldiers who were sent there to assimilate the native Irish population into a reformed English polity. The ultimate aim of this was, in fact, to render plantation unnecessary because the areas had agreed to obey the Tudor monarchy and adopt English customs. That said, it is the case that some areas of Ireland were subject to settlement in the sixteenth century, and Donegal experienced this too, albeit from 1609 onwards, following the Flight of the Earls. Thus, while viewing the experiences of Irishmen through a colonialist prism can be valid in certain times and places, the example of Tír Conaill in the sixteenth century shows that it is not particularly useful in others. Again, this points to the need to consider

local conditions before deciding which general approaches are relevant in understanding particularised experiences.

Finally, this study has attempted to consider fiscal factors alongside purely political issues in explaining O'Donnell discontent with English rule in the later sixteenth century. It has been argued that such concerns have some role in accounting for the breakdown in crown-O'Donnell relations. Without economic power in Tír Conaill, the O'Donnell lords could not possibly expect to uphold their local authority. Wealth was necessary if they were to patronise their political adherents or to maintain the military power which was so crucial in allowing them to retain their predominance in north-west of Ireland. Accordingly, the lords of Tír Conaill needed to preserve their hold over the lordship's internal economy, as well as its havens and ports from which goods were exported. Therefore, acquiring and retaining riches was central to O'Donnell policy in the north-west.

Such fiscal interests have previously been discussed in a general fashion by those who have described the external trade which passed through the lordship's havens. Similarly, historians have pointed out that power inside and outside Tír Conaill was attractive to the O'Donnells for financial reasons. There has also been some effort to outline the ways in which the crown's representatives undermined the O'Donnells by seizing some of the internal wealth of the lordship. Nevertheless, little weight has been placed upon the struggle for economic power in explaining the breakdown of crown-O'Donnell relations hitherto. This survey has attempted to remedy this neglect, by analysing the features of both the internal and external economy in Tír Conaill, and the growing interest of the crown and its representatives

in seizing this. It is revealed that such concerns played a significant role in ensuring that no peace could be reached between the confederate leaders and the crown at the turn of the century. At that time, the Ulster overlords made it plain that English fiscal policy was not acceptable to them and that many of its central tenets would have to be reversed. This emphasises that no serious account of the crown's relations with individual Irishmen can omit some discussion of how the struggle for financial power played out in the locality in question. Considering such economic issues alongside purely political factors is imperative if the fullest understanding possible of the relations of various Irishmen with the English crown in the sixteenth century is to be reached.

It has been concluded that the lords of Tír Conaill were never fully reconciled to the crown in the sixteenth century because Tudor monarchs failed to live up to the promises they made to individual O'Donnell leaders. Initially, the crown often neglected to assist the lords of Tír Conaill in upholding their regional power as promised while later steps were taken to undermine the political, ecclesiastical and fiscal supremacy of the O'Donnells in the north-west. English officials on the ground in Ireland undertook this task with gusto, often going further than Elizabeth had envisaged. Nevertheless, the queen did little to reverse this and, indeed, was keen to assert her claims in the region, for example to Tír Conaill's spiritual revenues. It is the prospect of losing this local authority which explains the mounting resistance of the O'Donnell lords to English rule in the latter decades of the sixteenth century. Therefore, particularised regional issues are crucial in explaining why the O'Donnell lords became so unhappy with English rule. Accordingly, in contributing to Irish historiography this study has highlighted the need to consider local

perspectives in order to challenge generalised assumptions about the Irish experience of English rule. Examination of the wider archipelagic and European picture has brought nuance to the historiography by outlining external factors which impacted upon the O'Donnells' situation. Additionally, the experiences of the neglected O'Donnell leaders of the mid-sixteenth century have been discussed more fully than in any previous work. This has been critical in enhancing our understanding of the events surrounding the Nine Years War because it has enabled a more realistic appraisal of the policies pursued by Hugh Roe O'Donnell through comparisons with his predecessors. Finally, the focus placed on the struggle for fiscal power in the north-west has illuminated a further issue contributing to the resistance to English rule. In future, local studies ought to consider fiscal priorities alongside the myriad other concerns which could combine to cause Irishmen to reject Tudor royal authority in Ireland during the sixteenth century.

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