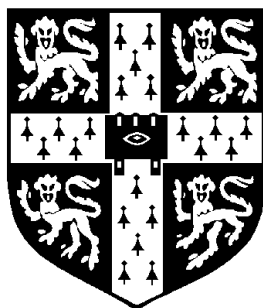


KATHLEEN HUGHES MEMORIAL LECTURES 14

JAMES E. FRASER

IONA AND THE BURIAL PLACES OF THE KINGS OF
ALBA



HUGHES HALL
&
DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE AND CELTIC

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Hughes Hall was founded in 1885 to take women graduating from the universities and give them a one year training to become teachers. As the first college in Cambridge specifically for graduates it broke new ground. Originally called the Cambridge Training College (CTC) it was re-named in 1948 in honour of its first Principal, Elizabeth Phillips Hughes, who had been one of the early students of Newnham College and became a respected leader in the theory and practice of education.

E. P. Hughes came from Wales and was a proponent of the language and culture of Wales. But, apart from this Welsh heritage, there is no known connection between the College and the scholar now commemorated in this series of lectures.

Hughes Hall became a full college of the university in 2006. It consists currently of around 50 Fellows and some 650 student members, men and women, who study for doctoral or MPhil degrees, for the postgraduate diplomas and certificates offered by the University, and, as mature undergraduates, for the BA degree. The academic community of Hughes Hall is now extremely diverse, including students of over 60 nationalities and representing almost all the disciplines of the University. Enquiries about entry as a student are always welcome. Information can be found on the college website at <http://www.hughes.cam.ac.uk/prospective-students/graduate-admissions/>

Kathleen Winifred Hughes (1926-77) was the first and only Nora Chadwick Reader in Celtic Studies in the University of Cambridge. Previously (1958-76) she had held the Lectureship in the Early History and Culture of the British Isles which had been created for Nora Chadwick in 1950. She was a Fellow of Newnham College, and Director of Studies in both History and Anglo-Saxon, 1955-77. Her responsibilities in the Department of Anglo-Saxon & Kindred Studies, subsequently the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, were in the fields of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh history of the early and central Middle Ages. Her achievements in respect of Gaelic history have been widely celebrated, notably in the memorial volume *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe*, published in 1982.

The Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lectures both acknowledge her achievements and seek to provide an annual forum for advancing the subject. Each year's lecture will be published as a pamphlet by the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic on behalf of Hughes Hall.

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Iona and the Burial places of the Kings of Alba

© James E. Fraser

First published 2016, by the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic,
University of Cambridge, 9 West Road, Cambridge, CB3 9DP.

ISBN 978-1-909106-10-9

ISSN 1475–9098

Set in Times New Roman by Dr Rosalind Love and Lisa Gold, University
of Cambridge.

Printed by the Reprographics Centre, University of Cambridge.

PREFACE

In 2000, thanks to an anonymous benefaction, an annual lecture was established at Hughes Hall in memory of Dr Kathleen Hughes, 1926-1977. A Fellow of Newnham College, Kathleen Hughes was the first Nora Chadwick Reader in Celtic Studies in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic (ASNC).

Over the years the lectures have embraced a wide range of topics in the early history and culture of the British Isles, reflecting the wide scholarly interests of Kathleen Hughes. Each lecture has been published as a printed pamphlet to coincide with the following year's lecture. They are listed on the back cover of this booklet. Hughes Hall is grateful to the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic for acting as publisher. Copies are available from ASNC.

The College is pleased to host the annual lecture and hopes that this academic initiative will make a significant scholarly contribution in the research areas in which Kathleen Hughes was a distinguished scholar.

Anthony Freeling
President
Hughes Hall

IONA AND THE BURIAL PLACES OF THE KINGS OF ALBA

JAMES E. FRASER
UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

We have no extant Scotch writing, so early as the reign of Malcolm Canmore, who died in the year 1093. That the art of writing was known and practised among us to a small extent before, we cannot doubt; but it was probably used only for books connected with the Church, its forms and service. At least there is no evidence of the existence, so early as that reign, of any charter, record, or chronicle.¹

In 1980 Kathleen Hughes's thoughts on the situation thus described by Cosmo Innes, 120 years before, were brought to posthumous publication in a ground-breaking essay bearing the interrogative title "Where are the writings of early Scotland?"² It is remarkable, when one stops to think about it, that so little scholarly effort was made in the intervening twelve decades to understand why, in Hughes's words now, "the written materials from which we have to construct the early history of Scotland – I mean the history before the eleventh century – are very few".³ After all, one is persistently reminded about this paucity of written evidence in virtually every study of early Scottish history that has been published since the eighteenth century, be it principally concerned with texts, with material evidence or with language. The matter was even lampooned by Scott. "It is rather a narrow foundation to build a hypothesis upon", observes the neutral bystander whom the hero of *The Antiquary* has roped in to help settle a debate with a fellow gentleman-scholar about the Picts, upon learning from the disputants that the evidence at issue amounts to a single word. But "the Antiquary" will have none of this, replying dismissively that "men fight best in a narrow ring".⁴ In 1939, in an

¹ C. Innes, *Scotland in the Middle Ages. Sketches of early Scotch history and social progress* (Edinburgh: 1860), p. 78.

² K. Hughes, *Celtic Britain in the early Middle Ages. Studies in Scottish and Welsh sources* (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 1–21.

³ Hughes, *Celtic Britain*, p. 1.

⁴ W. Scott, *The Antiquary* (Edinburgh, 1816), vol. I, 131–32. The issue disputed by Oldbuck and Sir Arthur Wardour in this charming scene is the character of the Pictish language, and the single word of evidence is "*Benval*", the *Peanfahel* of Bede's

important address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Alan O. Anderson reminded his audience of “the accident of survival of satisfactory evidence” upon which history is dependent, but he did not delve further into the specifics of the case for his own subject of “early Scottish history”, and proffered no explanation for how little evidence accidentally survives.⁵ Anderson’s focus was instead on how best to confront the limitations inherent in the body of evidence at our disposal, a subject that also fascinated Frederick Wainwright in the 1950s, who saw “the paucity and intractability of the sources” as grist to his particular mill in declaring repeatedly “the need for co-operation and co-ordination” between scholars and scholarship from different fields in order to understand early Scottish history.⁶ For the historian of early Scotland, then, her willingness to wade into these waters marks Kathleen Hughes as a truly exceptional scholar. It is a singular and humbling honour to have been invited to contribute to the series of Lectures commemorating her remarkable body of work. My subject here is not the (so-called) “Scottish lacuna” per se, but rather some material written close to the chronological horizon – the end of the eleventh century – identified as significant by Innes so many years ago. This material has some interesting light to shed on the history of the monastery of Iona, and it also may furnish clues that, in the fullness of time, can help us to answer Hughes’s question about the fate or fates of the writings of early Scotland.

*

My own interest in this subject has grown as a result of some work I have been doing on Thomas Innes’s *Critical essay on the ancient inhabitants of the northern parts of Britain, or Scotland*, published in 1729, and his unfinished *Civil and ecclesiastical history of Scotland*, published from his papers by the Spalding Club in 1853 (on the Council of which his namesake Cosmo Innes stood at the time). As with much else concerning early Scottish history as we now study it, it was the *Critical essay* that

Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum; see B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (eds.), *Bede’s ecclesiastical history of the English people* (Oxford: 1969), i.12.

⁵ A. O. Anderson, *Prospects of the advancement of knowledge in early Scottish history* (Dundee, 1940), p. 12.

⁶ F. T. Wainwright, “The Picts and the problem”, in F. T. Wainwright (ed.), *The Problem of the Picts* (Edinburgh, 1955), pp. 1–53, at 13, 19. Wainwright’s thinking in this respect reached its fullest state of development in F. T. Wainwright, *Archaeology and place-names and history: an essay on the problems of co-ordination* (London, 1962), albeit in a form to be applied generally to the study of early medieval Britain as a whole.

blazed the first trail down which others, including Hughes, later followed. Through painstaking labours Innes was able to establish that there was little or no evidence – what Innes called “proofs which can satisfy the learned of the present age” – to support the orthodox understanding of early Scottish history current at the time, whereas there was compelling evidence to suggest that it comprised mostly “inventions of later ages” expounded by two highly influential sixteenth-century books.⁷ The historian who wished to understand early Scottish history was on safer ground, Innes concluded, placing qualified faith in the previous orthodoxy brought together towards the end of the fourteenth century by John of Fordun, whose *Chronica gentis Scotorum* Innes regarded as a repository of what evidence had not yet been lost, or removed from Scotland by order of Edward I at the time of the so-called Wars of Independence.⁸ Above all else, however, Innes urged his readers to place their reliance on “ancient manuscript pieces”, apparently containing even earlier material, of which he had become aware in the course of his labours: “nothing hath been more hurtful to the truth of our history,” he wrote, “than the smothering by contempt or neglect [of these] ancient pieces”,⁹ and he hoped that, by publishing transcripts in the appendix of the *Critical essay*, he would be helping to “set the ancient state of the inhabitants of our country on a more certain, [or] at least a more likely... footing”, given “so lame accounts as we have of those times”.¹⁰

In her lucid, penetrating essay on these “lame accounts” of early Scotland, Hughes put to the test Innes’s presumptions that their paucity was owed principally to the seizure and removal of secular documents by English forces during the Wars of Independence, on the one hand, and later, on the other hand, to the deliberate and indiscriminate destruction of manuscripts possessed by ecclesiastical establishments in the sixteenth century by protestant zealots. She pointed out that material older than the twelfth century is virtually absent from Scottish book-lists predating the reformation, from which she concluded that there was very little material of the kind left in libraries lost to protestant zeal.¹¹ Hughes also suggested that there is nothing particularly remarkable – or at least, nothing

⁷ T. Innes, *A critical essay on the ancient inhabitants of the northern parts of Britain, or Scotland*, *Historians of Scotland VIII* (Edinburgh, 1879), p. 234.

⁸ Innes, *Critical essay*, p. 19. Innes’s esteem for Fordun as a commentator on early Scottish history was founded on the description of him by “one of his continuators”, namely Walter Bower, in the “Book of Coupar Angus” manuscript of *Scotichronicon*, as having been an industrious collector of ancient sources (Innes, *Critical essay*, pp. 123–27). *Chronica gentis Scotorum* continued to be trusted by scholars well into the twentieth century (see Hughes, *Celtic Britain*, pp. 6–7).

⁹ Innes, *Critical essay*, p. 80.

¹⁰ Innes, *Critical essay*, p. 19.

¹¹ Hughes, *Celtic Britain*, pp. 1–3.

necessarily sinister – about the fact that there are very few extant charters or other similar documents of the type prized by historians of the stripe of Cosmo Innes, produced as written records for the benefit of royal, local or ecclesiastical authorities in Scotland before about 1200. The survival of earlier material of this kind “anywhere in Western Europe was very much a matter of chance”, she argued; and, having considered the inventory undertaken in London in 1323 of the “muniments of the Kings of Scotland, and of various other persons of that realm” which had been seized in September 1296 by Edward I, she concluded that these records, which Thomas Innes had imagined were rich in early material, “would”, if we had them, “do little to help us to reconstruct early Scottish history”.¹²

Having thus rejected Innes’s explanation of the ill fate met with by the writings of early Scotland, Hughes found herself “driven to the conclusion” that by the end of the thirteenth century, when serious interest in early Scottish history was stirred up both in Scotland and in England, “the historian’s sources for early Scottish history were as scanty as ours”.¹³ Key evidence supporting her position was mobilized from Marjorie O. Anderson’s painstaking work on the Scottish king-lists across some twenty years, brought together in a monograph published in 1973. These texts form the main focus of my Lecture. They come down to us in the form of a handful of “Irish lists” written in Gaelic, apparently in the eleventh century, plus what Hughes nicely described as “the descendants of a twelfth-century Latin list in Anglo-Norman orthography”, which has since been assigned a date of composition during, or immediately following, the reign of the Scottish king Alexander I (1107–24).¹⁴ This Latin list served as the basis of a thirteenth-century chronicle of “very elementary” type, comprising “brief entries of historical events which took place during the reigns”, which was compiled during the reign of Alexander II (1214–49), a text identified by Anderson as the archetype of

¹² Hughes, *Celtic Britain*, pp. 3–8. It was with prescience that Hughes remarked (*ibid.*, 7, note 39) that “we badly need a study...of Fordun’s sources”, for her case is strengthened by Dauvit Broun’s argument (see below, note 25) that *Chronica gentis Scotorum* is based on a chronicle composed in the middle of the thirteenth century.

¹³ Hughes, *Celtic Britain*, p. 6.

¹⁴ Hughes, *Celtic Britain*, p. 5. The case in favour of the existence of this twelfth-century king-list is set out by M. O. Anderson, *Kings and kingship in early Scotland* (second edition: Edinburgh and London, 1980), pp. 44–49. Some further consideration of the case is set out by D. Broun, *The Irish identity of the kingdom of the Scots in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries* (Woodbridge, 1999), 155–59, 188–89. The lists descended from the twelfth-century Latin list form Anderson’s “X group” and “Y group” of king-lists. Broun’s dating of their twelfth-century archetype, which he denoted τ, refined Anderson’s earlier conclusion that it was written in the period 1105x65.

every known “descendant” of the Latin king-list written a century earlier.¹⁵ Hughes showed that, in England, this thirteenth-century king-list-chronicle very rapidly became regarded as the main authoritative source of information about early Scottish history.¹⁶ At the time, precious little positive evidence had been identified to suggest that thirteenth-century Scotland possessed any other sources for the early medieval history of the kingdom or its constituent parts and peoples. Dauvit Broun has since argued that Fordun’s fourteenth-century chronicle was based on a thirteenth-century, Monmouth-inspired, Scottish text which we shall see made use of the Latin king-list-chronicle. Broun also identified another Scottish chronicle, formerly erroneously attributed to Fordun, which was written at the end of the century and does not concern us because it begins in the middle of the twelfth century.¹⁷

*

Having arrived at this point, I wish to set aside until later the question of what happened to the writings of early Scotland, and to take a closer look at the thirteenth-century king-list-chronicle which came to define the history of early medieval Scotland within and outwith the boundaries of the kingdom. It apparently began with the reign of Cináed son of Alpin (842–58), stating that

xvi a. reg. super Scottos distructis Pictis et mortuus est et in Fethirtauethn et sepultus in Yona Insula ubi tres filii scilicet Erc, Fergus, Loaran, Tenagus, sepulti fuerunt.¹⁸

¹⁵ Hughes, *Celtic Britain*, p. 5. For detailed discussion of the evidence, see Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 49–67; and, for further refinements, see Broun, *Irish identity*, pp. 112–13, 133–64. Broun assigned the Greek siglum ξ to this archetypal king-list-chronicle, as distinct from τ, the twelfth-century king-list.

¹⁶ Hughes, *Celtic Britain*, p. 5.

¹⁷ D. Broun, ‘A new look at *Gesta annalia* attributed to John of Fordun’, in B. Crawford (ed.), *Church, chronicle and learning in medieval and early Renaissance Scotland. Essays presented to Donald Watt on the occasion of the completion of the publication of Bower’s Scotichronicon* (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 9–30.

¹⁸ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 266–67, 273–74, 282–83, 288, 290; W. F. Skene (ed.), *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and other early memorials of Scottish history* (Edinburgh, 1867), 301. Quotations from the chronicle are taken from the “D” copy (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Adv. 34.7.3, ff. 19v–21v). Translations follow A. O. Anderson, *Early sources of Scottish history* (Edinburgh, 1922), vol. I, *passim*, save where noted.

he reigned over the Scots for 16 years after destroying the Picts; and he died in Forteviot and was buried in the island of Iona where the three sons of Erc were buried, to wit, Fergus, Loarn and Óengus.

The chronicle then proceeded to note the reign-length of each subsequent king down to William the Lion (1165–1214) along with a short biographical statement along these lines, in many cases simply describing the circumstances of his death and the place of his burial. As already noted, Anderson demonstrated that this curious chronicle was a continuation of a twelfth-century king-list. Her suspicion was that its “chronicle notes” describing the reign, death and burial of Cináed and his successors had been present in, and extracted from, that earlier king-list.¹⁹ Further work on this material by Broun has borne out this suspicion.²⁰ It therefore seems that we must understand the Latin king-list-chronicle as representing a twelfth-century perspective on Scottish history from the reign of Cináed until that of Alexander I.

The subject which I mean to pursue here is that fact that this chronicle, following its source, observed about Cináed and all of his successors up to, and including, Lulach (1057–58), with three exceptions, that each ruler was *sepultus in Iona insula*.²¹ This information may be tabulated as follows:

¹⁹ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 49–51.

²⁰ Broun, *Irish identity*, pp. 155–57.

²¹ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 266–68, 273–76, 282–84, 290–91; Skene, *Chronicles*, pp. 301–2.

<u>KING</u>	<u>PLACE OF BURIAL</u>
1. Cináed son of Ailpín	Iona
2. Domnall son of Ailpín	Iona
3. Constantín son of Cináed	Iona
4. Áed son of Cináed	Iona
5. Giric son of Dúngal	Iona
6. Domnall son of Constantín	Iona
7. Constantín son of Áed	St Andrews
8. Máel Coluim son of Domnall	Iona
9. Ildulb son of Constantín	Iona
10. Dub son of Máel Coluim	Iona
11. Cuilén son of Ildulb	unstated
12. Cináed son of Máel Coluim	unstated
13. Constantín son of Cuilén	Iona
14. Cináed son of Dub	Iona
15. Máel Coluim son of Cináed	Iona
16. Dunchad son of Crínán	Iona
17. Mac Bethad son of Findláech	Iona
18. Lulach <i>fatuus</i>	Iona

Table 1: Burial places of the kings in the thirteenth-century Latin king-list-chronicle

The island's claim to be "the burial place of early Scottish kings" has become one of Iona's principal attractions to potential tourists nowadays, to judge from the online efforts of Iona Community Council.²² Visitors have been reminded of this claim since the Middle Ages, and it has featured as an accepted fact of Scotland's early history for the better part of a millennium. In the sixteenth century Donald Monro was confronted with both the historical fact and the physical presence of these early royal burials, observing the following in his *Description of the Western Isles of Scotland* of 1549:

within this Ile of Colmkill [i.e. Iona] thair was ane Sanctuarie or Kirkzaird callit in Irish *Religoran*... Into this Sanctuarie thair is three Tombs of stanes formit like little chapellis with ane braid gray [marble or] quhin stane in the gavill of ilk ane of the Tombs. In the stane of the mid Tomb thair is writtin [in Latin letters] *Tumulus Regum Scotiae*, that is to say, the Tomb or the Grave of the Scottis Kings. Within this Tomb, according to our Scottis and Irish Chronicles, thair lyis 48 crownit Scottis Kings, throw the quhilk this Ile has bene richlie dotit be the Scottis Kings, as we have hard. The Tomb on the south side of this foirsaid Tomb hes the subscription, to wit, *Tumulus Regum Hiberniae*, that is to say, the Tomb of the Irland Kingis: for we have in our Irish Chronicles that thair

²² <http://www.isle-of-iona.com/abbey.htm> [28.4.2011].

wes four Irland Kingis eirdit into the said Tomb. Upon the north side of our Scottis Tomb the inscription beiris *Tumulus Regum Norvegiae*, that is, the Tomb of the Kingis of Norway. In the quhilk Tomb we find in our ancient Irish Chronicles their lyis aucht Kingis of Norway ... [T]his Sanctuarie wes wont to be the sepulture of the best men of all the Iles, and als of our Kingis, as we have said; because it wes the maist honorable and ancient place that wes in Scotland in those dayis, as we reid.²³

No trace of this curious sixteenth-century exhibit survives, of course. It seems fairly clear from Monro's shrewd remarks that its construction was wholly inspired by, and a by-product of, late medieval book-learning. The fourteenth-century historian John of Fordun, whose *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, having been praised by Thomas Innes, was long considered a valid and vital source of information pertaining to the early medieval past, had observed the following about the death and burial of Constantín son of Áed, king of Alba from c.900 to 943 (Table I, king 7):

post hujus belli funestum excidium regni sceptrum quatuor regebat annis, ac deinde regno sponte dimisso, religionis in habitu Deo serviens apud Sanctum Andream, Killedeorum abbas effectus, annis quinque vixit, ibique moriens sepultus est. Hyenses deinde monachi, sua statim effodientes ossa tulerunt, et in basilica beati Orani patrum tumulo condiderunt²⁴

He kept on wielding the sceptre for four years after the tragic destruction of this battle [i.e. of Brunanburh]. Then giving up the kingship of his own accord, he put on the monk's habit and devoted himself to God, living for five years after becoming abbot of the Céli Dé at St Andrews. There he died and was buried. The monks of Iona then dug up his bones at once, took them away and buried them in the tomb of his fathers in the chapel of Blessed Oran.

Fordun's sources in the 1380s have been the subject of considerable and detailed study by Broun, who argued that his chronicle was here giving voice to an understanding of early Scottish history first set down in narrative form in the 1260s, more than a hundred years earlier, in a hypothetical text authored by Richard Vairement. Attached to the same Céli Dé establishment at St Andrews that Constantín himself had joined

²³ R. W. Munro (ed.), *Monro's Western Isles of Scotland and Genealogies of the Clans* (Edinburgh and London, 1961), §103. For discussion of the value of the evidence provided by Monro, see *ibid.*, pp. 33–34.

²⁴ W. F. Skene (ed.), *Johannis de Fordun: Chronica gentis Scotorum*, *Historians of Scotland I* (Edinburgh, 1871–72), iv.23.

and led three hundred years previously, Vairement was chancellor in the 1240s to Marie de Coucy, who became the second wife of Alexander II in 1239.²⁵ As we have seen, the narrative tradition about early Scottish history apparently begun by him in the 1260s, and subsequently embroidered by the better-known Fordun in the 1380s, derived its information that Iona had served as a mausoleum of Scottish kings like Constantín from an older source still – our thirteenth-century king-list-chronicle. That text’s brief account of the reign of Constantín son of Áed is worth quoting by way of example, in order to establish the debt owed to the unknown thirteenth-century chronicler by Vairement and Fordun:

FORDUN (1384x87)

regno sponte dimisso, religionis in habitu Deo serviens apud Sanctum Andream killideorum abbas effectus annis quinque vixit ibique moriens sepultus est.

Giving up the kingship of his own accord, he put on the monk’s habit and devoted himself to God, living for five years after becoming abbot of the Céili Dé at St Andrews. There he died and was buried.

THIRTEENTH-CENTURY LATIN CHRONICLE (1214x49)

dimisso regno sponte deo in habitu religionis abbas factus est in keledeorum sancti Andree quinque annis servivit et ibi mortuus est ac sepultus.²⁶

Giving up the kingship of his own accord, he served five years, devoted to God, in the monk’s habit, becoming abbot in the [convent] of the Céili Dé of St Andrews; and there he died and was buried.

It was shown earlier that the chronicle excludes three kings from its otherwise universal scheme of royal burial in Iona between the death of Cináed in 858 and that of Lulach in 1058. Constantín’s burial in St Andrews here discussed is one of these three exceptional cases. In his later account of Constantín’s final years, death and burial, Fordun

²⁵ D. Broun, *Scottish independence and the idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. 215–34 (especially 223–29), 252–61, developing ideas set out earlier in Broun, *Irish identity*, pp. 63–81 (especially 72–73). On Vairement, whom Broun identified as Hector Boece’s now infamous source *Veremundus*, see G. W. S. Barrow, *The kingdom of the Scots. Government, Church and society from the eleventh to the fourteenth century* (second edition: Edinburgh 2003), pp. 192–93.

²⁶ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 267, 274–75, 283, 288, 290–91; Skene, *Chronicles*, p. 301. The quotation follows “D” with slight modifications to reflect the witness of the other MSS.

characteristically preserved almost verbatim the text of our chronicle, apart from the innovation of a new sentence, added to the end and included in my earlier, fuller quotation, stating that the king's bones were, however, subsequently translated to Iona, and making him exceptional no longer.

Having become part of mainstream historiography in Scotland, and indeed (as Hughes showed) in England too by the middle of the thirteenth century, the presence of Scottish royal burials in Iona became a feature of the narrative history of the kingdom from the 1260s, according to Broun's understanding of the origins of the Vairement-Fordun chronicle tradition. It remains a feature of Iona's story today, and visitors to the island who are confronted or attracted by it follow in a tradition of visitation almost as long as the historiographical one. The historiography pertaining to the presence of royal burials in Iona had undergone further elaboration in the generations between Fordun's *Chronica gentis Scotorum* and Monro's visit to their physical remains in Iona. Such creative innovation and remodelling of the tradition were not confined to the textual world of "our Scottis and Irish Chronicles". By the eighteenth century Monro's "three Tombs of stanes" had been superseded in the Ionan landscape by "a line of late medieval grave-slabs" known as "the Ridge of Kings", and it is a matter of record that these objects were later "rearranged and enclosed by rails" in 1868.²⁷ Such incremental layers of more and more imaginative embroidery, ever more detached from the earliest account and more suited to the time of embellishment, recall to mind what happened to the story of early medieval Scotland more generally from the thirteenth century onwards, prior to the efforts of Thomas Innes to bring the process to a halt by rejecting "what appears advanced without sufficient ground".²⁸

Following Innes's example, few scholars who have considered the question closely have been disposed to join Iona Community Council in embracing the thirteenth-century king-list-chronicle's assertion that, for 200 years after 858, virtually every king of Alba was buried in Iona. Marjorie Anderson supposed that the memoranda of which the chronicle is comprised represented "oral tradition";²⁹ but Ted Cowan was disinclined to invoke such a source, concluding instead that the insistence by the chronicle that these kings were almost all buried in Iona was a "fictional" invention by "embroiderers of king-lists".³⁰ Certainly the

²⁷ R. Sharpe (ed.), *Adomnán of Iona: Life of St Columba* (London, 1995), p. 278.

²⁸ Innes, *Critical essay*, 16–17. Innes here refers to Irish history, but explicitly states that his aim was to do "as I have done in regard of my own country".

²⁹ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 50–52.

³⁰ E. J. Cowan, "The Scottish Chronicle in the Poppleton manuscript", *Innes Review* 32.1 (1981), 3–21, at 7.

repetition of the phrase *et sepultus [est] in Iona insula*, usually (but not always) at the end of each biographical note, has the suspicious look of an author's formula. Indeed the very name-form *Iona* looks suspicious alongside the other place-names, mostly Gaelic in form and language, which are recorded in the chronicle. In 1961 Anderson shared her husband Alan's view that this name-form, the normal English name of the island today, "was derived from Adomnán's *Iova*, through a textual error" and was "not current before the fourteenth century".³¹ A dozen years later she had apparently changed her mind on this point, having determined that our Latin chronicle had thirteenth-century origins. Even so, *Iona* remains a name-form very far removed from the period of Scottish history beginning with the reign of Cináed son of Ailpín. Like Cowan, Broun spoke of the presence of royal burials in Iona as an "obvious anachronism" in his comprehensive re-evaluation of Anderson's work on the king-lists and related texts.³² It may be because the point has been pretty tangential to most of the scholarship that has established it that the wider public has mostly failed to notice scholarly opinion crystallizing in this way against Iona's claim to have been home to a Scottish royal mausoleum. It may also be because no positive evidence has hitherto been put forward to refute the thirteenth-century chronicle's claim, in dubious support of which "oral tradition" could be invoked.

Positive evidence may, however, exist that several of the kings stated in the chronicle to have been buried in Iona were actually interred elsewhere. As mentioned earlier, there are four Scottish king-lists preserved in Irish texts to which Anderson assigned compositional dates in the eleventh century. Among these lists, only one, used as a source by the author of the so-called *Prophecy of Berchán*, appears to have included any burial information about the kings.³³ This poem was probably written

³¹ A. O. Anderson and M. O. Anderson (eds.), *Adomnan's Life of Columba* (Edinburgh, 1961), p. 155.

³² Broun, *Irish identity*, p. 188.

³³ B. T. Hudson (ed.), *Prophecy of Berchán. Irish and Scottish high-kings of the early Middle Ages* (London, 1996). For an earlier edition, see A. O. Anderson, "The Prophecy of Berchan", *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 18 (1930), 1–56, at pp. 11–56. Apparently earlier than the *Prophecy* king-list, but still eleventh-century (1034x93) in date, was the archetype of the "cognate" lists underlying the twelfth-century poems *Comaimsera rí nÉrenn ocus rí na cóiced iar creitim* (sometimes attributed to Fland Mainistrech) and *A eolcha Alban uile* (or 'Duan Albanach'); see Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 44–45; Broun, *Irish identity*, pp. 170–72. Neither of these poems mentions burials. For the texts, see Skene, *Chronicles*, pp. 18–22 (*Comaimsera rí nÉrenn ocus rí na cóiced iar creitim*); K. Jackson, "The Duan Albanach", *Scottish Historical Review* 36.2 (1957), 125–37, at pp. 128–32 (*A eolcha Alban uile*).

in the second half of the twelfth century.³⁴ The poet – whom I shall call hereafter Pseudo-Berchán – ran through a sequence of Scottish kings describing each one in brief, sometimes clear, but often cryptic detail, usually even omitting his name. The sequence appears to have been based on a king-list composed during the reign of Domnall son of Donnchad (1094–97) – or “Domnall Bán” – at the very end of the eleventh century.³⁵ The Scottish details derived by Pseudo-Berchán from this king-list thus seem to date from a generation or so prior to the production of the twelfth-century Latin king-list and historical memoranda embedded in our thirteenth-century king-list-chronicle. The nearness of the dates of Latin list and the slightly earlier one consulted by Pseudo-Berchán may be important for the present discussion. That is because, to judge from the *Prophecy*, the Scottish king-list consulted by Pseudo-Berchán was not simply a bare list of royal names and reign-lengths, but another king-list-chronicle like the thirteenth-century text we have been examining, featuring some brief memoranda of a similar type.³⁶

The two sets of memoranda about these Scottish kings and their reigns, dating from the end of the eleventh century on the one hand and from the early twelfth century on the other, represent independent reflections on Scottish history which seem to have differed in some remarkable ways. “We find no sign of relationship” in comparing them, observed Marjorie Anderson, and “the most that can be said is that Berchán and the Latin notes are not always incompatible”.³⁷ The *Prophecy of Berchán* makes a number of statements regarding the burial of kings listed in our chronicle, including Constantín son of Áed whom we encountered earlier, his son Ildulb (954–62) and his grandson Cuilén (967–71), three cases within a single patriline which will be considered later. In striking contrast to our chronicle, in no case where he named or described a royal burial-place did Pseudo-Berchán identify that place as Iona. In fact, there are no allusions in the poem to there having been any sort of burial custom or tradition involving that island (or any other place).³⁸ The relevant information may be tabulated as follows:

³⁴ Hudson, *Prophecy*, pp. 14–16, discusses the date of the text. The apparent link between John de Courcy and the text of the poem suggests a fairly close relationship.

³⁵ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 50–52.

³⁶ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, p. 50.

³⁷ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, p. 50.

³⁸ Even Columba’s burial place is said to be elsewhere than Iona; for discussion, see Hudson, *Prophecy*, pp. 191–93.

<u>KING</u>	<u>PLACE OF BURIAL</u>	
	<u>CHRONICLE</u>	<u>PROPHECY</u>
1. Cináed son of Ailpín	Iona	
2. Domnall son of Ailpín	Iona	“above Loch Adhbha”
3. Constantín son of Cináed	Iona	
4. Áed son of Cináed	Iona	
5. Giric son of Dúngal	Iona	“between Leitir and Claonloch”
6. Domnall son of Constantín	Iona	
7. Constantín son of Áed	St Andrews	St Andrews
8. Máel Coluim son of Domnall	Iona	“on the brow of Dunnottar”
9. Ildulb son of Constantín	Iona	
10. Dub son of Máel Coluim	Iona	
11. Cuilén son of Ildulb	unstated	St Andrews?
12. Cináed son of Máel Coluim	unstated	
13. Constantín son of Cuilén	Iona	
14. Cináed son of Dub	Iona	“between two glens, not far from the banks of the Earn”
15. Máel Coluim son of Cináed	Iona	
16. Dunchad son of Crínán	Iona	
17. Mac Bethad son of Findláech	Iona	
18. Lulach <i>fatuus</i>	Iona	

Table II: Burial places of the kings in the thirteenth-century Latin king-list-chronicle and the *Prophecy of Berchán*

The “gravestone” (*leacht*) of Domnall son of Ailpín, a king readily identifiable in the sometimes cryptic lines of the poem, is stated by Pseudo-Berchán to be “above Loch Adhbha” (*ós Loch Adhbha*), an obscure location which (wherever it was) was plainly not in Iona.³⁹ The *leacht* of the king called “the fool from songful Dundurn” (*in baoth á Dún Duirn dúanach*) by Pseudo-Berchán is stated to have been located “between Leitir and Claonloch” (*idir Leitir is Claonloch*).⁴⁰ Alan Anderson tentatively suggested these two places be identified as Leitir in Strathyre and Loch Lubnaig at the bottom end of that valley.⁴¹ These identifications are open to question but, again, an Ionan burial is certainly not being envisaged. His “fool from Dundurn” Pseudo-Berchán understood to be the immediate predecessor of the readily-identifiable

³⁹ Hudson, *Prophecy*, §126. There can be no doubt that Domnall son of Ailpín is the king intended. Anderson, *Early sources*, vol. I, 292, translated *ós Loch Adhbha* as “above Loch Awe” in Argyll. The early (and indeed recent) forms of the name suggest that *Loch Adhbha* is unlikely to be Loch Awe; see W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh and London, 1926), p. 75; E. Hamp, “Varia”, *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 15 (1988), 150. However, Anderson, “Prophecy”, p. 39, persisted in this identification.

⁴⁰ Hudson, *Prophecy*, §142.

⁴¹ Anderson, “Prophecy”, p. 42.

Domnall son of Constantín (889–900). Domnall’s predecessor in our chronicle, Giric son of Dúngal (878–89), is stated in that text to have been killed at Dundurn. If Giric is to be identified as Pseudo-Berchán’s “fool from Dundurn”, as seems unavoidable, we seem to have here an example of the occasional compatibility noticed by Marjorie Anderson between the two sets of memoranda provided by the *Prophecy* and our chronicle.⁴² That compatibility would be deeper, in Giric’s case, if one were to accept Alan Anderson’s identification of the burial-place of the “fool from Dundurn”, which would situate this unnamed king’s grave in the neighbourhood around Loch Earn, just like the site in Strathearn where Giric was apparently slain.

Some of these same points about compatibility can be repeated with respect to other royal burial places mentioned in the *Prophecy*. The *lecht* of Máel Coluim son of Domnall (943–54) – or rather, of the unnamed successor of the readily-identifiable Constantín son of Áed – was located by Pseudo-Berchán “on the brow of Dunnottar” (*for brá Dúna Foiteir*).⁴³ According to the *Chronicle of the Kings of Alba*, Máel Coluim was killed at Fetteresso by Mearns-men; burial at Dunnottar would thus fit nicely alongside that chronicle’s information.⁴⁴ The location of the “resting place” (*lighe*) of the predecessor of the readily-identifiable Máel Coluim son of Cináed (1005–34) – probably therefore Cináed son of Dub (997–1005) – is stated by Pseudo-Berchán to lie “between two glens, not far from the banks of the Earn” (*eidir dá ghleann / ní cían ó bhrúinnibh Éirenn*).⁴⁵ Only two of the extant “descendants” of our chronicle state where Cináed was killed, locating his death at Monzievairst in Strathearn, a location that fits similarly well alongside the *Prophecy*’s burial information.⁴⁶ These last two examples of the royal burial places recorded in the *Prophecy of Berchán*, potentially along with the third example of Giric, demonstrate sufficiently close compatibility with information recorded in other sources to be taken pretty seriously. I do not have the opportunity here to develop the point, but there is plenty of reason to regard it as probable that Scottish kings killed in battle or

⁴² In the Latin chronicle Giric, far from being a fool, is stated to have subjugated Ireland and England and to have liberated the Scottish Church from the tyranny of Pictish observances.

⁴³ Hudson, *Prophecy*, §159.

⁴⁴ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, p. 252. This text goes on to qualify *in Fodresach* with *id est in Claideom*; where two of the “X group” king-lists say that this king was killed *in Uluin* (“F”) or *in Ulnem* (“T”), it is conceivable that we are dealing with corruptions of *in Claideom*.

⁴⁵ Hudson, *Prophecy*, §180.

⁴⁶ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 275, 284. On the identification with Monzievairst, see Anderson, *Early sources*, vol. I, 522; Hudson, *Prophecy*, p. 90.

slain by assassins tended to be buried nearby, just as the *Prophecy of Berchán* repeatedly implies.⁴⁷

Further compatibility between the king-list used by Pseudo-Berchán and our Latin king-list-chronicle is to be found once attention is paid to the grandfather-son-grandson patriline of Constantín son of Áed, Ildulb and Cuilén, two of whom (Constantín and Cuilén) our chronicle makes exceptional to its scheme of burial normally occurring in Iona. Cuilén is readily identifiable in the *Prophecy* from his description, according to which he had his *lecht* “above the edge of the wave which will dissolve the promontory”. Benjamin Hudson understood this passage, from related and clearer references in the poem, to refer to St Andrews, the very place where both our chronicle and the *Prophecy* locate the burial of Cuilén’s grandfather Constantín.⁴⁸ Cuilén’s father too, who was Constantín’s son Ildulb, was associated with St Andrews by Pseudo-Berchán, who wrote that the king died there, “in the house of the same holy apostle, where his father will die”.⁴⁹ Sadly for us, the poet did not go on to make any mention of where the bodies of Constantín or Ildulb were buried, but it may be suspected all the same, from Pseudo-Berchán’s handling of his materials, that the king-list-chronicle which he used as his source understood that Constantín, Ildulb and Cuilén were each buried at St Andrews. Of these three kings, Ildulb alone is stated in our chronicle to have been buried in Iona. It may be that Constantín and Cuilén do not follow suit, and remain exceptional, because our chronicle appears to have been written at St Andrews or else somewhere closely connected with that church,⁵⁰ by a thirteenth-century author who may have balked at extending the Ionan burial scheme to kings whose remains were on record locally as resting in St Andrews.

This hypothesis may hold better in the case of Constantín, who is said directly in our chronicle to have been buried in St Andrews, than in that of Cuilén, whose burial place is simply not named. He shares this distinction with the third, final king whose burial, exceptionally, is not stated in our chronicle to have taken place in Iona, his successor Cináed son of Máel Coluim (971–95), who was “deceitfully killed” (*do marbad per dolum*) in 995 according to the “Annals of Ulster”.⁵¹ These same

⁴⁷ In the case of Cináed son of Dub, Pseudo-Berchán might be suspected of confusing the king’s death-site with his *lighe*; but the other matches, albeit geographically proximate, are not sufficiently exact to support such a conclusion in those instances.

⁴⁸ Hudson, *Prophecy*, §§163, 168. On the identification with St Andrews, see *ibid.*, p. 88.

⁴⁹ Hudson, *Prophecy*, §163.

⁵⁰ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 52–67; Broun, *Irish identity*, pp. 112–13.

⁵¹ S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill (eds.), *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)* (Dublin, 1983), p. 424 (995.1).

annals record that Cuilén was “killed by Britons in a battle-rout” (*marbad do Bretnaibh i rroi catha*); similarly, the *Chronicle of the Kings of Alba* records that Cuilén and his brother were “slain by Britons” (*occisi sunt a Britonibus*).⁵² The *Prophecy of Berchán* relates similar information, and so did the author of our chronicle, who observed that Cuilén “was killed by Amdarch son of Domnall in Lothian on account of his daughter”,⁵³ a story which we find much embroidered in Fordun’s later and fuller narrative, which makes the king out to be an infamous and unpopular character.⁵⁴ Concerning Cináed son of Máel Coluim, our author stated that this king was “killed by his own men in Fettercairn through the treason of Finnella daughter of Cunchar earl of Angus, she whose only son had been killed by the aforesaid Cináed” (*interfectus est a suis hominibus in Fetherkern per perfidias Finuele filie Cunchar comitis de Anguss cuius Finnele unicum filium predictus Kynnet interfecit*).⁵⁵ This story is even more elaborately embroidered in Fordun’s chronicle than that of Cuilén, describing how the king was deceived and outwitted by the vengeful and treasonous Finnella and murdered by springing an elaborate mechanical trap which she had constructed.⁵⁶ If posterity had been unkind to the memories of Cuilén and his successor Cináed, there may have been traditional notions about the fate suffered by their bodies at the hands of their enemies that disinclined the author of our chronicle from including these two infamous kings among the others who were supposed to have been buried in Iona.⁵⁷

There can be no doubt, in the light of the evidence provided by the *Prophecy of Berchán*, that our Latin king-list-chronicle’s understanding that Iona had served as a royal mausoleum for the remains of fifteen kings of Alba from the death of Cináed son of Ailpín until that of Lulach 200 years later is purely fictional. Even more remarkable is the fact that this fiction was not splashed onto a blank canvas by its twelfth-century creator. The evidence furnished by the *Prophecy of Berchán* suggests instead that there was a degree of suppression of older, apparently more

⁵² Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, *Annals of Ulster*, p. 408 (971.1); Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, p. 252.

⁵³ Hudson, *Prophecy*, §168; Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 267, 275, 283, 288, 291; Skene, *Chronicles*, p. 302.

⁵⁴ Skene, *Chron. Fordun*, iv.27.

⁵⁵ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 267, 275, 283–84, 288; 291; Skene, *Chronicles*, p. 302.

⁵⁶ Skene, *Chron. Fordun*, iv.22–23.

⁵⁷ Broun, *Scottish independence*, pp. 262–63, envisaged that such fanciful and free-spirited inventiveness was a feature of Vairement’s “Scottish Monmouth” text. A. Macquarrie, “The kings of Strathclyde, c.400–1018”, in A. Grant and K. J. Stringer (eds.), *Medieval Scotland: crown, lordship and community* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 1–19, at 16, accepted Fordun at face value.

reliable information involved when this inventive new historical position was assumed concerning the burial practices of the kings of this era. It was Kathleen Hughes who drew our attention to the centrality of our chronicle as a source of information about early medieval Scotland by the end of the thirteenth century. If the creation of its twelfth-century source towards the end of the reign of Alexander I involved the suppression of better royal burial information, we can but wonder what else may have been suppressed or manipulated in the act of producing that text. In her essay on the fate of the writings of early Scotland, Hughes came to the conclusion that the amount of material written in mainland Scotland in the first millennium was never large to begin with, and that losses from scriptoria plundered by Vikings may have reduced the size of the corpus prior to the twelfth century, when she suspected a wave of further losses occurred, due to neglect of books written in Gaelic after a proliferation within the Scottish Church of bishops and other important ecclesiastical figures of “Anglo-French” extraction.⁵⁸ What interests me about this hypothesis is the fact that Hughes considered the twelfth century to have been a really critical horizon affecting the survival or loss of earlier writing. Her reasoning on this point is dated in some of its important details, and there is no opportunity here to go into that. The point I would wish to make is that, if active suppression of accurate information about royal burial places took place in Scotland in the early twelfth century, that fact serves as a precautionary reminder that, as regards material of Scottish provenance, we are given to know today almost no early medieval Scottish history apart from what certain writers working in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries wished posterity to know or believe.

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Why then, was Iona made to be the burial place of Cináed son of Ailpín and almost all of his successors in a twelfth-century king-list-chronicle? Some time ago, Ted Cowan advanced the theory that such a depiction of Iona could have been an exercise in propaganda with the aim of asserting Scottish sovereignty in Argyll and the Hebrides.⁵⁹ The starting point of this attractive suggestion was a chapter of *Orkneyinga saga*, a text composed in the thirteenth century “using an astonishingly wide range of sources”,⁶⁰ relating the following story about Magnus “Barefoot”, king of Norway, who was killed in Ireland in 1103:

⁵⁸ Hughes, *Celtic Britain*, pp. 8–16.

⁵⁹ Cowan, “Scottish Chronicle”, p. 7.

⁶⁰ J. Jesch, “*Orkneyinga saga*: a work in progress?”, in J. Quinn and E. Lethbridge (eds.), *Creating the Medieval Saga. Versions, variability and editorial interpretations*

Magnús konungr helt sunnan með Skotlandi; ok þá kómu í móti honum sendimenn Melkólms Skotakonungs ok buðu honum sættir, sögðu svá, at Skotakonungr vill gefa honum eyjar allar, þær er liggja fyrir vestan Skotland ok fara mætti stjórnföstu skipi milli ok meginlands. En er Magnús konungr helt sunnan at Sátíri, lét hann draga skútu yfir Sátíriseið. Konungr helt um hjálmvöl ok eignaðisk svá allt Sátíri ... Magnús konungr helt þaðan í Suðreyjar, en sendi menn sína í Skotlandsfjörðu; lét þá róa með öðru landi út, en öðru inn ok eignar sér svá allar eyjar fyrir vestan Skotland.⁶¹

King Magnus was making his way north along the Scottish coast when messengers from King Malcolm of Scotland came to offer him a settlement: King Malcolm would let him have all the islands off the west coast which were separated by water navigable by a ship with the rudder set. When King Magnus reached Kintyre he had a skiff hauled across the narrow neck of land at Tarbert, with himself sitting at the helm, and this how he won the whole peninsula ... From there, King Magnus sailed to the Hebrides and sent some of his men over to the Minch. They were to row close to the shore, some northwards, others south, and that is how he claimed all the islands west of Scotland.⁶²

Unfortunately for the saga writer and for Cowan's theory, contemporary sources suggest that Magnus was not active in Atlantic Scotland until 1098, some five years after Máel Coluim was killed.⁶³ Moreover the saga's conception of a province comprising Kintyre and the Hebrides, which was notionally Scottish but had been wrested from the grip of the kings of Scots, finds its closest historical correlate sixty years later in the kingdom forged by Somhairle (or Somerled) son of Gilla Brigde, whom

of Old Norse saga literature (2010), pp. 153–73, at 168. A. Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba, 789–1070* (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 242, discusses the date of the text.

⁶¹ Finnbogi Guðmundsson (ed.), *Orkneyinga saga*, Íslenzk Fornrit 34 (Reykjavik, 1965), §41. Liberties taken with the text of the saga by the scribes who produced the different extant manuscript copies tend to obscure early textual features; for discussion, see Jesch, “*Orkneyinga saga*”, *passim*. It is therefore important that the quoted chapter of *Orkneyinga saga* is present in one of the earliest manuscript fragments of the text (Copenhagen, Den Arnemagnæanske Samling, AM 325 III a 4to), which is thought to have been copied in the first half of the fourteenth century.

⁶² The translation is that of H. Pálsson and P. Edwards (trans.), *Orkneyinga Saga. The history of the earls of Orkney* (London, 1981), pp. 86–87.

⁶³ For discussion, see R. Oram, *Domination and lordship. Scotland 1070–1230* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 48–51. For an assemblage of different sources pertaining to these events, some of which are more contemporary than others, see A. O Anderson, *Early sources of Scottish history* (Edinburgh, 1922), vol. II, 101–17.

the “Annals of Tigernach” describe as “king of the Hebrides and Kintyre” (*rí Indsi Gall 7 Cind Tire*) at his death in 1164.⁶⁴ I think it probable that the story of Magnus Barefoot’s acquisition of Kintyre and the Hebrides in the saga was imagined sometime after Somhairle’s career and death. Strenuous efforts on the part of Alexander II to establish his authority in the region in the 1220s triggered a reassertion of Norwegian suzerainty by 1230.⁶⁵ Our Latin king-list-chronicle, reiterating the twelfth-century idea that Iona was the final resting place of most of the early kings of Alba, and *Orkneyinga saga*’s story about Magnus may both have been produced in these years as rival propaganda. I make this suggestion tentatively. The bottom line here is that I doubt very much that the events described in the saga can have given rise to the notion that Cináed son of Ailpín and fourteen of his successors were buried in Iona.

As we have seen, this idea appears to have arisen during the reign of Alexander I and to have been committed to writing around the time of the king’s death. What is striking about its provenance is that it was apparently Alexander and his circle who conceived of the idea of establishing a royal mausoleum at Dunfermline Abbey. After the death of his father Máel Coluim in battle in England in 1093 the body seems not to have been immediately repatriated. When Alexander’s mother Margaret died very shortly afterwards she was buried in the church dedicated to the Holy Trinity which she had founded at Dunfermline. Fourteen years later her son Edgar was buried alongside her after his death, presumably at the instance, or at least with the consent, of Alexander, the dead king’s brother and successor. Having seen his mother and brother laid to rest in this church, the thoughts of Alexander apparently turned to his father’s remains in England. That at least is the testimony of his contemporary, the historian William of Malmesbury, who wrote in his *Gesta regum Anglorum*, which he completed around the time of Alexander’s death, that the king’s father “lay buried for many years at Tynemouth, but lately was carried to Scotland by his son Alexander, to Dunfermline” (*humatus ... multis annis apud Tinemuthe, nuper ab Alexandro filio Scottiam ad Dunfermelin portatus est*).⁶⁶ Alexander’s use of his mother’s tomb as a family mausoleum suggested to Steve Boardman that the king decided to attach “a special significance” to Dunfermline as a means of drawing a clear distinction between Margaret’s progeny and the rest of Máel

⁶⁴ W. Stokes, “The Annals of Tigernach – the continuation”, *Revue Celtique* 18 (1897), 150–197, at p. 195 (1164.6); see also Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, *Annals of Ulster*, 1164.2.

⁶⁵ Oram, *Domination and lordship*, pp. 186–88.

⁶⁶ R. A. B. Mynors et al. (eds.), *William of Malmesbury. Gesta Regum Anglorum: the history of the English kings* (Oxford, 1998), vol. 1, 464–65.

Coluim's descendants,⁶⁷ in order to "lay exclusive claim" on the part of the former "to [his] father's memory, rights and status as King of Scots".⁶⁸ The effect which this sepulchral enterprise appears to have achieved is appreciable from a miraculous story related in the thirteenth-century *Miracula s. Margarite Scotorum regine*:

quidam miles nomine Iohannes de Wemys ... huiuscemodi uisionem cernere promeruit. Videbatur namque sibi se in ostio ecclesie Dunfermelensis consistere, dominamque omni decoratum uenustate de eadem ecclesia prodire. Que in manu dextera militem ducebat, fulgentibus armis indutum ... Sequebantur per ordinem tres milites cum armis ... miles ... sancta regine tali loquitur affamine: "Obsecro, domina, ut que sis michi indices et qui sunt isti armati milites." Responditque regina, "Ego sum Margarita, Scotorum regina. Miles uero iste quem in manu duco meus erat maritus, nomine rex Malcolmus. Tres uero sequentes tres filii mei sunt et reges mecum in hac ecclesia iacentes."⁶⁹

a knight called John of Wemyss ... was found worthy to see the following vision. He seemed to be standing in the doorway of the church of Dunfermline and a lady distinguished in every beauty was coming out of the church. She was leading by her right hand a knight dressed in shining armour ... Three armoured knights followed in turn ... [Wemyss] addressed these words to the holy queen: "I beg you, lady, to tell me who you are and who are these armoured knights." The queen replied, "I am Margaret queen of Scots. This knight I am leading by the hand was my husband, king Malcolm by name. The three following are my three sons, kings who lie with me in this church.

⁶⁷ For example, Ladhmun son of Domnall, "the grandson of a king of Alba" (*h. righ Alban*) killed in 1116 by the men of Móreb (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, *Annals of Ulster*, 1116.6), probably the son of Alexander's older half-brother Domnall son of Máel Coluim, who predeceased their father in 1085. If there is no particular reason to suspect Ladhmun of plotting against Alexander, it seems unlikely that he would have regarded the king's use of Dunfermline to exalt Margaret and her offspring as a friendly policy.

⁶⁸ For discussion see S. Boardman, "Dunfermline as a royal mausoleum", in R. Fawcett (ed.), *Royal Dunfermline* (Edinburgh, 2005), pp. 139–53, at 140–41. My interest in the question of Iona's royal burials was stimulated in conversation with Dr Boardman on the subject of royal mausoleums, and I am grateful for his collegial encouragement, from which I benefited immensely throughout my time at the University of Edinburgh.

⁶⁹ R. Bartlett (ed.), *The miracles of Saint Æbbe of Coldingham and Saint Margaret of Scotland* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 69–145, at §7. On the date of this text, see *ibid.*, pp. xxxiv–xxxvi.

Asked by Wemyss to explain her actions, the vision explains that she is making for Largs “to bring victory” over an invading Norwegian “tyrant”, referring to the events of 1263, “for I have accepted this kingdom from God, and it is entrusted to me and my heirs for ever.”

The notion that the graves of Cináed son of Ailpín and his successors were located in Iona must surely have been inspired by what Alexander did at Dunfermline. It is even possible that our chronicle sheds light on how the king’s rivals within his extended family positioned themselves against him. The text briefly relates, towards the end, the tribulations of Máel Coluim’s successor, Alexander’s uncle Domnall Bán:

Douuenald filius Doncath <prius regnauit> .vi. mensibus et postea expulsus est a regno, et tunc Doncath filius Malcolin .vi. mensibus <regnauit> et interfectus est ...; et <rursum> Douuenald filius Doncath .iii. annis, et postea captus <est> ab Edgar filio Malcolin, et <cecatus> est et mortuus ... et sepultus <est> in Dunekeldyn cuius ossa translata sunt in Iona insula.

Domnall [Bán] first reigned for six months and afterwards was expelled; and Donnchad son of Máel Coluim reigned for six months. He was killed ...; and Domnall [Bán] reigned again for three years. He was captured by Edgar son of Máel Coluim, was blinded, and died ... He was buried in Dunkeld; his bones were removed thence to Iona.⁷⁰

The resulting image thus created by our chronicle’s treatment of Iona, viewed in the round, is eloquent. The bones of Alexander’s uncle, whose regime his brother had opposed, are removed from Dunkeld for reinterment in the ancient burial ground of the Scottish kings, which Domnall Bán’s rivals had forsaken in favour of a new mausoleum at Dunfermline. Something of the ideological roots and character of the fiction that Iona had served as a royal burial ground begin to become perceptible when viewed in this light. It seems to me that the hapless

⁷⁰ Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, pp. 276, 289; Skene, *Chronicles*, p. 303. The translation follows A. O. Anderson, *Early sources*, vol. II, 90, for which Anderson followed one manuscript witness (“F”) with occasional corrections from others. The Latin text I have offered here merely approximates what Anderson, based on these labours, took to be the correct text. The identification of Dunfermline as Domnall Bán’s resting place in one manuscript (Anderson, *Kings and kingship*, p. 284) thus seems to be an error. The “Annals of Tigernach” date the blinding of Domnall Bán to 1099, some two years after the end of his reign as understood by our chronicle; W. Stokes, “The Annals of Tigernach – the continuation”, *Revue Celtique* 18 (1897), 9–59, at p. 20 (1099.1).

Domnall Bán, who is described by some commentators as a usurper, is rather rehabilitated by his treatment here. The implication would seem to be that the twelfth-century king-list-chronicle underlying our chronicle was produced in circles unfriendly to Alexander.

The two successive burial places of Domnall Bán, Dunkeld and Iona, were both strongly associated with St Columba, who lived and died in the monastery he had founded in Iona in the sixth century, and whose cult in Scotland became centred on Dunkeld, the most eminent episcopal seat in the kingdom of Alba after St Andrews.⁷¹ The evidence furnished by our chronicle suggests that the Columban confraternity in Scotland in the early twelfth century participated actively in the rehabilitation of Domnall Bán. Detached parishes of the see of Dunkeld lined the stretch of coastline where Dunfermline is situated,⁷² and Alexander's handling of the latter church may have given rise to tensions which inclined the Columban brotherhood to sympathize with the king's rivals. Other evidence shows that the king took steps to win over the devotees of Columba in his realm by actively courting the affections and support of their patron saint. A poem addressed to Columba, seeking his help and protection on behalf of Alexander, survives appended to one manuscript of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* and indicates that the exemplar of this manuscript (and two others) was a product of Alexander's reign.⁷³ By pure chance, then, we know that a fresh copy of the Life was made available in Scotland during the reign in which a misreading of the Life gave rise to the name-form *Iona* found in our chronicle. These considerations increase the probability that the twelfth-century king-list-chronicle underlying our text was produced in Columban circles which appear to have been sympathetic to Domnall Bán. It was also Alexander, apparently, who began laying the groundwork for Dunkeld's new Augustinian appendage in the island of Inchcolm in the Firth of Forth, which took Columba as its patron and finally got its Augustinian convent during the reign of Alexander's brother and successor David. Kenneth Veitch showed that the establishment of this convent was largely an

⁷¹ Dunkeld probably assumed the position of cult-centre after the saint's relics were deposited there in the ninth century; for discussion, see Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba*, pp. 98–101.

⁷² P. G. B. McNeill and H. L. MacQueen (eds.), *Atlas of Scottish history to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 353. I am grateful to Alex Woolf for drawing this map to my attention.

⁷³ The manuscript in question is "B2" (BL Cottonian MS Tiberius D III); A. O. Anderson and M. O. Anderson, *Adomnán's Life of Columba* (second edition: Oxford, 1991), pp. lvi, lix–lx. B1 appears to be a Durham product of about the same date as B2 (i.e. c.1200); it may be that Durham acquired a copy of *Vita Columbae* from Alexander, who was in attendance at the opening of St Cuthbert's tomb in 1104.

episcopal rather than a royal project.⁷⁴ If the inference is correct that Alexander received cool treatment from Dunkeld during his reign, the evidence from Inchcolm suggests that a thaw had taken place by the end of the reign.

*

My aim in this paper has been to show more than that the idea that Scottish kings of the ninth, tenth and eleventh century were mostly buried in Iona comes from a text which advanced it without sufficient grounds to merit its being taken seriously. I also aimed to show why this troublesome factoid was dreamt up. To that end I have made some tentative suggestions concerning who fabricated it and how it could have served their purposes. I have not subjected these suggestions to the rigorous testing they require, for that enterprise lies beyond my scope at present. The aim which I hope to have achieved above all else – because the matter was one that interested the honourand of this Lecture series – has been to show that we have before us, in the material concerning the burial places of the kings of Alba, a clear example of earlier, probably more reliable, information about early medieval Scotland giving way in Scotland itself to a fiction. We may have to do here with precisely the sort of Anglo-French neglect of Gaelic manuscripts and learning that Kathleen Hughes envisaged as having contributed to the paucity of early Scottish writing. However, I rather suspect that active suppression of information in favour of a new perspective on the past with greater ideological power was at work here, instead of passive negligence rooted in ethnolinguistic indifference. The spirit of renewal that took hold in the kingdom in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has been much studied since we lost Kathleen Hughes. It is my hope that this paper in her honour successfully makes a point that she herself would wish us all to take away with us – that we who share Thomas Innes’s desire to “set the ancient state of the inhabitants of [Scotland] on a more certain, [or] at least a more likely...footing” have much to gain from exploring further how this spirit of renewal dealt with the writings and history of early Scotland.

⁷⁴ K. Veitch, “Replanting paradise: Alexander I and the reform of religious life in Scotland”, *Innes Review* 52.2 (2001), 136–66, at pp. 151–52. See also I. B. Cowan and D. B. Easson, *Medieval religious houses – Scotland* (second edition: London and New York, 1976), p. 91.

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