

Knapdale Dedications to a Leinster Saint: Sculpture, Hagiography and Oral Tradition

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An oral tradition in Knapdale, lost between the 1830s and *c.* 1875, maintained the correct form of the name of a Leinster saint, to whom were dedicated the church at Keills in Knapdale and the island of Eilean Mór in the Sound of Jura perhaps as early as the seventh century. In the *Statistical Account of Scotland*, the Keills church is called *Kilvick Ocharmaig* by the Rev. Archibald Campbell, minister in the parish of North Knapdale, and *Kilvicoharmaig* by 'some Gentlemen in the Parish' of South Knapdale, who also name the island *Ellanmorekilvicoharmaig* (SA VI: 255; XIX:315). W. F. Skene recorded the forms *Gill Mhic Ó Charmaig* and *Eilean Mór Mhic Ó Charmaig* in use among the elderly in the district in the 1830s, but Captain T. P. White found no one in the parish in the mid-1870s who still knew of the dedication.¹

Sculptural and structural remains provide evidence of Early Christian ecclesiastical establishments at Keills and Eilean Mór and the dedications may date from that period. Foundations of possible early monastic buildings have been identified at both sites,² although they await archaeological investigation. An incised cross slab from Eilean Mór and another, now at Inverneill House, which may also have come from the island, are both of a seventh-century type, as are two carvings on one wall of the Priest's Cave at the south end of Eilean Mór, a hexafoil and a cross of arcs.³

Surviving sculpture at Keills and Eilean Mór provides a remarkable record of sculptural continuity, unmatched west of Druimalban outside Iona. It begins with the seventh-century slabs and cave carvings on Eilean Mór and continues with the late eighth-century Iona School cross at Keills (*ECMS* III, fig. 408), the ninth-century cross-shaft on Eilean Mór (*op. cit.*, figs. 396A-B), and a cross fragment and two cross slabs (unpublished) of the Gall-Ghaidheal period at Keills.⁴ One of the earliest slabs carved in the late medieval West Highland style, dating from the thirteenth century, is at Keills (Steer and Bannerman 1977:14, fig. 2.1.) and a late medieval priest's effigy is inside the church on Eilean Mór (White 1875: pl. 33). The late medieval Loch Sween school of sculpture may have been based at Keills and inscriptions on several late medieval slabs at Keills reveal that it was particularly associated with the families of hereditary craftsmen (Steer and Bannerman 1977:7, 144-8). There appears to have been a sculptural hiatus in the twelfth century, although the Keills church was probably erected in the second half of the century (Dunbar 1981:40), suggesting that the original foundation, if indeed it were monastic, may have

degenerated into a hereditary, largely secular abbacy partaking more of fond memory than the contemplative life when West Highland ecclesiastical organisation took a new turn under Somerled and his sons.

The early medieval Iona School cross at Keills (see Plate I), the only one on the Argyll mainland, was probably carved at the end of the eighth century and is the most important surviving sculptural monument at Keills or Eilean Mór (Mac Lean [forthcoming]). The former base of the Keills cross, which is now set in a modern base in the re-roofed Keills church, was uncharacteristically crude and it has recently been suggested that the cross may have been moved to Keills since 1830, the year of publication of Archibald Currie's *Description of the Antiquities and Scenery of the Parish of North Knapdale*, which fails to mention the cross (Cowie 1980:106-110; Currie 1830). Speaking to Captain White *c.* 1875, however, 'a very old resident in the neighbourhood . . . remembered, when a boy, a stranger coming this way to cross to Jura, and offering the boatman two pounds to pull down the old cross', but 'neither the hatred of graven images nor the bribe were sufficient to induce the Knapdale men to accomplish the stranger's purpose' (White 1875:91). A man described as 'very old' *c.* 1875 would presumably have been a boy before 1830. The implication of the old man's story, that the Keills cross was at Keills before 1830, is confirmed by a cross slab from Keill recorded, but since lost, dating probably from the late ninth or tenth century, which showed an eagle in profile above a long-necked beast to the right of its cross-shaft (ECMS III, fig. 513). The Eagle symbol of St John the Evangelist is shown frontally in the top arm of the Keills cross, and a pair of long-necked affronted 'cats' are carved above its Celtic spirals panel. Long-necked 'cats' are not found on any other surviving early medieval sculptures in the West Highlands and Islands, although they became a common motif in the late medieval Loch Awe school of sculpture (Steer and Bannerman 1977:53). The eagle and the long-necked animal on the lost Keills slab are quotations from the early medieval Keills cross, which would suggest that the cross was at Keills when the lost slab was carved. The church or monastery at Keills would seem to have commanded enough wealth and influence to be able to commission a cross carved by a master of the Iona School at the end of the eighth century.

The dedication of Keills and Eilean Mór to a saint *Mac Ó Charmaig* now provides the only evidence for the early ecclesiastical foundations at both sites. The earliest surviving documentary evidence for the Keills dedication is a grant made by Walter Stewart, Earl of Menteith (1258 × 1294) to the Tironensian monastery at Kilwinning in Ayrshire of the church of *Kylmachornat* in Knapdale with its attendant chapels and lands (Fraser 1880:II. 220-1; Cowan 1967:102). The Menteith charter presumably dates after 1262, when Walter wrested control of Knapdale from the MacSweens (Barrow 1981:116). *Kylmachornat* appears to be a somewhat garbled rendering of *Kylmachormac*.

An even more garbled and problematic version of the name of the Keills church

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Plate I Keills Cross, Knapdale. [Photograph by Cameron Mac Lean, 1983.]

occurs in the 1507 royal confirmation of a lost early thirteenth-century charter which Professors Duncan and Brown would date 'probably before 1222' (Duncan and Brown 1957:200, 219). The lost original was granted by Roderick or Ruairi, lord of Kintyre and son of Reginald, son of Somerled, and witnessed by *Mauricio persona de Chillmacdachormes*.⁶ Professor William Gillies has suggested to the writer several possible ways of accounting for the form of the name of the Keills church in the 1507 document.⁶ The *-mes* ending may be a simple mis-transcription of *-mec*. Another possibility is implied by a suspension stroke above the last three letters of *Chillmacdachormes*. If relevant, it could indicate a contraction of *mac* in the name Cormac, suggesting that the scribe of the lost original was familiar with Gaelic orthography and rendered the name *-chorm̄cc̄*, which became *-chorm̄es̄* in 1507. The *da* between *mac* and *chormes* might stand for the rare but not unknown *do* ('thy') in place of the more familiar *mo* ('my') prefixed to a saint's name. Alternatively, *da* may represent a misreading of *ua* ('grandson, descendant'). Given that the Old Irish form of the saint's name was Abbán moccu Corbmaic (see below), the archaic tribal name *moccu* had fallen out of use by the eleventh century (MacNéill 1907:42) and had been replaced by *mac (h)uī* or *mac (h)ua*, apparently taken to mean 'son of the descendant(s) of'. Although the development of the syntax and semantics is not wholly clear, and the use of an original *moccu* name to denote an un-named individual may raise further questions, **Cill mac ua Chormaic* would appear to be a linguistically plausible form for the original of the 1507 document. With the further development of *ua* to *ó*, a similar explanation could be invoked for the later Scottish forms, including the vernacular ones from Knapdale. We shall see, at any rate, that both *mac huī* and *mac ua* are found in Irish written sources from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. Additional transcriptional mistakes appear elsewhere in the 1507 document, which also notes the royal confirmation of a lost charter of 1240, granted by *Eugenius miles filius Duncani de Erregeithill* and witnessed by *Therthelnac Makdouenald* and *Dunedall Makgilascop*.⁷ *Therthelnac* seems to represent *Tertheluach* for *Toirdhealbhach* and *Dunedall* is more likely to have been *Dunegall* for *Dúngal* in the original.⁸

Subsequent written versions of the names of Keills and Eilean Mór usually give the saint's name as *Mac Charmaig*, although forms related to the *Mac O Charmaig* of the Knapdale oral tradition are also on record in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Fordun called Eilean Mór *Helant Macarmyck* in the fourteenth century and described it as a *refugium* (Fordun 1871:I. 43). Keills is called *Kilmakcorme* in 1551 (RSS IV, no. 1184) and Eilean Mór is *insula de Sanct-Makchormik* in 1597 (RMS VI, no. 635). In the *Acts of Parliament*, Keills appears as *Kilmachormuk* in 1621 and *Kilmakcharnik (sic)* in 1662 (APS IV:652; VII:390). The churches at Keills and Eilean Mór are both called *Kilmacharmick* on the map of Jura in Blaeu's 1654 atlas (Blaeu 1970: map 102). Martin Martin did not discuss Eilean Mór, although it is labelled *Makarmig I.* on the map in his *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, first

published in 1703, but he did record that when he gave 'an Alms' to a poor woman in Islay, she made 'three ordinary Turns' sunwise around him and gave him the blessing of '*Mac-Charmig*, the Patron Saint of the Island', suggesting a lingering cult of the saint in Islay, if Martin had the right island in mind (Martin 1981:118). The Knapdale tradition of a saint *Mac O Charmaig* is supported by the forms *Kilmococharmik* found in 1581 (*RSS* 8, no. 121) and *Kilmichocharmik*, on record in 1628 (*RPC*:601).

Local tradition also linked the Keills parish with a local kindred. A couplet published in the *Statistical Account* connects four west coast parishes, ranging from Kilmartin in Mid-Argyll to Kilcolmanell in Kintyre, with four different kindreds:

Colmonell, Clan A gorry, Barry, Clan Murachie,
MacCharmaig, Clan Neill, Martin, Clan Donachie (*SA* XIX:318.)

Watson derived the Kilcolmanell dedication from Colmán Elo, an abbot of Lann Elo, now Lynally in County Offaly, a contemporary of Columba's who figures in Adomnán's *Life of Columba*.⁹ The Berach of Kilberry in Knapdale is probably the sixth-century Berach of Kilbarry in County Roscommon.¹⁰ Kilmartin is presumably dedicated to St Martin of Tours (Watson 1926:291). The couplet associates the *MacCharmaig* of Keills and Eilean Mór with the MacNeills of Taynish, who appear to be descended from the eleventh-century Aodh Álainn of Ailech, although they probably did not come into local prominence much before the fourteenth century at the earliest (Sellar 1971:32-3). The 'Gentlemen in the Parish' who prepared the South Knapdale entry for the *Statistical Account* surely had the right of it when they remarked that the saints mentioned in the couplet 'flourished at a period much anterior to our earliest accounts of these clans: and that instead of being of the same race, they had been adopted as their tutelaries' (*SA* XIX:318). The dedications of Keills and Eilean Mór to saint *Mac Ó Charmaig* are older than the association of the MacNeills of Taynish with the parish.

Bishop Forbes was the first to consider that Keills and Eilean Mór were probably dedicated to Abbán moccu Corbmaic, the so-called apostle of Leinster (Kenney 1979:318), and thought that the principal church of the parish was at Keills, with a chapel or hermitage on Eilean Mór (Forbes 1872:299-300). Indeed, the Keills church served as the parish church for Knapdale into the seventeenth century, although it had apparently fallen into ruin by 1734, when the parish was divided into North and South Knapdale (*RPC*:601; *NSA*:631). The inscription on a sculptured cross from Eilean Mór shows that it was erected *c.* 1400 by Mariota de Ros, wife of Donald, Lord of the Isles, and *Iohannes prespiter ac heremita iste insule* (Steer and Bannerman 1977:148), demonstrating that Eilean Mór was certainly a hermitage under the Lordship of the Isles, whatever its ecclesiastical function may have been in an earlier period. W. J. Watson called the Keills church *Cill Mo-Charmaig*, a form possibly attested by the Menteith charter, the 1621 Act of Parliament and Blaeu's map, but he

accepted Forbes's contention that the original form of the Keills and Eilean Mór dedications gave the saint's surname (Watson 1926:282-3). Church dedications which give the saint's patronymic or surname form, rather than the more customary Christian name, are not unknown in Scotland. There is a Kirkmabreck in the Rhinns of Galloway and another in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. Both may refer to a *Mo-Bhric* (MacQueen 1973:21-2) but they are variously labelled Kirkmakbrick, Kirkmackbrek and Kirkmakbrek in Blaeu's maps of Galloway (Blaeu 1970:maps 73, 75, 77), 'doubtless the better form' according to Watson, who attributed the dedications to the sixth-century Áed mac Bric and listed examples of the dropping of final *c* in internal *mac* elements in place names, noting that 'strictly the name should be Kirkmikbrik (*maic, mic, gen. of mac*), but "mak" would easily arise in the unstressed position'.¹¹ Watson also suggested that the Knapdale dedications might have been either to Abbán moccu Corbmaic or Baetán moccu Corbmaic, an abbot of Clonmacnoise who died in 664 (Watson 1926:283).

There are two Argyll dedications to a saint named Baetán. There was a *Cill Bhaodáin* in Ardgour, and the parish church at Ardchattan was known as *Kilbedan* until it fell into ruin in the seventeenth century when the site became known as *Baile Bhaodáin* (*op. cit.* 300-1). 1 March is given as the date of Baetán of Clonmacnoise in the late eighth-century *Martyrology of Tallaght*, which also gives the dates 14 January, 24 January and 23 March for three other saints named Baetán (*MT* 8, 11, 20, 26). All four of these Baetáns appear in the twelfth-century *Martyrology of Gorman*, which lists two additional Baetáns on 5 February and 29 November (*MG* 16, 22, 30, 46, 60, 228). The *Martyrology of Donegal* lists all six Baetáns found in other martyrologies (*MD* 14, 26, 38, 60, 84, 322). The *Martyrology of Oengus* of c. 800 lists none. The *Martyrology of Tallaght* includes yet another Baetán in its list of the 52 monks martyred with Donnán of Eigg on 17 April 617 (*MT* 33). Baetán of Eigg may, perhaps, account for the Ardgour and Ardchattan dedications. Little is known of the other Baetáns, with the exception of Baetán moccu Corbmaic of Clonmacnoise, who was one of a group of Irish abbots who received a papal letter written in 640, urging them to conform to Roman usage,¹² but he does not appear to have had other churches dedicated to him in Ireland or Scotland. The Knapdale dedications are more likely to have been to Abbán, who had an extensive *paruchia* in Leinster that extended into Munster and Connaught as well.¹³

Abbán is commemorated on two dates in the Martyrologies of Tallaght, Oengus and Gorman, 16 March and 27 October,¹⁴ and on 16 March alone in Mícheál Ó Cléirigh's seventeenth-century *Martyrology of Donegal* (*MD* 76-77). He founded two principal monasteries in Leinster according to Oengus, Gorman and Ó Cléirigh, *Cell-Abbáin* or Killabban in County Laois in north Leinster and *Mag-Arnaide* or Moyarney, near Adamstown in County Wexford in south Leinster.¹⁵ The two dates and the two monasteries led Bishop Forbes and the Bollandists to conclude that there had been two Abbáns,¹⁶ but Plummer argued that 'it is an historical and a

mythological Abban that have been combined, rather than two distinct historical personages', and the *Lives* show that 27 October was the death date of the single saint: he died *post longissimam etatem* and ascended into heaven *sexto kalendas nouembris inter choros angelorum* (Plummer 1910:1. xxiiin., xxv, 33).

Confusion over the proper form of the saint's surname arose at an early date. Surviving *Lives* of Abbán, two in Latin and an incomplete version in Irish, make him the son of a Leinster king named Cormac¹⁷ in which case he would have borne the patronymic *mac Cormaic*, not the early surname form *moccu Corbmaic*. Eóin MacNeill discovered that the last evidence for *moccu* surnames is an early eighth-century poem and concluded that 'quasi-surnames in *moccu* become obsolete in the eighth century' (MacNeill 1911:14). Kenney noted that the authors of the *Lives* were unable to distinguish between *mac* and *moccu*, indicating a 'date of composition not earlier than the second half of the eighth century', by which time *moccu* had become obsolete, but the common exemplar for the surviving *Lives* might have been a later 'edition prepared in the twelfth or thirteenth century', possibly by an abbot of Moyarney (Kenney 1979:318n., 319). Plummer found confusion in the *Lives* over Abbán's 'family name Mac Ui Cormaic, under which name he appears in the churches dedicated to him in Scotland' (Plummer 1910:1. xxiii-xxivn). Abbán's 'quasi-surname' is abbreviated *m.h. Chormaic* in the text of the *Martyrology of Tallaght* contained in the twelfth century Book of Leinster (MT 24, 84), which also gives the form *Abban mac hUi Chormaic* in the text of a Litany of Irish Pilgrim Saints originally compiled c. 800 (Plummer 1925:60-61). Additional notes on the *Martyrology of Oengus* in the early fifteenth-century Rawlinson B.505 render the saint's name *Abbán mac hui Chormaic*. His name appears as *Aban mac ua Cormaic* in the late fifteenth-century Rawlinson B.512 text of the same martyrology (MO 98, 228). Glosses on Abbán's two dates in Mícheál Ó Cléirigh's seventeenth-century copy of the twelfth-century *Martyrology of Gorman*, the only surviving manuscript, give both forms: *mac úa Corbmaic* and *mac uí Corbmaic* (MG 66, 204). Ó Cléirigh named him *Abbán mac Ua Corbmaic* in his own *Martyrology of Donegal* (MD 67). The Knapdale tradition preserved the name as *Mac Ó Charmaig*. According to the *Statistical Account*, *Carmaig* was the 'ancient proprietor' of Eilean Mór, where he lived with his grand-daughter, who miraculously conceived the saint while living on the island (SA XIX: 315). The Knapdale story has no counterpart in the surviving *Lives* of Abbán, but at least it provides the requisite number of generations from Corbmac implied by *mac ua* or *mac hUí*, the forms *moccu* was understood to mean by the Early Modern period.

Moccu Corbmaic was the surname form used by members of the Dál Chormaic, one of the four *prímshluinte* ('chief stocks') of the Leinstermen, all of whom claimed descent from Cú Chorb son of Find File (O'Rahilly 1946:19-20; Byrne 1973:288). The Dál Chormaic and the Uí Bairrche, who also claimed descent from Cú Chorb but were not one of the four *prímshluinte*, were the dominant kindreds in south Leinster

in the fifth century, but probably began to be displaced by the Uí Dúnlainge and the Uí Cheinnselaig, invaders from Ossory, by the end of the century (Smyth 1982:15, 20, 66).

It is not at all clear when Abbán lived. His death is not recorded in any of the Irish annals but annal entries for Leinster do not become fully developed until the eighth century (Byrne 1973:134). Notes in the Rawlinson B.512 version of the *Martyrology of Oengus*, which may ultimately derive from an early *tráchtad* ('commentary') kept at Armagh (MO xlvi; Kenney 1979:481), give contradictory genealogies for Abbán and Damán, who is presented as Abbán's brother, and neither of them agrees with the genealogy of the Dál Chormaic in Rawlinson B.502 (MO 74, 228; O'Brien 1962:28, 34-5). The genealogies of Abbán, Damán and Dubán, another brother mentioned in Rawlinson B.512, do agree in Ó Cléirigh's seventeenth-century genealogical collections, but Ó Cléirigh inserts an extra generation between Corbmac and Cú Chorb and two extra generations between Cú Chorb and Find File, not found in other genealogies (Walsh 1918:85, 88).

The *Lives* of Abbán make him the son of a Leinster king named Cormac, presumably the Cormac son of Ailill who died in 535, and a contemporary of the fifth-century saints Patrick and Ibar, the sixth-century saints Finnian of Clonard, Brendan of Clonfert and Columba, as well as Pope Gregory the Great and the seventh-century saints Munnu and Moling, who died in 697.¹⁸ The fourteenth-century *Codex Salmanticensis* Latin *Life* credits him with a life of 317 years, as does Rawlinson B.512 (Heist 1965:262; MO 228-9). Colgan's version of the Latin *Life*, taken from the fifteenth-century *Codex Kilkenniensis*, gives him a life of 310 years.¹⁹ Colgan thought it unlikely that Abbán lived much later than the mid-seventh century, otherwise the *Lives* would have made him the contemporary of still later saints, and credulously suggested that he may have lived only 210 years (Colgan 1948:627). Abbán is said to have baptized Finnian of Clonard, in the *Lives* of both Finnian and Abbán (Heist 1965:96; Plummer 1910:1. 23), but Kathleen Hughes thought that 'the original Life of Finnian probably merely intended to establish more firmly Finnian's connection with Leinster through his baptism by Abbán, who, according to one tradition was of a Leinster family, and was accepted as the apostle of Leinster' (Hughes 1954:360). In his *Lives*, Abbán is said to have been the nephew of bishop Ibar, the most virulently anti-Patrician member of a group of southern Irish saints that included Ailbe of Emly, Ciarán of Saigir and Declán of Ardmore, whose own *Lives* make them Patrick's older contemporaries.²⁰ Plummer accepted Ciarán of Saigir and Declán as fifth-century saints but noted that various annals record Ailbe's death in 527, 534 and 542 (Plummer 1910: 1. xxx, liv, lxi). The tradition of Leinster's conversion by Abbán may have been due to the influence of later abbots of Killabban and Moyarney, as well as persistent Leinster separatism. Tírechán and *Bethu Phátraic* credit Patrick's contemporary Iserninus with a foundation at Old Kilcullen in County Kildare.²¹ Fer-domnach, the scribe who compiled the *Additions of Tírechán* in the

early ninth century, had access to early Leinster documents and recorded that Iserninus evangelised the Cuthraige, a branch of the Dál Chormaic, in the fifth century (Stokes 1887:II. 342-3; Kenney 1979:335). Abbán was neither the first apostle of Leinster nor even of his own kindred. Plummer's conclusion that Abbán probably 'belongs to the sixth and seventh centuries, and that his life has been prolonged backwards by local patriotism, the process being helped by silently dropping three or four links in his pedigree' (Plummer 1910:I. xxv), is supported to some extent by an event in the *Lives* accepted as historical by Dr Alfred Smyth: Abbán's monastery at Camaross in Wexford, which was apparently a daughter cell of Moyarney, was attacked during his lifetime by Cormac mac Diarmata, king of Uí Bairrche, who was active in the second half of the sixth century.²² Colgan assigned Abbán a death date of *c.* 640, an approximation based on the likely deduction that Abbán died towards the end of the first half of the seventh century, an elderly man even if not quite so advanced in age as to have reached 317 or even 210 years (Colgan 1948:627).

The seventh century also provides the most likely historical context for a Leinster foundation in Argyll. Dr Bannerman has shown that there is no factual basis to the Irish stories which would make Aedán mac Gabrain, who died *c.* 608, a son of Eochaid mac Muredaig, king of Leinster, but 'the early relationship between Iona and the Leinster monastery of Tech-Munnu' may explain the origin of the later Irish stories (Bannerman 1974:80, 89-90). Both Adomnán and the Latin *Life* of St Fintan, or Munnu of Tech-Munnu, report that Fintan, intent upon becoming an Iona monk, arrived in Iona shortly after Columba's death, only to be persuaded by Columba's successor Báithíne to return to Ireland and to found a monastery of his own in Leinster, where Columba had foretold that Fintan was destined to become an abbot in his own right (*Adomnán* 206-12; Plummer 1910:II. 228-9). Adomnán's informant was the elderly Oissíne son of Ernán, who had heard the story from Fintan 'whose monk he was' (*Adomnán* 101-2; 212-5). In *Fintan's Life*, Columba predicted that the infant Fintan would be *inter maiores sanctos Hibernie* and later instructed the young Fintan in a school at *Cell-mór Dithrib*, or Kilmore, in the neighbourhood of Lough Key and the river Boyle in north Roscommon, a district frequented by Columba on three occasions recorded by Adomnán.²³ Columba may not in fact have served as a monastic schoolteacher at *Cell-mór Dithrib*, but he had some knowledge of the activities of the young Fintan: when he foretold Fintan's future, Columba informed Báithíne that Fintan was spending his youth properly in the study of sacred literature (*Adomnán* 210-12). In later years Fintan proved loyal to the Iona tradition in opposing the Roman dating of Easter at the Synod of Mag-Ailbe of *c.* 630 and died *c.* 635.²⁴ Fintan, or Munnu, is commemorated in Argyll at Kilmun in Cowal, Kilmun on Loch Avich, Kilmun near Inveraray, and at Eilean Munde in Loch Leven (Watson 1926:307). Adomnán's source for the story of Fintan's visit to Iona, Oissíne son of Ernán, may be the Ossene, bishop of the monastery of Fintan, whose death is recorded in 687 (*Adomnán*: 101-2). Fintan's monastery of Tech-Munnu, now

Taghmon in Wexford, is no more than five miles from Abbán's foundation at Camaross, itself in the neighbourhood of *Mag-Arnaide* (Plummer 1910:I. 21, 23), Abbán's principal monastery in south Leinster. Adomnán would have heard the story from Oissíne in the second half of the seventh century.

Secular and ecclesiastical relations between Leinster and Dál Riata were apparently favourable in the second half of the seventh century. Bran Mut mac Conaill, the Uí Dúnlainge king of Leinster who died c. 693, was married to Álmaith, a lady of the Dál Riata whose genealogy is given in the Book of Leinster.²⁵ Bran's successor to the Leinster kingship, Cellach Cualann of the Uí Máil, was one of the guarantors of the Law of Adomnán promulgated at the Synod of Birr in 697 (Ní Dhonnchadha 1982:202; Kenney 1979:245-6). Other Leinster guarantors included Moling of Tech-Moling, now St Mullins in County Carlow, and bishop Áed of Slebte (Ní Dhonnchadha 1982:189-90, 192) or Sletty in County Laois, which is about five miles from Abbán's principal north Leinster monastery at *Cell-Abbáin*. The list of the guarantors of the Law of Adomnán survives in two manuscripts, the fifteenth century Rawlinson B.512 and the seventeenth-century Ó Cléirigh Brussels manuscript (Kenney 1979:245). Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha has now established that the lists are contemporary with the original promulgation, despite the late dates of the manuscript sources (Ní Dhonnchadha 1982:181-5, 214-15). The list demonstrates that the abbot of Iona could enlist the support of political and religious leaders in Leinster in the late seventh century.

One of the more problematic names of the guarantors of the Law of Adomnán is given in Rawlinson B.512 as *Mobecoc Aird*, and in the Brussels manuscript as *Mobeoc Ard* (*op. cit.*:189; Meyer 1905:16). Kuno Meyer identified him as the *Mophiōcc* 'of *Ard Camrois* on the shore of Loch Garman' in Wexford Harbour and of *Ros Caoin* in Galway, who is commemorated on 16 December in the Martyrologies of Gorman, Donegal and Oengus, which give his name as *Beōóc*.²⁶ *Ard Camrois* is apparently Camaross Hill, which is about a mile from Abbán's foundation at Camaross and about ten miles from Loch Garman. Hogan suggested that *Ros Caoin* had got mixed up with Roscam in Galway and noted that both sites pertain to another saint, Béo-Áed of Ardcarne in County Roscommon, a bishop who is commemorated on 8 March and died in 523.²⁷ The confusion is understandable. Camaross was thought to be Roscam when *Mobecōc* became *Mobeōóc* and was mistaken for Béo-Áed. Of the two sites associated with the *Mophiōcc* of 16 December, *Ros Caoin* should be rejected. *Ard Camrois* is Abbán's foundation at Camaross. *Mophiōcc* would have been one of its abbots but *Mophiōcc* and *Mobeōóc* are hypocorisms for Béo. The name of the guarantor of the Law of Adomnán in Rawlinson B.512 is *Mobecoc Aird* and *Mobecōc* is a hypocorism for Beccán (Plummer 1910:II. 347). According to his *Lives*, Abbán moccu Corbmaic built a monastery at *Cluain Aird Mobecoc* in the territory of the Múscraige in northeast Munster, where the hermit Beccán, from whom the place took its name, kept vigils (*op. cit.*: I. 17-18; Plummer

1922:I. 8). *Cluain Aird Mobecoc* is now Kilpeacan or Toureen Peakaun in County Tipperary (Plummer 1910:II. 320; Moloney 1964:99). Beccán or *Mobecóc* is commemorated on 26 May in the Martyrologies of Tallaght, Oengus, Gorman and Donegal (*MT* 46; *MO* 126; *MG* 104; *MD* 138). He may have been one of the recipients of the letter of c. 632 on the Easter controversy Cummián sent to abbot Ségène of Iona and to Beccán *solitario*.²⁸ He died in 689, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, where he is called *Dobecóc Cluana Airdd*.²⁹ In the *Annals of Tigernach* he is *Da Beoóc Cluana hIraird* (*AT* 211). In the *Annals of Inisfallen* he is *Mo-Beoch Cluana hAird* (*AI* 100). His death is recorded twice by the Four Masters, as *Beccan Cluana hIoraird* in 687 and as *Dabecog Cluana hAird* in 689 (*FM* I. 294). The *Annals of Tigernach* and the Four Masters confuse *Cluana Iráird* or Clonard with *Cluain Aird Mobecoc*. The *Lives* of Abbán make it clear that *Cluain Aird Mobecoc* took its name from Beccán but he died too soon to have been a guarantor of the Law of Adomnán. The *Mobecoc Aird* of the Law of Adomnan may be a corrupt form of the style of his successor. In either case, *Mophiócc* of *Ard Camrois* and the abbot of *Cluain Aird Mobecoc* were both members of Abbán's *paruchia*, which was apparently in contact with the abbot of Iona at the end of the seventh century. The confusion in the annals and martyrologies over the similarities between the names of different places and the names of saints, their hypocorisms and corruptions, was probably compounded by the venerable if minor role the *paruchia* of Abbán seems to have played.

There is no evidence that Abbán's travels took him to Scotland, but Plummer noted a number of mythological elements underlying the 'ecclesiastical whitewash' in the *Lives*, particularly those associated with 'power over the waters', an attribute most likely to be assigned to a saint remembered for his voyages, although Plummer thought it might merely reflect 'some vague idea that his name was connected with *abann*, the Irish word for river' (Plummer 1910:I. xxiv-xxv, cxlvii-cxlviii). Abbán belongs to a small group of Irish saints known for their sea voyages but 'for whom no formal voyage literature exists' and Kathleen Hughes remarked that 'it was probably the special protection he could afford to sea-farers which gave him his prominent place at the beginning of the Litany of Irish Pilgrim Saints' compiled c. 800 (Hughes 1959:316, 320). A Knapdale story attributes 'power over the waters' to the saint of Eilean Mór. According to the *Statistical Account*, 'the master of a vessel, conceiving a liking' for the late medieval inscribed cross on the low hill at the south end of the island, 'carried it along with him, but, being overtaken by a storm at the Mull of Cantire, was obliged to throw it overboard', whereupon it floated back to Eilean Mór (*SA* XIX: 316). Despite allusions to Abbán's voyages in other sources, however, he is not one of the Irish saints whose journeys to see Columba are recorded by Adomnán. There is no evidence that Abbán himself founded any ecclesiastical establishments in Argyll, but the Keills and Eilean Mór dedications must have originated before *moccu* surnames went out of use in the eighth century and may reflect the wanderings of one of Abbán's disciples.

There is, however, an alternative possibility for the origins of the Knapdale dedications: in a recent paper, Dr Pádraig Ó Riain has shown that Colmán, the patron saint of Dromore in County Down, was also known as Mocholmóc and that both versions of his name may be nothing more than hypocoristic forms of Colum (Cille) (Ó Riain 1983:21-4). Hypocorisms frequently arose in the sixth century, a period of great linguistic change, and many reflect Welsh influence. The hypocoristic suffix *-óc*, for example, is Brittonic in origin (*op. cit.*: 26, 31). The *Mo-Charmaig* of Keills and Eilean Mór suggested by the *Kylmachornat* of the Menteith charter, the *Kilmachormuk* of the 1621 Act of Parliament and the *Kilmacharmick* of Blaeu's atlas might conceivably represent a local hypocoristic form of Colum, if the *l* of Colum had been replaced by *r*, a possible substitution in view of the liquidity of both consonants in Gaelic. The *Mo-Charmaig* of Knapdale would then be Columba of Iona, or Mocholmóc, which might explain the origins of the blessings of *Mac-Charmig* bestowed upon Martin Martin in Islay, but such an explanation cannot account for the forms *Kilmakcorme* and *insula de Sanct-Makchormik* found in the sixteenth century, or the *Kilmakcharnik* of 1662. The Keills church is on record as *Kilmococharmik* in 1581 and *Kilmichocharmik* in 1628. Some similar form may lie behind the garbled *Chillmacdachormes* of the 1507 royal confirmation of the lost early thirteenth century charter of Ruairi of Kintyre. Processes of linguistic change and hypocoristic forms of Colum cannot negate the early *moccu* 'quasi-surname' that led to the Knapdale tradition of a saint *Mac O Charmaig*, nor do they explain the purpose of the local tale that interposed three generations between the saint of the Eilean Mór and his great-grandfather *Carmaig*, the 'ancient proprietor' of the island.

Keills and Eilean Mór are the only ecclesiastical sites in Scotland dedicated to Abbán, who seems not to have been a popular saint for the new stone churches to be dedicated to in the West Highlands and Islands in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Bishop Forbes thought Kirkcormac in Kirkcudbrightshire might also have been dedicated to him but Professors Watson and MacQueen are surely correct in attributing the Kirkcormac dedication to Columba's contemporary Cormac Ua Liatháin.³⁰ Knight thought the *Cill Mo-Charmaig* at Ardeonaig on Loch Tay meant that the saint of Eilean Mór 'found his way along Glen Dochart to this quiet spot' (Knight 1933:II. 138), but Watson translated *Ard-Eodhnáig* or *Ard Eodhnáin* as 'Adamnan's cape' and suggested that the *Cill Mo-Charmaig* there might have been an Iona foundation during the abbacy of Adomnán, with Cormac the 'first cleric in charge' (Watson 1926:149). The affectionate prefix *Mo-* was customarily applied to saints' Christian names in any event, not to 'quasi-surnames'. The name of the *Mo-Charmaig* of Ardeonaig might, however, be a local version of *Mocholmóc*, a hypocorism for Columba, the saint to whom Adomnán is most likely to have dedicated a church. The twelfth-century Keills church and the thirteenth-century church on Eilean Mór (Dunbar 1981:40-42) may have been dedicated to Abbán independently of each other at the time of their construction, but the traditional

association of Eilean Mór with Keills suggests instead that the Abbán dedications dated from an earlier period and were so well-remembered that it would have been either undesirable or impracticable to have dedicated the medieval churches to other saints.

The shared dedication of Keills and Eilean Mór to Abbán implies that the church on the mainland and the island hermitage had some sort of connection dating from a common origin. Following Forbes, Campbell and Sandeman suggest that Eilean Mór was a *dísert* associated with Keills 'in early times' (Campbell and Sandeman 1962:66). The Latin *Lives* record that Abbán occasionally retired to a *silua deserta* to fast and celebrate mass at a place near *Mag-Arnaide* called *Diserth Cendubhain* in the *Codex Kilkenniensis* and *Cheducani Desertum* in the *Codex Salmanticensis* (Plummer 1910:1. 24; Heist 1965:269). Hogan treated the two spellings as two different places in his *Onomasticon*, although they must be one and the same, but Smyth has followed Hogan's identification of *Diserth Cendubhain* as Templeludican in County Wexford (Hogan 1910:346; Smyth 1982: pl. XVI). The *Lives* suggest that the *dísert* took its name from one of Abbán's disciples. If *Cendubhain* is the closer of the two to the original form of the name of the *dísert*, it may somehow be connected with Abbán's brother Dubán, commemorated on 11 November in the Martyrologies of Gorman and Donegal (*MG* 216; *MD* 305). If Keills belonged to the *paruchia* of Abbán in the seventh or eighth century, it may have followed the practice of the parent monastery by having a *dísert* of its own on Eilean Mór. Local tradition and the sculptural evidence, however, present a different interpretation.

The earliest surviving sculpture at Keills is the late eighth-century cross but the earliest Christian sculpture on Eilean Mór belongs typologically to the seventh century, suggesting the possibility that the island was dedicated to Abbán in the seventh century, when he was still a figure of living memory, and that the dedication was extended to Keills when the necessarily small community or hermitage on Eilean Mór expanded to the nearby mainland site in the following years. Later, as Keills grew in local importance, Eilean Mór might have been relegated to the role of a *refugium*, thought once to have been a *dísert* dependent upon Keills. According to the *Statistical Account*, *Mac O Charmaig* 'was an Irish saint, who took up his residence upon a small island, in the vicinity of the parish: he occasionally made excursions upon shore, and founded different chapels in the neighbourhood' (*SA* VI:255). Stories told locally about the saint connect him with the island. The dedication alone connects him with Keills. We have seen that the Keills dedication is on record by the thirteenth century, the Eilean Mór dedication by the fourteenth. Surviving sculpture and the early form of the saint's surname indicate a seventh-century foundation by a member of the *paruchia* of Abbán moccu Corbmaic of Leinster and an early connection between *Eilean Mor Mhic Ó Charmaig* and *Cill Mhic Ó Charmaig* that was remembered in the Knapdale oral tradition that survived into the nineteenth century. The Christian name of the saint to whom, possibly, a wandering Leinster hermit dedicated Eilean Mór in the seventh century might well have been forgotten because it was thought to be an affectionate title, Abbán or 'little abbot'.

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The photograph of the Keills cross was taken by my brother, Cameron Mac Lean, in June 1983.

NOTES

- 1 White 1875, 75n and 95, quotes a letter from Skene. Forbes 1872:300 also cites Skene as his source for the dedication.
- 2 White 1875:71-2; Campbell and Sandeman 1962:66, 68.
- 3 *Op. cit.*: 66-7; *ECMS* III: fig. 419; White 1875:pl. 43.1-2.
- 4 White 1875:pl. 43.5; *RCAHMS* (forthcoming).
- 5 *Ibid.* Duncan's and Brown's reading, *Rocherichus Reginaldi filius*, is preferable to the *Rotherici, Reginaldi filii* in *RMS* II:no. 3136.
- 6 I am most grateful to Professor Gillies for his conscientious advice on this point and for permission to include his suggestions here, although I alone am responsible for their use.
- 7 *RMS* II:no. 3136. There is a better reading in Duncan and Brown 1957:219.
- 8 Duncan's and Brown's reading of *Dunedall* is preferable to the *Dimedall* in *RMS*.
- 9 Watson 1926:187; *Adomnán*:188, 222, 356-8; Kenney 1979, 399-400.
- 10 Watson 1926:301; Anderson 1965:31; Kenney 1979:402.
- 11 Watson 1926:166. Professor John MacQueen kindly drew my attention to this reference.
- 12 *HE* II:19; Kenney 1979:221-2; Hughes 1966:105.
- 13 A list of Abban's foundations is given in Colgan 1948:627.
- 14 *MT* 24, 84; *MO* 98-9, 228-9; *MG* 56-7, 204-5.
- 15 *MO* 98-9, 228-9; *MG* 56-7, 204-5; *MD* 76-7.
- 16 Forbes 1872:282; *AA.SS.Boll. Octobris XII*, 270-2.
- 17 *Op. cit.*: I. 4; Plummer 1922:I. 3; Heist 1965:256.
- 18 Discussed in Plummer 1910:xxv; Kenney 1979:461.
- 19 Plummer 1910:I. 14; for the two *codices* see Kenney 1979:304-6.
- 20 Plummer 1910:I. 55, 220:II. 40, 45; Kenney 1979:310-12.
- 21 Stokes 1887:I. 187; II. 331; Smyth 1982:9, 18, 20.
- 22 Plummer 1910:II. 23-4; Smyth 1982:65. Smyth confuses the *Life* of Fintan of Clonenagh, which also mentions Cormac mac Diarmata, with the *Life* of Fintan or Munnu of Tech-Munnu, but the historicity of the event remains unchallenged, as does the date. Fintan of Clonenagh died in AU 603.
- 23 Plummer 1910:II. 228; *Adomnán* 70, 296, 322, 366.
- 24 Plummer 1910:I. xxxv; II. 236-7; Kenney 1979:221n, 450; Hughes 1966:108.
- 25 Smyth 1982:82; Smyth 1984:82; O'Brien 1962:340; *Álmaith ingen Blaithmeic meic Eogain m. Colmain m. Báetain Cobraind de Dál Riata*. If *Álmaith's* great-grandfather was the Colmán mac Baetain of the *Genelaig Albanensium*, she may have belonged to the Cenél Loairn, who probably controlled North Knapdale in the late seventh century. See Bannerman 1974:66, 112-13.
- 26 Meyer 1905:16, 39; *MG* 240; *MD* 336; *MO* 252.
- 27 Hogan 1910:585; *MO* 81; *MG* 50; *MD* 70; *FM* I. 178.
- 28 *PL* 87, cols. 969-78; Kenney 1979:220-1; Hughes 1966:105n; Moloney 1964:99-106.
- 29 *AU* I. 140. The new edition of the *Annals of Ulster* was unavailable at the time of writing.
- 30 Forbes 1872:300; Watson 1926:167-8; MacQueen 1973:22.

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