

The Irish and the Scots Are From the Same Tribe

Ireland used to be divided up into five parts, *the five fifths*. There was a northern fifth, *Ulster*, a western fifth, *Connaught*, a southern fifth, *Munster*, an eastern fifth, *Leinster* and a middle fifth, *Mide*.

The Ulster Cycle is a set of stories which are grounded in the five fifths. Indeed, they are primarily concerned with **Cú Chulainn**, the Ulster hero and his king, **Conor Mac Nessa** in their wars against the king and queen of Connaught, **Ailill** and **Maeve**. These figures play a prominent role in the what may be the greatest story of the Ulster Cycle, the **Táin Bó Cúailnge**, *The Cattle Raid of Cooley*.

Sometime after 300 AD, Ulster became steadily less important in status among the five farthings and the ruling family of Mide, the **Uí Néill** *Sons of Niall* started to take over large parts of Connaught and most of Ulster. A similar move was made in Munster by the ruling family of Munster, the **Eoganachta** family. Thus, was Ireland divided almost entirely into two halves.

The people of Ulster were pushed to a small coastal strip bordering the Irish Sea. The kingdom changed its name to **Dál Riata**. Yet eventually Dál Riata fell under the rule and influence of the Uí Néill. This family, not content with the boundry presented by the sea, launched colonies across the Irish Sea into then Pictish Britain. Thus, was Scotland founded, for it was these Uí Néill that the Romans called **Scotti**, not the original Picts.

Indeed, it was this Irish Expansion which led to Christianity in Scotland in 563 AD. **St. Columba**, the patron saint of Scotland, was a member of a powerful family in Dál Riata and in order to keep his ties in Ireland he settled on an island that was close to both Scotland and Ireland, **Iona**. Of course, even more bizarre is the fact that **St. Patrick**, the man responsible for bringing Christianity to Ireland in the first place, was from Wales.

[As mentioned in an earlier document, *The Six Celtic Languages*, when the Irish expansion into Pictish Britain occurred, several colonies were established in present day Wales. The local inhabitants called the Irish arrivals **gwyddel**: *savages* from which comes **geídil** and **goidel** and thus the Goidelic tongue.]