Gaelic Learned Orders and Literati in Medieval Scotland

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It would be false to suggest that in medieval Scottish sources there is much deliberate repression of information about the Gaelic area of Scotland. On the contrary, where officials or chroniclers have occasion to deal with the affairs of this area they seem to accept its conventions in a matter-of-fact way, often borrowing Gaelic technical terms, and in their translations of names and titles (whether into Latin or into Scots) often retaining Gaelic syntax. This is particularly noticeable in the records of Scottish supplications to Rome, and here presumably the drafters of supplications were bilingual in Latin and Gaelic. In other bilingual situations, such as the English/Gaelic and the Norman French/Gaelic ones, and earlier the Norse/Gaelic one, we must assume the presence of interpreters and translators, as Miss Constance Bullock-Davies (1966) has demonstrated for the English/Norman French/Welsh situation in the twelfth century, but I am not at present able to produce evidence of a specific class of latimers on the Gaelic border in Scotland.

These remarks are well enough illustrated by the compilation *Regiam Majestatem*, an account of medieval Scots law, reflecting the process whereby, in the fourteenth century, indigenous and foreign elements were used to rebuild a system which had been partly shattered during the struggle for independence (see Duncan 1961). Some of the indigenous material used came from a source close to the Leges Scotie, which form a section of the Berne MS, written between 1267 and 1272, and close to the Ayr Miscellany, a MS of the earlier fourteenth century. This native material is entitled 'Leges inter Brettos et Scotos', the Bretti presumably being the British or Welsh-speaking people of Strathclyde, and the Scoti the Gaelic-speaking people north of the Forth and Clyde. It appears, then, that some of the traditional Celtic legal terminology was considered relevant in a fourteenth-century law treatise compiled in Lowland Scotland, although the Scottish definitions, explicit or implicit, do not always square with the Irish evidence. Thus *cro* is used in the sense of a fine paid in compensation for slaughter. The *cro* of the King of Scotland is said to be 1,000 ky or 3,000 ounces of gold, the *cro* of the son of an earl or of a thane was 100 ky, and that of a carl 16 ky. Sir John Skene, in his interpretation of terms in the *Regiam Majestatem* (1597), defines *cro* as 'ane satisfaction or assithment for slauchter of ony man. The quhilk the judge suld paie to the

narrest of his kin . . .'. In the tenth-century Irish tract on *cró* and *díbad* (Meyer 1904: 109–15) on the other hand, the reference seems to be more to the property of the dead man than to the fine or compensation.

Again, *enach/enauch* is used imprecisely in the Scots laws, but in such a way as to leave no doubt as to its proper origin and affiliations. Sir John Skene defines it as 'satisfaction for ane fault, crime, or trespasse', which would define *lóg n-enech*, *eneclann* or one of the related Irish terms.

Two other terms used in the *Regiam Majestatem* are (1) *culreach*, defined by Sir John Skene as 'backborgh or cationer' (John Fraser [1928: 233–4] took this to be the equivalent of an Irish form *cúlráith*, a compound of *ráth*, surety) and (2) *colpindach* (*hodie corrupte Quyach*—Reg. Maj. ii, 7, 3), which represents the Irish *colpthoch/colpdach*, a yearling calf. Sir John Skene defines it as 'ane young cow'.

It might indeed be argued that there was a deliberate archaising tendency at work in the *Regiam Majestatem*, fortified perhaps by novel nationalistic sentiment in fourteenth century Scotland. This cannot be said of other Gaelic terms in common use in Acts of Parliament and in charters then and later, such as *cain/can/cane*, used of a payment in kind, often of a burden on land, though later of the custom duty on merchandise carried aboard ship; *conveth*, used of a night's refection given by the occupiers of land to their superior, and later commuted to a fixed food contribution or payment in kind; and *cuddiche* (*cuid-oidhche*), in Scottish usage similar to *conveth*. Both *conveth* and *cuddiche* are charged in the Western Isles in the late sixteenth century, and as late as 1719–20 tenants in Atholl were paying *cudeichs* of corn and straw. Clearly *conveth* was borrowed into Scots early, for the final lenited *d* of Gaelic *coindmed* became a guttural spirant (*gh*) or occasionally *v*, in the thirteenth century.

The survival of even this attenuated body of Gaelic legal and administrative terminology in medieval Scotland would in itself argue the existence at one time in the country of officers to administer the Gaelic system. One of the earliest references to these is in the third grant in the notitiae in the Book of Deer, a grant made in 1131–2, and witnessed among others by Ruadhri Mormaer of Mar and *Matadin brithem* or Matadin the judge. Much later, in a charter of Aonghas Óg of the Isles, granted in 1485, one of the witnesses is *Hullialmus archiiudex*. One of his fellow testators is *Lacclanus McMurghaich archipoeta*, and we can fairly safely deduce that just as MacMhuirich was the chief poet in the Lordship, so Hullialmus was the leading brehon. More surprising is the evidence of a widespread retention of the native office of judge elsewhere in Scotland. This evidence has been assembled for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in a recent paper by Professor G. W. S. Barrow, 'The Scottish *judex* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries'. 'It has long been recognised', says Barrow, 'that the *judex* represented a survival from pre-twelfth century Scotland, that he formed a part of the older Celtic order of society. It has also long been known that gradually the *judex*, under his more familiar title of "dempster", sank from a prominent to a subordinate, eventually to an insignificant, position. . . . A long series of personal names can be established, running

from the reign of David I to that of Robert I, among which names of an archaic or vernacular type show a notable predominance. The conservatism of which this is evidence suggests nothing less than the tenacious survival of an ancient judicial caste' (1966:16).

To summarise some of Barrow's conclusions, the *judices* were normally attached to a province, not necessarily singly. We find them specifically attached to the provinces of Caithness, Buchan, Mearns, Angus, Gowrie, Fife, Strathearn, Lennox and Strathnith. Also some are attached to the King, bearing the title *judex regis*. They often appear as witnesses to charters, in the twelfth century high up in the witness list, towards the end of the thirteenth century usually in a distinctly subordinate position. In the surviving records, the commonest activity of the judex is the formal perambulation of marches, but this is perhaps because documents recording decisions of this kind are the most likely to have been preserved. The lists of names given by Barrow show decisively that the Celtic population was still keeping a firm hold on such offices: *e.g.* Farhard in Buchan (between 1211 and 1233), Kineth in Mar (1187×1207), Boli Mac Gillerachcah (Gille Fhearchair?) in Mearns (1199×1214), MacBeth in Gowrie (1189×1197), Meldrinneth son of Machedath or MacBead in Fife and Fothrif (*c.* 1128×*c.* 1136), Gillecrist in Lennox (*c.* 1208–34), and so on. Barrow also draws attention to 'a Lennox man named as excommunicate in a document of 1294 (Paisley Reg., 203), Gillecolm son of Dovenald Macbref', and suggests that this 'may give the names of a son and grandson of a Lennox *judex*', or, in Gaelic terminology, a *brithem*. We can probably conclude that the office of *brithem*, translated *judex* in the documents of the time, survived well into the thirteenth century, held by persons of Gaelic race to a large extent, and over much of Scotland. But apart from their function in cases of determining boundaries, we have as yet little clear evidence of what they did, or how large a body of law they administered.

The evidence of later antiquarian writers, purveying mainly the traditional accounts current in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, throws some additional light, of a general kind, on the activities and status of the legal order of *brehons* or *breves*. Hugh MacDonald, the seventeenth-century historian of Sleat in Skye, says: 'Moreover, there was a judge in every isle for the discussion of all controversies, who had land from MacDonald (*i.e.* of the Isles) for their trouble, and likewise the eleventh part of every action decided. But there might still be an appeal to the Council of the Isles' (Macphail 1914:24–25). Sir Robert Gordon, in the mid-seventeenth century, refers to the 'Brieve' as 'A kind of Judge among the Islanders who hath an absolute Judicatory, and unto whose authority and censure they willingly submit themselves (R. Gordon 1813). Sir Robert Gordon appears to be describing the contemporary situation, and confines the system to which he refers to the Islands. The office of Breve seems to have survived longest in Lewis. We catch a tantalising glimpse of Hucheoun Breve of Lewess on his death-bed on 22 August 1566 (Macphail 1916:180–1), when he confessed to Sir Patrick McMaister Mairtin, Persoun of Barvas, that he was the father of Torquil, reputed son of McLeod of Lewis, but there is no reference to more judicial activities. The descendants of this Hucheoun Morrison seem to have exercised the office of Breve for some

generations after this time, and curiously enough one of them, who flourished in the seventeenth century, is still quoted as the author of succinct and pithy verses which define the boundaries of lands on the West Side of Lewis. It looks, in fact, as if in Lewis a Breve was still perambulating the marches some four or five centuries after the practice was common on the Scottish mainland. And it is probable that the connection of verse with legal practice is not fortuitous.

Dean Munro, writing in 1549, describes the composition of the Council of the Isles, and adds: 'Thir 14 persons sat down into the Counsell-Ile, and decernit, decreitit and gave suits furth upon all debaitable matters according to the Laws made be Renald McSomharkle callit in his time King of the Occident Iles . . .' (Munro 1961:57), but if this son of Somerled in the twelfth century emulated the example of the earlier Welsh king Hywel Dda, or other royal law-givers, his code is lost.

We need not doubt that the office of Brehon or Breve was hereditary, like so many other Gaelic offices. This is clear from the example of the Lewis Breves, and Dr John Macpherson of Sleat states in the mid-eighteenth century that 'The office belonged to certain families, and was transmitted like every other inheritance from father to son. Their stated salaries were farms of considerable value' (1768:187). The system was clearly similar to that obtaining in Ireland, where, for example, MacCarthy Mór's brehon, MacEgan, had lands set apart for his support, as well as having various other emoluments (Butler 1925:68).

It may be that legal traditions were reinforced in the Islands, although no doubt modified also, by the admixture of a legally-conscious, if not indeed litigious, people, the Norse. The Norse of course had their own lawmen, and one such gave his name to a once-influential Argyllshire clan, the Lamonts. In 1358 we find one of this clan, retaining a name-form closer to Norse, Duncan son of John McLagmanid, entering into a bond with Colin son of Gillesbuig Cambel, the representative of another family which acquired great skill in manipulating the law (Macphail 1916:143).

Despite this long history of Gaelic legal officers in Scotland, there is a disappointing scarcity of Gaelic legal MSS: little beyond some stray paragraphs in MS II (Nat. Lib. of Scot.) on the rights and responsibilities of the physician, a tract on the Law of Sunday, comment on the privileges of poets (MS VII), one Gaelic charter, a contract of fosterage, and an agreement between a Scottish and an Irish chief in the mid-sixteenth century. No copies seem to have survived in Scotland of the Law treatises and commentaries.

The natural survival of earlier Gaelic terminology and offices in the Gaelic West is illustrated in an interesting way by the history of the office of *rannaire* (quartermaster or steward). Professor Barrow, in his book on *The Acts of Malcolm IV*, draws attention to twelfth-century witnesses of acts who bear the title *renner(e)* or *renner(i)us*, and this evidence suggests that the office was hereditary. These witnesses appear at various dates from *c.* 1128 to *c.* 1178, and the office seems to have been discontinued in the royal household before the end of the twelfth century (Barrow 1960:32–33). It survives later in the household of a Celtic earl, and it is interesting to note a comparatively late

occurrence of the term in fifteenth century Skye: in a supplication to Rome in 1428 it is stated that 'a certain Molcolmus McGillebride rannarc, alleged priest, has detained the rectory of Crist de Strathsowradyl' (Dunlop 1956:203–4).

Medical Families

Outside the specifically literary profession, the native Gaelic learning in Scotland seems to have been brought to bear most markedly on medical topics, and there is evidence of the hereditary medical families becoming almost the ultimate custodians of the old learning and the old libraries. This can be partly accounted for by the differing rates of change in various official functions. The loss of temporal power by a great chief or noble, such as the Lord of the Isles, limited his need for an official archivist or judge, but left him no less dependent than before on a physician. The prosperity of these officials, then, seems to have lasted rather longer than that of their fellow court officers. This prosperity made for more settled living conditions, more substantial houses in which MSS could be decently kept, a greater sense of pride and continuity in a crumbling society. This respite was only temporary, but it lasted long enough to enable at least a few of the Gaelic MSS to be gathered into institutional libraries.

There appear to have been at least three main medical dynasties in Gaelic Scotland, and several lesser ones. The chief one, both numerically and in terms of length of service, was that of the Beatons, MacBeths or Bethunes. In length and width of service this dynasty comes nearest to rivalling the record of the MacMhuirich poets. The traditional account of the origin of this family in Scotland is that its founder came in the retinue of the daughter of Ó Catháin or O'Kane, who married Aonghus Òg of the Isles about the year 1300. The earliest probable reference to a member of the family known to me is in the grant of lands in Melness and Hope in Sutherland in 1379. This grant was made by the Wolf of Badenoch to Ferchar Ligliche, and confirmed by King Robert II in 1379. In 1386 the same King granted to Ferchar (*nostro Ferchardo leche*) the islands of Jura, Calwa and Sanda, together with a large group of small islands lying off the north-west and north coasts of Scotland (Mackay 1906: 371–2). In 1408 a Fercos MacBetha appears as a witness to a Gaelic charter granted in Islay by John of the Isles, and as he is the only one of the witnesses to sign his name it has been deduced that he was also the writer of the document. There is no indication here that he was a medical man, but later pedigrees suggest that he was an ancestor, direct or collateral, of the medical MacBeths or Beatons in Islay. The earliest recorded grant of land to a MacBeth in Islay is in 1506: 'Gilcristo McVaig, surrigico' (ER XII:709). Hugh MacDonald of Sleat reports the tradition that 'Beatton', the principal physician, was one of few guests given precedence in the seating arrangements at Domhnall Ballach's feast in Aros, Mull, in *c.* 1451 (Macphail 1914:45).

Branches of the MacBeth medical family appear in various parts of Gaelic Scotland, mainly in territories once controlled by the Lords of the Isles, but these physicians

seem to owe a more direct allegiance to the chiefs of other clans than the poets did. One of the Mull branch, described as 'Joannes Betonus MacLenorum familiae medicus', died in 1657. This specific connection with the family of MacLean is underlined by John Maclean, writing to Robert Wodrow in 1701 (Analecta Scotica 1834:124). Fraser of Wardlaw, in the second half of the seventeenth century, refers to a son of Lord Lovat being 'cut of a stone by Gilleandris Beatton in 1612', and implies that Beatons had been living, and practising as leeches, in Glenconvinth in the Aird of Inverness-shire, for 'time out of mind' (Mackay 1905:242, 185).

Martin Martin, *c.* 1695, writing of S. Uist, refers to a Fergus Beaton living there, still in possession of a traditional medical library in MS form. He says: 'Fergus Beaton hath the following ancient Irish manuscripts in the Irish character: to wit, Avicenna, Averroes, Joannes de Vigo, Bernardus Gordonus, and several volumes of Hippocrates' (Macleod 1934:155). Martin evidently had a less high opinion of his fellow-islander whom he refers to as 'the illiterate empiric Neil Beaton in Skye' (*ibid.*:238). Martin was a university-trained physician, and perhaps as such would tend to underate the empiric, but there may well be a justifiable value judgment in his differing descriptions of two of the Beatons of his own time. At any rate, there are other indications that the Clanranald branch of the MacDonalds inherited a richer strain of the old culture than did other branches. Skye, however, can lay some claim to the largest of the Gaelic medical MSS in Scotland, the copy of the translation of Bernard Gordon's *Lilium Medicinae* which was sent to the Society of Scottish Antiquaries by the Rev. Donald MacQueen of Kilmuir in 1784. MacQueen's Memorandum says that it belonged to Farchar Beaton of Husibost five generations earlier, *i.e. circa* 1630, and that it was 'of such value in his estimation that when he trusted himself to a boat, in passing an arm of the sea, to attend any patient at Dunvegan, the seat of MacLeod, he sent his servant by land, for the greater security, with the *Lilium Medicanum*' (see Mackinnon 1912:298).

Information about the library of another member of the Beaton family came to light only a few years ago, with the publication of Edward Lhuyd's notes on the books possessed by the Mull clergyman John Beaton at the very end of the seventeenth century. John Maclean, writing in 1701 to Wodrow says: 'Our Physicians were Beatons both in Mull and Ilay, of whose skill and acts they talk great things. They were expert schollars both in Irish and Latine, but had English ne'er a word. They had an heritable right to so much land while they could so much as draw blood, which they yet enjoy. Mr John Beaton being the only scholar of their race, has fallen to all their books and manuscripts' (Analecta Scotica 1834:124). The details which Lhuyd recorded of this library show at least a modest attempt to straddle the two cultures. The library included anthologies of Irish verse, a good selection of Irish sagas and romances, historical and pseudo-historical MSS, genealogical tracts, a tract on grammar and prosody, and of course medical MSS. Beaton lists a number of books which he had lost, and the list is probably not exhaustive. He told Lhuyd that he thought he had some pages of parchment concerning the laws of the Irish (Campbell and Thomson 1963:37–46).

John Beaton, it is relevant to add, was not a medical man, nor a professional Gaelic scholar, but an Episcopalian minister. He was the second son of John Beaton who died in 1657, and who was probably the last of the Mull family of hereditary physicians. Learning that is transmitted by a hereditary arrangement is vulnerable when a new set of values and conditions is created in society, and the Beaton library does not seem to have remained intact for long after the practical reason for its existence was removed. Fortunately some of it survived through the good offices of another Argyllshire family with strong medical and antiquarian interests, but much of it appears to have been lost.

This family which provided the vital link between us and a number of the Gaelic MSS of the Beatons and others was that of the MacLachlans of Kilbride. They possessed Gaelic MS XXXIII in the National Library, to take one instance, a MS which has signed memoranda by various members of the Beaton family. According to eighteenth-century accounts by Lord Bannatyne and the Rev. Dr John Smith, the family of the MacLachlans of Kilbride 'had once possessed a very large collection of Gaelic manuscripts' (Highland Society's Report 1805:App. 282). It is known that several of these MSS were loaned to named individuals in the mid-eighteenth century, some were gifted by Major MacLachlan to the Highland Society of Scotland, others were recovered after his death from a law-agent in Glasgow. Dr John Smith wrote in 1797: 'I have seen some myself, which was part of a large treasure left by a gentleman who died 30 or 40 years ago. Much of it was scattered before I saw it, and more of it I suppose since, after a lapse of twenty years' (*ibid.*: App. 72–73).

It was reported to Lord Bannatyne that an ancestor of Major MacLachlan had been 'a dignified Ecclesiastic, I think one of the Deans of Argyll about the time of the Reformation, and whose family were said to have retained for a considerable time, a peculiar taste for Gaelic antiquities . . .' (*ibid.*:282). The reference is to 'Farquhardus episcopus insularum et commendatarius Ione' who appears as signatory to a charter of 1532 (Innes 1859:156–8). It is said that the MacLachlans of Craiginterve were leeches and hereditary doctors to the Argylls, and that a related branch were hereditary Captains of Innischonnel Castle to the Argylls, replacing MacArthurs in that office from the year 1613 (Macphail 1934:26, 53). In a charter of confirmation dated 1562 there appear among the witnesses 'John Makclauchane and John Makallaster clauchane servitors to Archibald Earl of Argyll', and also 'Colin leiche' (*ibid.*:34). Although the evidence here is shadowy, due to lack of sufficient research, it is suggestive of the characteristic combination of (1) traditional learned office (in this case of physician), (2) secretarial function (servitor), (3) ecclesiastical connections. This is a pattern which recurs regularly whichever branch of the Gaelic learned orders is investigated.

But the MacLachlans of Kilbride act as a link also with another notable medical family, that of the O'Conachers or MacConachers of Lorn. Some of the MSS in the Kilbride Collection were written for or by members of the family of Lorn physicians. In 1530 there is record of John McConchra of Stronecormik (*i.e.* Sròn Chormaig, at

the head of Loch Feochan) who pays 40 merks 'for ye grassum of ye office of chirurgeon' (Mackinnon 1912:63). The dated MSS associated with this family belong mainly to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Thus there is a large medical MS written in Ireland about 1596–7 by Donnchadh ua Concubhair, who was born in 1571, and died at Dunstaffnage in 1647 (*ibid.*:273–7). In MS XXXIV (No. 3 of the Kilbride Collection), a MS containing some Gaelic verses and two romantic Irish tales, there is a greeting, dated 1603, from the scribe 'Eomuin McPhaill' to John O'Conchubhar (*ibid.*:139).[1] MS II was written by John son of Donald McConacher, in the sixteenth century, but is later found in the possession of Malcolm McBeath, probably one of the Skye MacBeths or Bethunes (*ibid.*: 5). MS LX was written, between 1611 and 1614, for Duncan son of John son of Donald son of Duncan McConacher (*ibid.*:63). This is the MS of the Lorn physicians mentioned by the Rev. Donald MacNicol in his rumbustious rejoinder to Dr Johnson. The scribe of this MS is, for the main part, Angus son of Farquhar son of Angus, presumably a MacBeth. It is clear from this and many other instances that there was a notable degree of co-operation and collaboration between the members of different medical families.

It seems likely, from what has been said, that the O'Conachers or MacConachers appeared comparatively late on the Scottish scene. The founder of the Scottish family may have been brought over on the recommendation of a Beaton, sojourning at the schools in Ireland. The fluctuation in the form of the name, between Ó and *Mac*, suggests such a late arrival. This would explain also the restricted area of the family's influence. Some of their MSS strayed further afield. The Rev. James McLagan, the eighteenth-century collector, has a note: 'Thos. Fraser of Gortleg in Stratharig knows of Lord Lovat's papers [and among them] a Treatise of Physick wrote by Conchar of Ardoran in the Gaelic Language' (McLagan MS 122). This could well be explained by a close association with the Beatons, of whom a branch was settled in the Aird of Inverness-shire. But the O'Conacher family does not itself seem to have established off-shoots as the Beaton one did. They are associated with Lorn, and in particular with Airdoran on the northern shore of Loch Feochan, in the parish of Kilbride. In 1650 'Donald O'conochar phisitiane' was brought from Argyll to Irvine to attend to Campbell of Cawdor's son, and in 1652 he was brought from Lorn to Islay to attend the Laird himself (Innes 1859:303, 304). In 1715 Duncan Oconachie of Ardeorans came to Inveraray to consult regarding measures to be taken on behalf of the government, suggesting that by this time the family was 'in the pocket' of the Campbells (Lamont 1944:333). In 1730 Duncan Oconochar of Ardeirans features in the Commissariot Records of Argyll (Grant 1902:44), and in 1760 McConacher is described as 'heritor in Kilmore' (Mackinnon 1912:64). The 'Doctor's house' was still standing in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Another Irish medical family which appears to have established branches in Gaelic Scotland is that of O'Donlevy. A notable medical scribe of this name was Cormac Ó Duinnshléibhe, 'batchelor of physic', who translated Bernard Gordon's *Lilium Medicinae*

into Irish *c.* 1450, and in 1459 wrote parts of the British Museum MSS Harley 546 and Arundel 333 (O'Grady 1926:171, 257). He was also the translator of a tractate by Thomas Aquinas, which is in MS XII in the Gaelic Collection of the National Library of Scotland, a MS which belonged at one time to the Kilbride Collection (Mackinnon 1912: 38). An earlier MacDonlevy, who died in 1395, had been described as chief physician of Ulster. The hereditary surgeons to MacCarthy Mór were of this name, and held three ploughgates in Muskerry in 1600 (Butler 1925:117), when they are referred to as 'Aulyves als O'Leavies'. It may have been a member of the Scottish branch of the O'Donlevy's who wrote part of Gaelic MS LX ('O'Conacher of Lorn's MS'), signing himself 'Donnchadh mac dubhsleibhte' (Mackinnon 1912:64).

Writing at some time before his death in 1749, Duncan McLea, Minister of Dull in Perthshire, gives an account of the name McLea, saying that one of his ancestors was McLea a surgeon, who himself and his forebears for several generations had been Physician in Ordinary to the Family of Lamont at Inveryn, and had the five merk land of Achnaskioch. McLea says that the present (*i.e.* mid-eighteenth century) Lamont's Great Grandfather was the person who turned the then McLea of Achnaskioch off from being his Surgeon and Physician in Ordinary. This would imply a mid-seventeenth century date for the end of this medical line. Duncan McLea also refers to members of the family who had ecclesiastical offices, saying that one was 'a Popish Bishop', that one branch of the family had hereditary charge of the crozier of the Bishop of Lismore, and that the head of this branch was still known as 'Baron Bachuill', and that 'many call themselves Livingstones' (Macphail 1934:93–96).

Some of the present-day Livingstones still call themselves MacDhunléibhe in Gaelic, and Duncan is still a family name with them, but it seems likely that confusion arose as early as the seventeenth century at least between 'Mac Dhuinnsléibhe' and 'Mac an Léigh' (*i.e.* 'son of the physician'), and that this is the explanation of the form 'McLea' used by some of this family. The form 'Mc onlea' is common in the seventeenth century, its affiliations appearing clearly in the form 'Dunsla M^{c} ein v^{c} onlea', the name of a man killed at Dunaverty in Kintyre in 1647 (Macphail 1916:255), and 'Dounslea M^{c} onlea', a tenant in Shuna in 1669 (Macphail 1934:222).

The last medical family I shall mention briefly illustrates a different kind of development. In 1615 'John oig M^{c} murquhie leiche in Ilay' appears in the records (Innes 1859: 233). Here we see a descendant of the MacMhuirich bardic family moving over to a new discipline. A contemporary representative of this line, Professor Currie, holds the Chair of Pathology in the University of Aberdeen, but I have no evidence that either he or his seventeenth-century ancestor learned their medicine from Gaelic MSS.

Ecclesiastics

Law, Medicine and the Church were for centuries, until the present century, regarded as the leading professions in many countries, and Medieval and late Medieval Scotland

was no exception. In Gaelic Scotland it is of great interest to observe the ramifications and inter-connections of these and other professions, and to observe the intimate connection between ecclesiastical preferment and temporal power. The detailed study of the church in Gaelic Scotland in Medieval times has still to be written, and the most important sources, in the Vatican archives, are gradually being made available. I shall not pretend to make a serious contribution to this subject, but only to indicate briefly some of the patterns which the available printed sources allow us to discern.

The descendants of Somerled showed very early an interest in ecclesiastical foundation and patronage. Reginald, son of Somerled, founded a Benedictine monastery in Iona, and this foundation was confirmed by Pope Innocent III in 1203. He also endowed a nunnery, of which his sister Bethoc was the first prioress (Macphail 1914:82 ff.). Several of the later descendants of Somerled founded or endowed additionally various ecclesiastical houses, and by the fifteenth century the Lords of the Isles held extensive rights of lay patronage in the sees of Sodor and Argyle. Several members of the family held benefices and also high ecclesiastical office, such as John Goffridi, claustral prior of Iona in 1405 and later Abbot of Iona (Macphail 1934:156; Lindsay and Cameron 1934: 264–5), and Angus of the Isles who became Bishop of Sodor in 1426 (Dunlop 1956:132, 184). The commend of the church of Kilchoman in Islay was granted to Bishop Angus in 1428 (*ibid.*:197–8), after the death of Odo McAyg, who was probably of the same family as Brian Bhiocaire MacAoidh who was granted a charter by the Lord of the Isles in 1408. The Mac Mhuirich historian says that Bishop Angus, son of Domhnall a h-Ile, died in 1437 (A. Cameron 1894: 210).

Representatives of other leading families are seen to be holding office well before this time also, and by the middle of the fourteenth century there is evidence of ecclesiastical position being usurped for purposes of temporal gain. In 1358–9 there is record of the Abbacy of Iona being void, but being detained unlawfully by Fyningonus son of Brice (Macphail 1934:135–6). In 1397 the so-called 'election' of Fingon, Abbot of Hy, some forty years earlier, was confirmed by the Pope (*ibid.*:149), but in 1405 John Goffredi reported on Fingon's dilapidation of the monastery to provide for the upkeep of his family and that of his noble concubine, and as a result Fingon, whom Hugh MacDonald of Sleat calls the 'Green Abbot' appears to have been deposed (*ibid.*:156). In 1421 another Fyngonius, a relative of the Abbot, is claustral prior of Iona (Lindsay and Cameron 1934:272), and the Abbot and convent in 1426 say that they are suspicious of his intentions (Dunlop 1956:139, 272). Despite these set-backs we find two Mackinnons, Lachlan and John, abbots of Iona in the last quarter of the fifteenth century (Campbell and Thomson 1963:Pls. XVI and XVIII).

More interesting, perhaps, is the pattern which emerges of the preferment of members of other professional families, representatives of hereditary lines best known to us for other than ecclesiastical activities. In general it is clear that the Lords of the Isles, as the fount of lay patronage, are providing openings for members of those families which held hereditary offices in the Court of the MacDonalds, although in the present state of

our knowledge it is not always clear whether ecclesiastical or secular office came first. Thus Rogellus Obrolchan, priest, Secretary to Alexander Lord of the Isles, and rector of Islandfinan, asks to be provided to the church of Morvern in 1426 (Dunlop 1956:133, 138). He is said to be the son of a priest and an unmarried woman, which probably implies merely that his father, like the Celtic clergy of the West of Scotland generally, was not celibate. In this instance, remembering Somerled's unsuccessful invitation to Ua Brolchain, Abbot of Derry, *c.* 1164 (Barrow 1960:8–9; Colgan 1959:514–15), one would suppose Rogellus Obrolchan to have come of an old line of ecclesiastics, and to have added his Secretarial duties as an additional string to his bow. I do not know whether the same should be said of Nigel Makduuhie (Makduwhie/Macdwffye/Machoffye) who is referred to in 1420 as late rector of Kilmonivaig, having 'died on his way to the Roman Court' (Lindsay and Cameron 1934: 143, 147, 157, 171). The MacDuffies were hereditary archivists or keepers of the records to the Lords of the Isles, but whether or not they held this office first, and ecclesiastical office later, or vice versa, remains to be elucidated by a fuller examination of the evidence. The MacDuffies appear spasmodically in ecclesiastical office for some centuries after 1420, *e.g.* one as prior of Oransay before 1554 (OPS II, 1:281), and another in 1597 (Smith 1895:449), while a Malcolm McDuphie is described as a 'trifficquing preist' in S. Uist and Barra in 1703 (Maitland Club Miscellany 1843:424–5).

I suspect, but do not know for certain, that Bean Makgillandris, provided by Benedict XIII in 1397, and successively Dean and Bishop of Argyle (Lindsay and Cameron 1934:157, 179–80; Macphail 1934:162), was a member of the MacBeth or Beaton family, and we have already noted this family's ecclesiastical involvement in the seventeenth century. In 1420 and 1425, MacLachlans are on record in connection with the vicarage of Kilbride, which was still the home-ground of the MacLachlan family in the eighteenth century. In 1425 Gilbert McLoclan or Torleti was provided anew to the chancellorship of the church of Lismore (Lindsay and Cameron 1934:203–4; Dunlop 1956:79, 89–90). By the mid-seventeenth century there are ministers of the name of MacLachlan in six Argyllshire charges, and elders in as many congregations, including John McLachlane of Kilbryde, Ruling Elder in 1651 (MacTavish 1943:1, 2, 9, 15, 29, 124, 183–4, 198). About this time also one of the O Conacher family is preparing for the ministry (*ibid.*:136).

Members of the MacMhuirich family appear as clergymen from *c.* 1490 onwards (Thomson 1966),[2] and an Osenog of Lephenstrath (*i.e.* of the family of harpers to the Lords of the Isles) in the first half of the seventeenth century (Scott 1923:59). The MacEacherns, said to have been armourers to the Lords of the Isles, may have a representative in Sir Andrew Makcacherne rector of Islandfinan until his death in 1515. Significantly, perhaps, he was succeeded by Rore Ranaldsoun, kinsman to Donald Lord of the Isles (OPS II, 1:198).

There were, in addition, other hereditary lines whose fame is more exclusively ecclesiastical, such as the Martins or MacMartins, the MacGilleMhìcheils, the Malcolms

or MacCalmans and the MacArthurs, all of whom are on record from the fifteenth century onwards, and the MacQueens.

The general impression which one gets, however, is that by the fifteenth century at least, and probably earlier, the Church in Gaelic Scotland had been fairly thoroughly drawn into the nexus of temporal power, especially that of the Lords of the Isles, and that there was already a fairly free movement between professions or learned orders: clergy, bards, scribes, medical men. This composite class might be described as a Civil Service and its solidarity might be compared to that of the Public School class in more recent times. This class was a Gaelic-speaking class, naturally, at home in reading and writing Classical Common Gaelic, but its *lingua franca* for wider purposes was Latin. It appears to have had a reasonably easy access to the Roman Curia, and to have often got its own way in these dealings. A successful petition such as that of 1425, for the licence to constitute six natives of Scotland as Notaries Public, 'even if the persons are in priests' or other orders', would no doubt facilitate legal business other than dealings with the Roman Court (Dunlop 1956:98), but it is significant that we owe most of our knowledge of medieval Gaelic verse in Scotland to one such Notary Public at the beginning of the sixteenth century: James MacGregor, Dean of Lismore. The Dean's Book itself provides evidence of Gaelic-Latin bilingualism, or rather of Gaelic-Latin-Scots trilingualism. In it we see an ecclesiastic poised between the Gaelic and the Latin worlds, and the Gaelic world clearly embracing Ireland as well as Scotland, but already drawn to the Scots tradition, so that he uses (and I think this was a conscious rather than an inevitable decision) a spelling of Gaelic which is based on the contemporary spelling of Scots. I think many Argyllshire clerics of his day must have looked askance at the Dean's system, if they knew of it, and regarded him with disfavour as a Scotticised Perthshire innovator.

Scribes, Record-keepers

The extent to which specifically Scottish scribes can be regarded as belonging to the learned orders is not entirely clear. It is clear that there was scribal activity in Scotland, and Scottish-sponsored scribal activity in Ireland. Both types survived into the seventeenth century at least, and some skill in writing the Gaelic hand lingered late into the eighteenth century: it was practised then not only by professionals such as the MacMhuirichs but by amateurs such as Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair, and in the second half of the century James McLagan reports that MacArthur friends of his from Mull wrote the old script. A close analysis of scribal activity, especially in the later Middle Ages, would clearly be rewarding, but it will not be attempted here.

The Lord of the Isles, according to a rental of 1505, was wont to give the 2-merkland of 'Ballemaenach Inferior' to his secretary and scribe (*suo cancellario et scribe*) (ER XII:703) but this no doubt refers to secretarial rather than to purely scribal activities.

The Lords of the Isles are said to have had hereditary record-keepers, the MacDuffies

of Colonsay. Dean Munro in 1549 says of Colonsay: '. . . This Ile is bruikit (*i.e.* owned) be ane gentle Capitane callit Mc duffyhe and perteinit to Clan-donald of Kintyre of auld' (Munro 1961:60). It is Hugh MacDonald of Sleat who refers to the office of the MacDuffies, saying 'MacDuffie, or MacPhie of Colonsay, kept the records of the Isles' (Macphail 1914:25). One might have expected these records to be housed in the vicinity of Finlaggan in Islay, where the Council of the Isles was held, and it is probably no accident that we find numerous references to MacDuffies in Islay in the sixteenth century and later (see, *e.g.* Smith 1895:*passim*). As an example of hereditary duties conferring status on the holders of the name we may note the appearance of Dugall Mak Dushie and Cathelus M°Murich as witnesses to a discharge for feu duties in Benbecula in 1634 (A. MacDonald 1962:385).

Musicians

We may turn now to the more specifically literary professions and to the musicians, who have a literary function also. We may look first at the musicians, especially the hereditary harpers, some of whom were bards also.

It is as a bard that the work of Giolla Críost Brúilingeach, who flourished in the mid-fifteenth century, has survived. Two of his poems are included in the Book of the Dean of Lismore, and his affiliations have not previously been identified. I think it is not too hazardous to identify him as belonging to a family surnamed Mac an Bhreatnaich or Galbraith, who seem to have been harpers in the MacDonald territory of Kintyre. The earliest probable reference to a member of this family, known to me, is in a poem by Donnchadh Mac Cailein (Watson 1937:14 ff.), the Good Knight of Glenorchy who died at Flodden in 1415. The poet makes elaborate fun of a man Lachlann whom he calls 'Mac an Bhreatnaigh bhinn' (sweet-voiced Galbraith), and who is notorious for asking for all sorts of gifts. It is fairly clear that the fifteenth-century poet Giolla Críost Brúilingeach, who addressed a poem to the Irish lord Tomaltach MacDiarmada before 1458 was a harper. He says that he has come from Scotland to make a request of Tomaltach, and this is that he should be given a harp specially in return for the poem which he is addressing to him. The poet is called, in the Dean's MS, 'Bard in Leymm', and the chain of circumstantial evidence is completed by a seventeenth-century record of a number of men from the Isle of Gigha who were required to appear at Campbeltown in 1685. These include six McVretny's or Galbraiths, the first designated 'John Roy McVretiny in Leim', and another called Lauchlan mcVrettny (MacTavish 1935:17). It seems reasonable to assume that Giolla Críost was a MacBhreatnaich from Leim in Gigha, and that he belonged to a family of hereditary harpers. Whether this family was attached to the MacDonald family or to another I am not able to say.

We do know, however, that the family of O'Senog, Mac O'Senog or MacSenach held the position of professional harpers, and had lands from the Lords of the Isles in virtue of their office. These lands were situated in South Kintyre, close to the bardic

lands of the MacMhuirichs, and various members of the family appear in sixteenth-century rentals: 'Muriach McMaschenach citherista' in 1505 (ER XII:364, 582), Gallicallum M^{c}Cosenach in 1506 (ER XII:708), Muriach again from 1508 to 1528 (ER XIII:223, XV:164, 433). The main harper's lands were Lyell and Lephinstrath, and members of the family continued to hold these lands at least until the mid-eighteenth century (F. F. Mackay 1955:31). Malcolm M^{c}Shannon, Merchant at Lephenstrath Bridge, died in 1874.[3] There are still MacShannons with musical interests in Kintyre. I am encouraged by these and similar facts to think that the principle of hereditary succession in the artistic professions had much to commend it.

This survey has been very largely concerned with Argyll, partly perhaps because our sources are fuller for this area, and it is pleasant to be able to refer to a fellow-Lewisman who was the most famous of all poet-harpers, Roderick Morrison or An Clàrsair Dall, harper to MacLeod of Harris and Dunvegan, who held lands in Glenelg in the second half of the seventeenth century, in virtue of his office. Exceptionally, some of his harp-music as well as his poetry has survived. It is said that the last official harper was Murdoch MacDonald, harper to the Laird of Coll, and that he died in 1734, four years before the Irish harper Carolan. Well before this time the piper had usurped the place of the harper to a great extent, and there were several great lines of hereditary pipers, such as the MacCrimmons, the MacArthurs and the Rankins, but I shall not attempt to summarise their history. This is not because, like the seventeenth-century poet Neil MacMhuirich, I find the music of the pipes harsh and barbaric, but because I know too little about it, and suspect that it is a fresh development which does not link up with the work of the other learned orders as the work of the harpers does.

Historians and Genealogists

It is clear that in Ireland, from early Christian times, there was a re-distribution of the functions of the learned orders, and there seem to have been subtle shifts from time to time in the lines of demarcation between poets, historians, chroniclers and other men of learning. By the twelfth century, for instance, it is evident that the *fili* had begun to intrude on the bard's territory, and was taking over some of the bardic subject-matter, especially praise-poetry, and was using the metres which the bards had developed. In deference to the Church he had long since allowed his magical functions to recede into the background. As a result of the monastic reforms of the twelfth century, monastic activities were to a significant extent de-secularised, and as the old monasteries declined the secular MS tradition passed into the care of lay scholars, who begin to appear in separate schools. Yet the feeling seems to have persisted that poetry was the element common to much of this learned activity, the binding agent by which the elements of knowledge were made to cohere. This widespread use of verse is one of the factors which makes it difficult to distinguish clearly between the functions of poet on the one hand and historian or genealogist on the other.

In the *Uraicecht Becc*, a text which circulated in Scotland as well as in Ireland, the historian is described as the 'tanist' of the master of letters, *i.e.* the one second in rank to the master, and his honour price of four *cumals* (alternatively twelve cows) reflects this high grading (Atkinson 1901:113). The Irish poet Giolla Brighde Mhac Con Midhe, about the year 1259, emphasises the close connection between poetry and history and genealogy,

> 'Were poetry to be suppressed', he says, '. . . with no history, no ancient lays, save that each had a father, nothing of any man would be heard hereafter.'[4]

One of the assumptions here, that the recording of history is a necessary activity, would be widely shared by civilised communities; the other, that verse plays an essential part in this activity, is certainly characteristic of Gaelic society.

For all that, the functions of poet and historian *were* distinguished in the minds of Scottish observers. This appears clearly from late accounts, of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it may be that a close examination of the surviving work of the MacMhuirich family will throw further light on this matter. I should not be surprised to find that, at least in the more spacious times of the Lordship of the Isles, this family maintained specialists in history and genealogy alongside court poets. John Maclean, writing to Robert Wodrow *c.* 1701, refers to the *Seneciones* who held office, in the family of the Macleans of Mull, up to about 1660, saying that the office lapsed with the death of Muldonich M^{c}Eoin, evidently of the Ó Muirgheasáin family, about that time. This Muldonich, Maclean adds, had been 34 years at the schools in Ireland (Analecta Scotica 1834: 124). A few years earlier, in 1692, Professor Garden of Aberdeen, in his account of the bardic organisation, distinguishes *philies* from *skealichin* or *sheanachin* saying that the latter two made up the 'second degree' of the organisation, and he defines them as 'narrators of antiquitie and old historie, especialie geneoligies of great persons and families' (C. A. Gordon 1955:22). An account of the 'Genealogie of the Campbells', written before 1678, refers to 'certain persons called Seanachies and Bards (often named by George Buchannan under the Latine form of senathei and Bardi) who were antiquaries, and whose work it was from father to son for many ages, to keep ane account of the genealogies of great families, and their actings, which ordinarly they did put in Irish ryme of a most exquisit frame . . .,' (Macphail 1916:73) and he goes on to refer to members of the MacEwen family, 'who for many ages were Imployed in a lyne of generations to keep records of such genealogies' (*ibid.*:74). In a poem on the death of Donald of Clanranald, composed by his wife, the daughter of MacDonald of Dun-Naomhaig in Islay, presumably in 1618, the poet recalls the entertainment in Donald's house: piping, dicing, the activities of poets, and the use made of 'leabhraichean seanchais/Le falluinge dearga' (*i.e.* books of history, in red bindings), which is an early reference to the colour of the famous and controversial Red Book of Clanranald (A. and A. MacDonald 1911:26).

It must be confessed that there is a disappointing lack of detail in the earlier parts of

the Clanranald Books history of the Clan Donald. Thus we find, for example, the MacMhuirich historian recording the foundation by Ranald son of Somerled of a monastery of Greyfriars at Saddel in Kintyre, but a much fuller and more circumstantial account of the monastery's endowments is contained in the petition made on behalf of the Abbot and convent in 1393, when the confirmation of ancient grants was requested (Macphail 1934:146 ff.). It is open to us to suppose that the Lord of the Isles' *seanchaidh* would have had a fuller record of this kind, but this is only a supposition. It would seem to have been no longer available to the seventeenth-century historians of Clanranald. Although they were still conscious of their connections with the Lordship their world had contracted, and they were operating on the periphery of a Gaelic order which had already lost its fixed and assured centre.

Similarly, we can say that the Lordship of the Isles itself, despite its assurance, was in some respects 'out on a limb', a survival of an order that may once have embraced much of Scotland. And just as we may see in the more confined activities of Clanranald's court a reflection of conditions at the court of the Lord of the Isles, so we may be justified in seeing the social order in the Lordship as a reflection of conditions in the earlier Gaelic kingdom of Scotland. This at any rate would seem to be true of certain customs and ceremonies. We have already noted the decline of the native legal order in thirteenth-century Scotland, and the survival of a native official in the royal household until that time also (the *rannaire*), whereas such native officials are still appearing in the Gaelic west two or three or four centuries later. Similarly a traditional *seanchaidh* makes a brief but dramatic appearance in 1249, at the inauguration of Alexander III, when he is said to have recited the King's pedigree in Gaelic. It may well be that the late accounts we have of the inauguration of the Lords of the Isles reflect the earlier practice at the courts of Kenneth MacAlpine and his successors.

The Poets

The learned order of poets is the one which survived longest in Scotland, and the one about which we have the fullest information. I shall be guilty of some lack of balance in compressing the following account of them.

We know little of the activities of Gaelic poets in Scotland before the thirteenth century. Some earlier Irish poets are given the obituary title of Ollamh of Ireland and Scotland, and whether or not this title is other than a flamboyant gesture it would be natural to assume that the narrow channel between Kintyre and Antrim would not deter poets from enlarging the more confined circuit of either Ireland or Scotland. In later medieval times there is ample evidence of a two-way traffic not only of poets but of members of all the learned orders. There is no reason to doubt that the leading bardic family in Scotland, the MacMhuirichs, took its origin from Muireadhach Albanach who made a stay in Scotland early in the thirteenth century, and more than one member of the Irish bardic family to which he belonged, the *Ó Dálaighs*, addressed poems to

Scottish nobles, or made circuits in Scotland. The closely maintained contacts between the two countries brought new practitioners of poetry, as of medicine, not only to visit but to settle in Scotland. Among the poets we can number the Ó Muirgheasáins, some of whom apparently were reckoned as historians to the Macleans in Mull before the family appears as bards to MacLeod of Dunvegan in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. There is evidently an overlap between their activities in Mull and Skye. Another family of poets, known to us only through the accident of two quatrains in the Book of the Dean and a few entries in the sixteenth-century Exchequer Rolls, is that of MacMharcuis, probably connected with the bardic family of Clann Chraith in Antrim and Thomond and the ecclesiastical family of that name in Donegal (O'Grady 1926:342–3). Bardic members of this family held the lands of Laggan in N. Kintyre from 1506 to 1541, the tenant in the latter year being Gilnow McMarkische (ER XVII: 626), evidently the 'Gille Neif mac Warkis', or Giolla na Naemh Mac Mharcuis briefly quoted by the Dean. Laggan was still held by the family at the end of the sixteenth century, while a Gillatius Marcius probably disguises a later Giolla na Naemh in Islay in 1624 (Giblin 1964:40), and John and Donald M^{c}Marcus still retain reputations for Gaelic scholarship in 1658 and 1700 respectively (MacTavish 1944:177; Sharp 1937:76–77). It may be supposed that Mr Niel Marquis, grocer, Glasgow, subscriber to the second edition of the poems of Duncan Bàn Macintyre, in 1790, was of this family, as well as the famous Gaelic singer of this century, Phemie Marquess.

It seems likely that at least seven generations of the MacEwans were hereditary poets, first to the MacDougalls and later to the Campbells. The late Angus Matheson suggested a link between this family and the Irish bardic family of the O'Hoseys (Matheson 1965:203). A charter of 1558 records the grant of lands in Argyll to this family (Innes 1855:408), while the earliest and latest extant poems which can with probability be ascribed to them belong to the fifteenth and the mid-seventeenth century. The interest of members of this family in genealogical detail is often ill-concealed, and in the main it must be concluded that they were genealogists first and poets afterwards.

The poetry of the MacMhuirichs, if we include Muireadhach, spans the tremendously longer period from the early thirteenth to the mid-eighteenth century, and if we include the Canadian branch, to the early twentieth century.[5] There are fairly clear indications of a long association with Kintyre and the Lords of the Isles, from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth, and of settlement in the lands of the related Clanranald from the sixteenth century onwards. We get an impression of great mobility, in keeping with the traditions of Muireadhach Albanach's flight to Scotland and participation in the 3rd Crusade: thus we have record of a MacMhuirich poet inciting the Clan Donald to battle before Harlaw in 1411, or keeping company with his chief on the night before Aonghas Òg's murder in Inverness in 1490, while members of the family appear as witnesses or servitors or tenants, in Lennox, Skye, Benbecula, and throughout the islands and seaboard of Argyll. We know something of the duties and privileges of

the family, from rentals and tacks as well as from their extant works in prose and poetry: that they held extensive farm-lands in Kintyre, and holdings later in Uist, that they were required to serve both as bards and historians, according to a tack of 1707, and to train up suitable members of their family to succeed to these duties, that the bardic township at one time enjoyed the privilege of sanctuary (MacLeod 1934:176). Martin Martin, who supplies the latter piece of information, says also that 'the poet or bard had a title to the bridegroom's upper garb, that is, the plaid and bonnet; but now he is satisfied with what the bridegroom pleases to give him on such occasions' (*ibid.*:177). Martin Martin's reporting may be a little loose here, as we may recall the famous Irish case at Cork in 1576, when 'one Dermond Odayly in the name and to the use of Odaly Fynyne . . . haith forceably taken of Margaret ny Scally . . . all the rayment that shee did weare, that day being newly mareid, or else the valwe of the same . . . alleadginge the same to be due to the foresaid Odayley of everye womane that is maried throughout all Desmond and McDonoghe countrye because he is their cheef Rymor otherwise called Olowe Dane (O'Rahilly 1922:115–16). There is ample evidence, sometimes wearisome in its frequency, of the interest of the poets in rewards for services rendered, and we can hardly imagine these poets winning the influence and the affluence they evidently had at one time by a devotion to art for art's sake.

Although the Public Records and other documents help us to build up a partial picture of the larger bardic families, we are dependent to a remarkable degree on the Book of the Dean of Lismore for examples of the poetry. This is less true in the case of the MacMhuirichs, but for a line of poets such as that which served the chiefs of the MacGregors we are utterly dependent on the Dean, and many other poets are known only from his cryptic pages. Yet the Dean's anthology is heavily weighted in a geographical sense, concentrating on Perthshire and Argyllshire. His work as a churchman seems to have brought him into close contact with people in Argyllshire who had bardic connections. It can scarcely be doubted that he knew members of the MacMhuirich family, for he includes a good many poems both by members of this family and by their bardic- and blood-relations, the Ó Dálaighs of Ireland. Approximately 15 per cent of the poems in the Dean's Book are by MacMhuirichs or Ó Dálaighs; 10 per cent of his total consists of Ó Dálaigh poems, and perhaps the poems by Gearóid Iarla came to the Dean from the same sources as these. There are large areas, however, of Gaelic Scotland on which he does not touch *e.g.* the whole country north of Inverness, and he scarcely impinges on the islands. In its areas of concentration his book gives us vivid glimpses of the state of Gaelic poetry in his own time and a little earlier, and allows us to make some reasonable general inferences.

Clearly the professional poet was not burdened by the feeling that he had to be original. Neither, we may say, was the professional physician, or lawyer, or historian, or musician. In general, they had an elaborate set of rules on which to base their work. Students of Gaelic classical verse are often amazed by the consistency of the product over several centuries. O'Grady says of the 'Irish-writing leech' that he was a scholastic,

'and successive little revivals of science left him to the last untouched' (O'Grady 1926: 171). The rigidity of the legal system has often been remarked. In the end, we may perhaps say that the learned orders impaled themselves on the stake of this rigidity. The close literary corporation was in earlier times a source of strength, but its esoteric virtues did not flourish in the more open and fluid society which came in the wake of printing and the Renaissance. Much less could it hope to keep any popular hold in the world of universal sub-literacy to which modern states aspire. There was no head-on collision between the University schools of law and medicine on the one hand and the native learned orders on the other, but the latter withered quietly away. We may say, brutally but I think honestly, that it was time they did, for they had too long survived the medieval world to which they belonged, and had become irrelevant. But equally, we can hardly insist too strongly on the relevance of a study of these learned orders in their proper medieval setting.

If I may risk a brief summary of this large and ill-digested topic, I would emphasise the following points. The Scottish evidence suggests that there was a close correspondence with Ireland in the organisation of society, and especially in the organisation of the learned and literary orders, but that Gaelic Scotland leaned heavily on Irish initiative, periodically and consistently importing literary, medical, scribal and musical professionals from the *maior Scotia*, and even when these immigrants became thoroughly naturalised, continuing to send them back to Ireland to the springs of the native learning. Yet the obligations were not all on the one side, for there was a free movement of poets at least, Irish poets making their offerings to Scottish patrons from the early thirteenth century onwards, while we find Scottish scribes plying their craft in Ireland. Such evidence as we have suggests that the legal order broke rank in Scotland earlier than in Ireland, perhaps because of a strong admixture of Norse thought and practice. The other learned orders break rank too, but not at the same time. The physicians and the clergy (who in many respects can be regarded as a native learned order, with affiliations somewhat similar to those of the secular orders) seem to have had a readier command of Latin than the litterateurs, and so found it easier to become absorbed in Medieval society. The Church, sharing with the secular learned orders the patronage of nobles and chiefs, attracted many members, probably younger sons, of the learned families, and lax ideas about celibacy and church property enabled the clergy to establish hereditary lines on the pattern of the secular ones. The conservatism of the learned orders, and of Gaelic society as a whole, made for the very late survival of medieval and perhaps pre-medieval thought and practice in Gaelic Scotland, but left Gaelic society ill-prepared to adapt to new conditions, so that only a slender eighteenth-century link connects the bilingual literacy of the late Middle Ages with the University-based literacy of professional people in modern times.[6]

NOTES

1 The scribe was possibly a member of another medical family; at any rate, a 'Ewane oig Mcphaill mediciner and servitor' to Sir Donald Campbell of Ardnamurchan, is a witness to a document of 1631–2 (Innes 1859: 276).
2 Possibly from 1432, if we regard John Mauritii, who appears in the records of the Apostolic Camera for that year, as a MacMhuirich (see A. I. Cameron 1934: 107).
3 Inscription on tombstone in Keil Churchyard, Southend.
4 Quoted by Eleanor Knott in Carney 1966: 60.
5 For a more extended discussion of this family see Thomson 1966.
6 In conclusion, I should like to add that this study is in its early stages, and that it is capable of considerable expansion and refinement.

ABBREVIATIONS

ER *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland.* Eds. J. Stuart, et alia. Edinburgh 1878–1908.

OPS *Origines Parochiales Scotiae.* Bannatyne Club. 1851–5.

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