

# The Iona Chronicle, the Descendants of Áedan mac Gabráin, and the ‘Principal Kindreds of Dál Riata’

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In presenting us with new editions of the important Dalriadic genealogical ‘tractates’ *Cethri Primchenéla Dáil Riata* and *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*,<sup>1</sup> Professor Dumville has challenged historians of seventh-century Scotland to allow contemporary texts to speak for themselves, and to be more circumspect than has perhaps been usual in assessing non-contemporary texts for what they purport to reveal about the kindreds that dominated Argyll in this period. A particular target of his characteristically formidable criticisms has been the proposition that the only seventh-century kings of Dál Riata were Cenél nGabráin dynasts,<sup>2</sup> now recapitulated thirty years after John Bannerman insisted that ‘it was from the Cenél nGabráin that the kings of Dál Riata were drawn without exception’.<sup>3</sup> In this study I intend to explore some annal evidence that tends on the whole to affirm Professor Dumville’s reservations about this centralist thesis. In

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<sup>1</sup> In his edition of *Cethri Primchenéla Dáil Riata* [henceforth *Cethri Primchenéla Dáil Riata*], D. N. Dumville, ‘*Cethri Primchenéla Dáil Riata*’ [henceforth Dumville, ‘*Cethri Primchenéla*’], in *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 20 (2000), 170-91, has established its credentials as a discreet text. Similarly, his edition of *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* [henceforth *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*], D. N. Dumville, ‘Ireland and North Britain in the Earlier Middle Ages: Contexts for *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*’ [henceforth Dumville, ‘Ireland and North Britain’], in C. Ó Baoill and N. R. McGuire (eds.), *Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 2000* (Aberdeen, 2002), 185-211, has established that the text more usually known by the ‘perversely acephalous name’ of *Senchus Fer nAlban* is more accurately to be entitled *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*.

<sup>2</sup> R. Sharpe, ‘The thriving of Dalriada’ [henceforth Sharpe, ‘Thriving of Dalriada’], in S. Taylor (ed.), *Kings, clerics and chronicles in Scotland 500-1297: Essays in honour of Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday* (Dublin, 2000), 47-61, at 55. For responses to this essay, see Dumville, ‘*Cethri Primchenéla*’, 172, 189; Dumville, ‘Ireland and North Britain’, 199.

<sup>3</sup> J. Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada* [henceforth Bannerman, *Dalriada*] (Edinburgh, 1974), 104.

so doing it will be necessary to draw attention to the fact that its main exponents have made it explicit that, far from reflecting merely 'the predilection for big government which Oxonian historians have displayed since Geoffrey of Monmouth showed the way',<sup>4</sup> the thesis is instead derived from the testimony of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* – precisely one of those contemporary texts that Professor Dumville rightly demands we prioritise. Professor Sharpe, for example, has pointed out that 'if Adomnán was aware of subordinate royal lineages in Dalriada, their royal status was beneath his notice' and that he 'regarded the rulers of Dunadd as the only kings of Dalriada', while Bannerman earlier maintained that the centralist thesis was 'in keeping with the picture of the political situation in Dál Riata in the sixth and first half of the seventh centuries in *Adomnán* and the annals'.<sup>5</sup> In fact a case can be made, as we shall see, that the annals provide rather a different picture of such things than does Adomnán, but in any case, if the centralist thesis is flawed, it seems that it must be principally to the door of the ninth abbot of Iona that we ought to nail up our grievances.

In addition to his reinvigorating work on some of our key texts, Professor Dumville has stressed the need to take serious notice of 'a substantial shift' since the late 1960s 'in historians' attitudes to mediaeval historicising literature which is now regarded as historically significant for the period of its composition and not as the repository of prehistoric "tradition"',<sup>6</sup> a movement within which he has himself been a driving force. It therefore emerges as a fundamental consequence of the convincing case put forward by Bannerman and further developed by others, establishing the existence of an Iona Chronicle that took shape in the last third of the seventh century with a certain amount of recourse to earlier *aides-mémoires*,<sup>7</sup> that study of the Irish annal evidence relating to the kindreds of Argyll in the sixth and seventh centuries must take into active consideration

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<sup>4</sup> Dumville, 'Cethri Primchenéla', 172.

<sup>5</sup> Sharpe, 'Thriving of Dalriada', 55; Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 104.

<sup>6</sup> Dumville, 'Ireland and North Britain', 194.

<sup>7</sup> J. Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 9-26; K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources* (Ithaca NY, 1972), 117-19; see also M. Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry: The History and Hagiography of the Monastic Familia of Columba* [henceforth Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry*] (Dublin, 1996, previously Oxford, 1988), 22-23. Readers are directed<sup>7</sup> J. Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada* [henceforth Bannerman, *Dalriada*] (Edinburgh, 1974), 104. Readers are directed to these works for fuller references to the various contributions that have shaped the important Iona Chronicle thesis.

the political situation of the region at the time when Iona's chronicle was being assembled, and how its political perspectives may have influenced Iona's historical memory. This is no easy task, for it has long been recognised that the annals do not readily render up a clear-cut vision of the regional political landscape in this period. Indeed, eminent past students have remarked that the affairs of Argyll 'were very confused at this time', or else that they were 'in a state of complete disorganisation'.<sup>8</sup> Yet the extent to which one encounters confusion or disorganisation in the sources may, as Professor Dumville has warned, have less to do with the texts themselves than with the expectations that have underlain their interpretation. What follows here is an attempt to understand something of the political situation in Argyll in the late seventh century as it is reflected in our contemporary genealogical texts, focusing in particular upon the annal evidence.

To begin with, we are encouraged by Adomnán, whose hagiograph in commemoration of Columba was composed (like the Iona Chronicle) in the last third of the seventh century, to read this evidence in a particular way. His route through the labyrinth is deceptively straightforward. It begins, in his own time, with Eochu aue Domnaill, slain in 697,<sup>9</sup> upon whom he can but recently have called to be a guarantor of his *Lex Innocentium*.<sup>10</sup> This man's grandfather Domnall is not explicitly identified in the annal record, and we shall see that this is a recurring feature of this category of evidence. What may for convenience be called the Dalriadic regnal list, which has been reconstructed from later medieval witnesses

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<sup>8</sup> A. O. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources of Scottish History, A.D. 500 to 1286*, vol. i [henceforth Anderson, *ES* i] (Edinburgh, 1922), 182; W. F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: A History of Ancient Alban*, vol. i [henceforth Skene, *Celtic Scotland* i] (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Edinburgh, 1886), 263.

<sup>9</sup> S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill (eds.), *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)* [henceforth AU] (Dublin, 1983), 697.4 (*iugulatus*); throughout this study I have silently corrected AU's actual dates for the period 664-97, where records seem to be consistently one year out where they can be checked. The other collections of annals referred to in this article are W. Stokes (ed.), *The Annals of Tigernach*, vol. I [henceforth AT(i) by page number] (Felinfach, 1993); W. M. Hennessy (ed.), *Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135* [henceforth CS] (London, 1866); D. Murphy (ed.), *The Annals of Clonmacnoise, being annals of Ireland from the earliest period to A.D. 1408* [henceforth AClon] (Felinfach, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> M. Ní Dhomnadhá, 'The Guarantor List of Cáin Adomnáin, 697' [henceforth Ní Dhomnadhá, 'Guarantor List'], in *Peritia* I (1982), 178-215, § 85: *Eochu ua Domnaill*.

‘serving ends very different from ours’,<sup>11</sup> establishes that this Domnall was Domnall Brecc mac Echdach Buide, who fell in 642 in battle with a British army at Strathcarron.<sup>12</sup> Eochu’s grandfather was therefore the man who, in Dorbbéne’s famous interpolation in the Schaffhausen *Vita Columbae*, was accused by Adomnán’s predecessor but one as abbot of having broken a family covenant with Columba in 637.

Cumméne the White, in the book that he wrote on the miracles (*de uirtutibus*) of St Columba, wrote to this effect, that St Columba began to prophesy of Áedán and of his descendants, and of their kingdom, saying: ‘O Áedán, believe and doubt not that none of your opponents will be able to stand against you, until first you practise deceit against me and against my successors. For this reason, therefore, do you charge your sons, that they also shall charge their sons and grandsons and descendants, not to lose their sceptre of this kingdom from their hands through evil counsels. For at whatever time they shall do evil to me or to my kindred who are in Ireland, the scourge that I have endured from an angel on your account will be turned by the hand of God to a great disgrace upon them. And the heart of men will be taken from them, and their enemies will be strongly heartened against them.’ This prophecy has been fulfilled in our times in the battle of [Mag] Roth, when Domnall Brecc grandson of Áedán wasted the province of Domnall grandson of Ainmuire without cause. And they are from that day to this still held down by foreigners, which fills the breast with sighs of grief.<sup>13</sup>

It was because Adomnán chose not to adopt this story from Cumméne’s lost *De Uirtutibus*, and because Dorbbéne decided to insert it into the text of his copy of *Vita Columbae*, that we know anything about this earlier work. Yet thanks to Dorbbéne it may be deduced that Adomnán relied upon *De Uirtutibus Sancti Columbae* for a related anecdote describing another Columban prophecy that the kingship of Domnall’s grandfather Áedán mac Gabráin would be

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<sup>11</sup> Dumville, ‘*Cethri Primchenéla*’, 188. Throughout this study I shall refer to the regnal list [henceforth ‘Dalriadic regnal list’] as edited by M. O. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* [henceforth Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*] (Edinburgh & London, 1973), 44-76, and presented at 228-291.

<sup>12</sup> AU 642.1 *in bello Sraith Cairuin in fine anni in Decembri interfectus est annis .xii. regnauit*; AT(i) 146 adds that he was killed *ab Ohan reghe Britonum*; similarly a marginal note in AU (*ab Hoan rege Britonum*).

<sup>13</sup> A. O. Anderson and M. O. Anderson (eds.), *Adomnán’s Life of Columba* [henceforth Adomnán, *VC*; otherwise Anderson & Anderson, *Life of Columba* in reference to editorial comment] (Oxford, 1991), iii.5. For the battle of Mag Roth, see also AU 637.1.

inherited by Domnall's father Eochaid Buide.<sup>14</sup> The particular branch of Cenél nGabráin that features in this way in the pages of *Vita Columbae* can also be traced through the annals over these same five generations back from Eochu to his great-great-grandfather Áedán, and indeed further back to Áedán's own grandfather Domangart Réti (see Figure 1).<sup>15</sup> With recourse to the Dalriadic regnal list and to *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, the genealogical sections of which were probably compiled, like *Vita Columbae* and the Iona Chronicle, in the last third of the seventh century,<sup>16</sup> we may insert into this pedigree from the annals Eochu's father Domangart mac Domnail Brecc.<sup>17</sup> Such a comparison of the sources also enables us to trace in the annals a second segment of this kindred, similarly descended from Áedán mac Gabráin through his son Eochaid Buide, but thence from Eochaid's son Conall Crandamnae rather than from Conall's brother Domnall Brecc (see Figure 1).<sup>18</sup> The Cenél nGabráin kindred defined by these two segments taken together is, of course, quite well known as a result of its treatment by Adomnán, who, probably following Cumméne, regarded it as being the sole dynasty – the *genus regium* –

<sup>14</sup> Adomnán, *VC* i.9. On Cumméne's importance as a source for *Vita Columbae*, see Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry*, 24-26.

<sup>15</sup> The relevant obits are: Eochu nepos Domnail (AU 697.4 *iugulatus*); Domnall Brecc (AU 642.1 *in bello Sraith Cairuin interfectus est*; AT(i) 186); Eochaid Buide mac Áedáin (AU 629.4 *mors*; CS 629 adds *anno .xx. regni sui*); Áedán mac Gabráin (AU 606.2 *mors*; AT(i) 127 *bass...anno .xxxiii. regni sui, etatis uero .lxxiii.*); Gabrán mac Domangairt (AU 558.2 *mors*; AT(i) 102 *bass*); Domangart Réti (AU 507.1 *ut alii dicunt...secessit anno .xxu.*; AT(i) 85 *bass*).

<sup>16</sup> I follow here Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 159-60, who argued that *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* contains two assessments of the Dál Riata cobbled together at a later date, the one (§§ 50-53) having been conducted about a generation after the other (§§ 32-38), with the genealogical sections (§§ 6-31, 39-49) pertaining to the earlier assessment. Dumville, 'Ireland and North Britain', 205, has shown that the Dalriadic origin myth at the outset of the text (§§ 2-5) probably had a provenance distinct from that of the following genealogy and assessment (§§ 6-49). I share Anderson's hunch that the earlier assessment took place in the period 660 x 72 (less probably 660 x 696), though Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 155-56, on the basis that the latest figure mentioned in the genealogy died in 660, argues for a date prior to that year; Dumville, 'Ireland and North Britain', 199, would seem inclined to agree.

<sup>17</sup> AU 673.2 (*iugulatio* as *rex Dal Riati*); AT(i) 162 (*guin* as *ri Dail Riata*).

<sup>18</sup> The relevant obits are: Conall Crandamna (AU 660.3 *moritur*; AT(i) 155 *mortuus est*); Máel Dúin mac Conaill Crandamna (AU 689.7 *mors*; AT(i) 171); Domnall mac Conaill Crandamna (AU 696.1 *iugulatio*; AT(i) 174).

invested with the *rigdamnae* to put forward credible claims to the kingship of the Dál Riata.<sup>19</sup>

The Iona Chronicle's interest in these descendants (and ancestors) of Áedán mac Gabráin in the seventh century is likely to reflect not merely the undoubted importance of this powerful Argyll kindred, evident from the Dalriadic regnal list,<sup>20</sup> but also its perceived special relationship with Iona as enunciated in *Vita Columbae*. Unfortunately for the centralist thesis, this is by no means the end of the story told by the Iona Chronicle and our other contemporary texts. With the help of *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* it is possible to trace in the annals what may be thought, on balance, to be two additional lineages descended from Áedán mac Gabráin. These segments of Cenél nGabráin receive no mention in *Vita Columbae*; accordingly, they invite a degree of uncertainty and remain decidedly obscure, even though both putative lineages would seem to have produced prominent contemporaries of Eochu ua Domnaill during Adomnán's abbacy. Indeed, we may take it as a working hypothesis that it was this contemporary significance that aroused Iona's interest in the ancestors of these individuals.

The more prominent of the families under investigation may be thought to have been descended from Conaing mac Áedáin, a son of Áedán mac Gabráin who drowned at sea in 622 (see Figure 1),<sup>21</sup> though it must be emphasised that, without the corroboration of other sources, this lineage reconstructed from annal evidence can never be more than hypothetical, if supported by reasonable inferences. To begin with, the annals take note of the deaths of two Dalriadic individuals whose kinship with one another seems reasonably secure.

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<sup>19</sup> Adomnán, *VC* ii.22. It is to Cenél nGabráin, rather than to any specific branch, that Adomnán refers here, though it seems likely that he had the descendants of Áedán mac Gabráin particularly in mind. This kindred is outlined in *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, §§ 6-8, 11-17.

<sup>20</sup> 'Dalriadic regnal list', §§ 2, 4, 6-7, 10-11, 13-15, 17.

<sup>21</sup> The relevant obits are: Fiannamail nepos Donnchado (mac Osseni, AU 699.2) (AU 700.4 *iugulati sunt as rex Dal Riati*; AT(i) 176 *iugula as ri Dal Araidhi*); Béc nepos Donnchado (AU 707.3 *iugulatus*); Conall Cael mac Donnchado (AU 681.3 *iugulatio i Ciunn Tire*; AT(i) 166 *bass i Cind Tire*); Donnchad mac Conaing (AU 654.5 *cecidit*; AT(i) 153 *torchair*, adds *re Tolartach mac Anfraith rig Cruithne*); Máel Dúin mac Rígullóin (AU 676.2 *iugulatio*); Rígullón (AU 629.3 *cecidit*; AT(i) 140-41); Conaing mac Áedáin (AU 622.2 *dimersus est*; AT(i) 135). Conaing's obit is followed by a poem, *Tonna mora morglana*, in both AU and AT, the latter containing an extra stanza. Conaing and his sons Rígullón and Donnchad also appear in *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, §§ 12, 15.

The men in question are Fiannamail aue Donnchado *rex Dál Riati*, another guarantor of the *Lex Innocentium* like Eochu aue Domnaill, killed in 700,<sup>22</sup> and Conall Cael mac Donnchado, an otherwise unknown man killed in Kintyre (*i Ciunn Tire*) in 680. There is no reason to doubt that they were descendants of the same Donnchad, and it may be proposed that he was Donnchad mac Conaing who was killed in battle with a Pictish army in Strathyre (*bellum Sratho Ethairt*) in 654.<sup>23</sup> Since the *rigdamnae* of Fiannamail aue Donnchado must have been inherited from a grandfather who had been *rex Dál Riati* in his own right, Marjorie Anderson was almost certainly correct in supposing that Fiannamail's unidentified grandfather Donnchad was the king of that name attested in the vernacular versions of the Dalriadic regnal list.<sup>24</sup> According to the slippery chronology of that source, this king ought to have been exactly contemporary with Donnchad mac Conaing, whom we know was killed on campaign in the Perthshire highlands, suggesting that he was a leader of considerable status when a king of Dál Riata called Donnchad was apparently flourishing. It must therefore be admitted as a strong possibility that these two Donnchads were in fact the same individual, even if the attested king is called Donnchad mac Dubáin (probably a by-name) in the late sources.

The evidence does not allow for certainty that Donnchad mac Conaing links Conall Cael mac Donnchado and Fiannamail aue Donnchado with Áedán mac Gabráin. The most that can be said is that it is reasonable to expect the Iona Chronicle to have exhibited a measure of self-contained cohesion, and so, just as Eochu aue

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<sup>22</sup> Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Guarantor List', § 77. Fiannamail occurs (or rather his occurrence has been obscured by later copying problems, see Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 105-106) in the 'Dalriadic regnal list', §19; this would seem to tip the balance in favour of AU 700.4 (*rex Dal Riati*) over AT(i) 176 (*ri Dal Araidhi*).

<sup>23</sup> AU 654.5; for the identification of *Srath Ethairt* see W. J. Watson, *Scottish Place-Name Papers* (London, 2002), 91. In constructing this pedigree I have followed Skene, *Celtic Scotland* i, 273, and Bannerman, Dalriada, 103; Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 155-56, and Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Guarantor List', 209-10 consider other identities for the Donnchad in question, but never Donnchad mac Conaing, who would seem, in addition to being ideally located genealogically, to meet Anderson's criterion of having been 'the head of one of the major divisions of the Dál Riata'.

<sup>24</sup> 'Dalriadic regnal list', § 12; cf. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 155-56, and Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Guarantor List', 209-10 (alluded to in Anderson & Anderson, *Life of Columba*, xvii, xxiv-v) for considerations of the identity of Donnchad mac Dubáin.

Domnaill is certainly (on the evidence of a narrative source) to be connected to a Domnall attested within its earlier pages, that the same ought to be true of these descendants of Donnchad. In that event there are only two candidates for identification, and on chronological grounds Donnchad mac Conaing, who died in 654, is more likely to have been the father of a man killed in 680, and the grandfather of a man killed in 700, than Donnchad mac Éogain, a grandson of Gabrán who died in 621.<sup>25</sup> The Cenél nGabráin segment thus hypothesised may be placed in Kintyre where Conall Cael mac Donnchado was killed, and as one would in any case have expected. If its claim for factuality cannot conclusively be upheld, neither can it be summarily ignored, for the lineage arguably produced two seventh-century kings of the Dál Riata, and its dynasts were prominent in Argyll in the latter half of the seventh century.

Seemingly less prominent, but still significant as a matter of record in the annals, was another putative segment of Cenél nGabráin which presents similar problems of uncertainty, but which similarly cannot be ignored. This lineage was first teased out of the annals – it should be said that the third and fourth generations are attested only in the Ulster annals – by Alan Anderson (see Figure II),<sup>26</sup> but ‘seems to have been ignored by subsequent historians’.<sup>27</sup> We can recover four generations of men descended from someone called *Tothalán* in the Ulster annals (*Totalán*, *Túathalán* and *Túathal* in the Tigernach annals); it is clear that, among his four sons whose obits appear in the annals, it was Éoganán mac Túathaláin, who died in 660, whose descendants were of primary interest to the Iona chronicler. Túathalán himself is not attested in the surviving annals save in the patronyms of

<sup>25</sup> AU 621.3.

<sup>26</sup> Anderson, *ES* i, 190. My reconstruction of this kindred in Figure II differs in identifying the Túathalán in question as the son of Áedán, and also in being a generation less deep. The relevant obits are: mac Cuandai and Conaing mac Donnchado (AU 701.7 *imbairecc i Scii ubi cecidit Conaing mc Dunchado 7 filius Cuandai*); Congal mac Eunganáin (AU 701.6 *mortui sunt*); Máel Díthraib mac Eunganáin (AU 692.4 *iugulatio*); Donnchad mac Eunganáin (AU 680.6 *iugulatus*); Cuanda mac Eunganáin (AU 677.4 *iugulatio*); Fereth mac Totholáin (AU 653.1 *mors*; AT(i) 152 *bass*); Eunganán mac Totholáin (AU 660.3 *defunctus est*; AT(i) 155 *mortuus est*); Domnall mac Totholáin (AU 663.3 *mors* as *m. Totholain*; AT(i) 158 *mc Tuathail*); Feradach mac Túathaláin (AU 689.6 *mors* as *m. Tuathalain*; AT(i) 171 *mc Thuathail*), illustrating the interchangeability of Tóthalán/Túathal. I take it that Eoganán’s sons and grandsons were present in the Iona Chronicle and Chronicle of Ireland, but not included in the Clonmacnoise Chronicle.

<sup>27</sup> Dumville, ‘*Cethri Primchenéla*’, 188.



his sons, and, although clearly important enough in the late seventh century to warrant extended genealogical treatment in the Iona Chronicle, none of his descendants ever became king of the Dál Riata. The last of them on record are Éoganán's grandsons, Conaing mac Donnchado and an unnamed son of Cuanda mac Éoganáin, both of whose fathers were killed in the 670s, and who were themselves slain in a skirmish on Skye (*imbairecc i Scii*) in 701.<sup>28</sup> Certain other events that occurred on this island were of some interest to the Iona chronicler, who recorded voyages in the late 660s on the part of a local people, Cenél nGartnait (*genus Gartnait*), to Ireland and back to Skye.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, although Éoganán mac Túathaláin and his brothers all appear to have died peacefully in the years before Cenél nGartnait retreated from Skye, three of the four sons of Éoganán known to us were killed in the twenty years following the kindreds return to the island around 670.

A Gaelic annal record of uncertain provenance in the Ulster annals refers to a 'war of the grandsons of Áedán and Gartnait mac Accidain (*cocath hUae nAedhain 7 Gartnaith mc. Accidain*),<sup>30</sup> and Marjorie Anderson was probably on the right track in connecting Cenél nGartnait and the sons and descendants of Túathalán with this struggle, which she envisioned as 'attempts by Áedán's descendants either to settle in Skye or to impose on its ruling family an overlordship which was resisted'.<sup>31</sup> She stopped short of identifying the brothers and descendants of Éoganán mac Túathaláin, during whose lifetime the *cocad* began, as the *uí Áedáin* in question, but it may be proposed, though again it can only be an hypothesis, that Túathalán be identified as Túathal mac Áedáin, a son of Áedán mac Gabráin known only from *Míniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*.<sup>32</sup> In addition to making sense of, and providing something of skeletal chronology for this war on Skye, such a proposition that this lineage was a segment of the kindred descended from Áedán mac Gabráin makes it easier to understand the detailed level of interest in it

<sup>28</sup> AU 701.7

<sup>29</sup> AU 668.3 *nauigatio filiorum Gartnaidh ad Hiberniam cum plebe Sceth* (AT(i) 160 *filiorum Gartnaith*); AU 670.4 *uenit genus Garnaith de Hibernia* (AT(i) 161 *gens Gartnait*).

<sup>30</sup> AU 649.4.

<sup>31</sup> Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 154-55, where the annal evidence pertaining to this conflict is rehearsed without reference to the descendants of Túathalán. It would seem that this *cocad* was the inspiration for the later Gaelic text, *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin*.

<sup>32</sup> *Míniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, § 12. No sons of Túathal mac Áedáin are listed in this text.

demonstrated by the Iona chronicler. In other words, it may be thought that it was the protagonists, rather than the conflict as such (which would seem to have been prolonged and bloody) in which the descendants of Túathalán became involved, that were regarded as significant on Iona.

It has been stressed that room for doubt about these two reconstructed lineages must be allowed, but at the same time we ought to accept that it is unwise to allow our gratitude for *Vita Columbae*'s assistance in interpreting our evidence to blind us to the consequences of taking Adomnán's hand. In so doing, we become compelled to follow where he chooses to lead us, to privilege whomever he chooses to privilege and to overlook whomever he chooses to overlook, leaving unexplored on either side twists and turns that, as historians, we ought to investigate. This would seem particularly true when one looks even further afield to the evidence of lineages of kindreds other than Cenél nGabráin. It is easy enough to understand the Iona Chronicle's two-fold interest in these branches and putative branches of Cenél nGabráin, for they would seem to have been powerful lineages, and families with an historical or traditional association with the monastery that was probably made manifest through ongoing political affiliations. Neither, however, is it particularly difficult to appreciate Iona's clear interest, beginning at the end of the seventh century, in Ferchar Fota and his sons and grandsons, a lineage that can be recovered from the annals. After all, the Dalriadic regnal list informs us that these Cenél Loairn dynasts successfully contended for the kingship of Dál Riata for at least three generations beginning during Adomnán's abbacy (see Figure III).<sup>33</sup>

It is worth pausing to make two points about the Iona chronicler's interest in Cenél Loairn – or rather the Loairn kindred Cenél Echdach – made evident through contrasting how he handled the genealogies of the descendants of Ferchar Fota and their allies on the one hand, and

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<sup>33</sup> 'Dalriadic regnal list', §§ 16, 18, 20, 22, 24. Relevant annals include: Muredach mac Ainfcellaich (AU 733.2 *regnum generis Loairnd assumit*; AT(i) 197); Dúngal mac Selbaich (AU 736.1 *catenis alligauit*; AT(i) 199); Feradach mac Selbaich (U 736.1 *catenis alligauit*; AT(i) 199); Selbach mac Fercair (AU 730.4 *mortuus est*); Ainfcellach mac Fercair (AU 719.6 *iugulatus est*; AT(i) 187); Fercair Fota (AU 697.2 *moritur*; AT(i) 175). There may be a further relevant annal in *Annales Cambriae*, in J. Morris (ed.), *British History and the Welsh Annals* (London & Chichester, 1980), 85-91, which note *s.a.* 736 the death (*obiit*) of *Ougen rex Pictorum*, who might perhaps be identified with Eogan mac Muiredaich of the 'Dalriadic regnal list', § 24a, who ought to have died about this time. See also AU 730.4 *Bran filius Eugain, Selbach m. Fercair mortui sunt*.

how, on the other, this material was handled by the genealogist and overt ‘partisan of Cenél Loairn’ who compiled *Cethri Prímchenéla Dáil Riata* around 700.<sup>34</sup> The latter tractate follows *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, the genealogical sections of which were probably in existence at the time, in maintaining that Cenél Loairn shared a common ancestor (Erc mac Echdach Munremair) with Cenél Comgaill, Cenél nÓengusa and, though intriguingly less explicitly, with Cenél nGabráin.<sup>35</sup> It also contends that one Congus mac Consamla was descended from Áedán mac Gabráin through yet another son called Gartnait, who appears in *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly the annals also enable us to trace the pedigree of Congus mac Conamla (almost certainly the same man) back to an ancestor called Gartnait, but to one Gartnait mac Accidain rather than to a son of Áedán mac Gabráin (see Figure IV).<sup>37</sup> It may well be the

<sup>34</sup> On the date of this ‘tractate’, see Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 161, whose argument, largely reaffirmed in more detail by Dumville, ‘*Cethri Prímchenéla*’, 186-90, has more to commend it than that of Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 110, though they arrive at roughly the same conclusion. On the author’s allegiances, see Dumville, *idem*, 186, 189.

<sup>35</sup> *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, §§ 2-3, 6-31, 39-49; *Cethri Prímchenéla Dáil Riata*, §§ 22-35 (Cenél Loairn i), §§ 36-45 (Cenél Loairn ii), §§ 46-58 (Cenél Comgaill), §§ 59-70 (Cenél nÓengusa). The Cenél nGabráin pedigree listed here (§§ 14-21) goes back only as far as Gabrán, and may be linked with Eochaid Munremair only by recourse to the prefatory section (§§ 7-12), in which Gabrán’s fraternity with Comgall is established in a phrase almost identical to *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, § 8.

<sup>36</sup> *Cethri Prímchenéla Dáil Riata*, §§ 14-21; *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, §§ 12, 16.

<sup>37</sup> The relevant obits are: Conamail mac Canonn (AU 705.4 *iugulatio*); Coblaithe filia Canonn (AU 690.3 *moritur*; AT(i) 171 *mortua est*); Cano mac Gartnait (AU 688.2 *occisio*; AT(i) 170; CS 684; AClon 683 *entred into Religion* has replaced *occisio* with *clericatum suscepit* from AU 688.3 et al.); Iarnbodb mac Gartnait (AU 643.4 *loscoth*; AT(i) 147); Talorgg mac Acithaen (AU 686.2 *mortuus est*; AT(i) 169 *obit*; but *recte* 642, an emendation following Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 30-31). The patronym of Talorc mac Acithaen makes it reasonably certain that *Accidán* is not a palaeographical mistake for *Áedán*, but rather a distinct individual. Congus mac Consamla himself has no surviving obit, but Talorc mac Congusso and his brother (AU 734.5; AT(i) 197), who ran afoul of Pictish aggression in Dál Riata in the 730s (see also AU 731.6; AT(i) 195), are likely to have been his sons. A *Conamail mac Conainn epscop* appears as a guarantor (§ 23) of Adomnán’s *Lex Innocentium*, but Ní Dhonnchadha, ‘Guarantor List’, 191-92 is justified in rejecting *mac Conainn* as ‘a wrong-headed gloss drawn from the Dál Riata genealogies and tales’, and to identify *Conamail epscop* with Conamail mac Fáilbe *abbas lae* (AU 710.1). No obit survives for Gartnait

case, as Professor Dumville has inferred, that Congus mac Conamla, a dynast of Cenél nGartnait, whom we have already encountered at war with the descendants of Túathalán, was 'reigning in some part of the territory of Cenél nGabráin at the time when [*Cethri Primchenéla Dáil Riata*] was written';<sup>38</sup> this makes it the more notable that the Iona chronicler seems not to have recognised – and perhaps even protested against – this man's alleged Cenél nGabráin credentials.<sup>39</sup>

The evidence suggests, then, that there was a difference of opinion between clear partisans of Cenél Loairn and Cenél nGabráin as to the genealogy of the Skye kindred Cenél nGartnait. In the past, such contradictions have been regarded as 'confusion' or 'disorganisation' in our sources, but it may be rather that, in some instances, they provide glimpses of political tension among the more powerful Argyll kindreds in the time of Adomnán, expressed in part through the production of genealogical texts in which various men of substance made particular claims about their own ancestry and the histories of one another's families. In this case, it would seem that Congus mac Conamla of Cenél nGartnait put forward a claim to Cenél Gabráin heritage backed by the genealogists of Cenél Loairn, and that this went unrecognised on Iona. Such differences of opinion would be quite understandable at this time, given the rising significance of Cenél Loairn during Adomnán's abbacy and the obvious threat this posed to the security and prosperity of Iona's traditional friends in Kintyre. Indeed, the killings of Eochu aue Domnaill in 697 and Fiannamail aue Donnchad in 700, along with the implication of the annal record that the lordship of Donnchad Becc of Cenél nGabráin was confined to Kintyre at his death in 721,<sup>40</sup> would seem to provide an ideal context for the scenario envisioned by Professor Dumville, in which Congus mac Conamla became established in Cenél nGabráin territory with Cenél Loairn support. In failing to recognise Congus's claim to descent from Áedán mac Gabráin, Iona may be suspected of having failed to recognise his right to hold such a lordship, a political

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mac Accidáin, *fl.* 649 (if we may trust AU 649.4). Although this latter record cannot be assumed to have been present in the Iona Chronicle, other records relating to Cenél nGartnait and this *cocad* were present, and there is a compelling consistency throughout, cf. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 154.

<sup>38</sup> Dumville, '*Cethri Primchenéla*', 187.

<sup>39</sup> AU 649.4 clearly differentiates between Uí Áedáin and Gartnait mac Accidan, implying that Gartnait was no descendant of Áedán. Its authority is uncertain.

<sup>40</sup> AU 719.7 (AT(i) 187); AU 721.1 (AT(i) 187). I would follow Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 163, in thinking it 'probable that Dúinchad Becc was of the same family as the earlier Fiannamail, *nepos Dunchado*'.

leaning that is unsurprising given what we know about the monastery's relationship with Cenél nGabráin. Such an interpretation of the evidence does not seem extravagant. Nor must it be thought entirely coincidental that the Iona Chronicle seems to have made no demonstrable attempt to trace the ancestry of Ferchar Fota, allowing us to entertain the possibility that Iona did not recognise the pedigrees enunciated by Cenél Loairn in *Cethri Prímchenéla Dáil Riata*, tracing two branches of Cenél Echdach back to the eponymous Loarn and claiming common ancestry with Cenél nGabráin.<sup>41</sup>

The thinness of annal evidence that can only sometimes be supported from the testimony of other texts means that other interpretations are inevitably possible. This need not invalidate the underlying point that there would seem to be considerable room for uncertainty as regards the extent to which Adomnán's centralist views (and modern exponents of the related thesis) provide us with a serviceable picture of the complexities of the political landscape of seventh-century Argyll. It will be useful, before moving on, to recapitulate that a close examination of the surviving annals relating to our period suggests that Iona's interest in the powerful kindreds of Argyll, to judge from what may be recovered of the Iona Chronicle, was concentrated in two principal directions in the late seventh century. On the one hand, the chronicle may be seen to have traced faithfully, if not exhaustively, the successive generations of three branches of the larger kindred descended from Áedán mac Gabráin, in large part because of links established between Iona and Áedán and his heirs over three generations before the battle of Mag Roth in 637, but also because these three families happened to be the branches of the kindred that were prominent in the last third of the seventh century when the chronicle was being produced. The compiler's historical interest in Cenél nGabráin was not general, but narrow, for we must suspect that for the purposes of the chronicle he ignored the existence of any number of other Cenél nGabráin lineages and segments. On the

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<sup>41</sup> That we may share in the proposed doubts of the chronicler regarding the veracity of the seventh-century claims of Cenél Echdach, Cenél Cathboth and Cenél Salaig (see Figure III) to be descendants of Loarn mac Eirc was pointed out by Anderson & Anderson, *Life of Columba*, xxvii. Note that Boetán mac Echdach, whence both attested branches of Cenél Echdach descended, became an eponym in his own right, cf. W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* [henceforth Watson, *CPNS*] (Dublin, 1986, originally Edinburgh, 1926), 122. At which point 'Cenél' Boetáin emerged is unclear; the kindred lent its name to modern Morvern, suggesting the possibility that this was the home territory of Ferchar Fota and his sons.

other hand, the chronicle also maintained an understandable, and of course occasionally overlapping interest in the kingship of the Dál Riata, even when it passed into the hands, for example, of a putative descendant of Conaing mac Áedáin rather than a descendant of Eochaid Buide, or into the hands of a Cenél Loairn over-king after the rise of Ferchar Fota and his sons.

With such a pattern emerging from the Iona Chronicle, one is guided to the conclusion that it was this interest in the history of the regional over-kingship, even when not held by a descendant of Eochaid Buide or even of Áedán mac Gabráin, that lies behind the chronicler's occasional mention of yet another kindred all but ignored by Adomnán. A number of men descended from Comgall mac Domangairt are made known to us in such sources as the annals, the Dalriadic regnal list, *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* and *Cethri Primchenéla Dáil Riata*, allowing for the construction of a genealogy (see Figure V).<sup>42</sup> It has been argued as part of the centralist thesis, which requires that Cenél Comgaill be 'consigned to oblivion at an early date',<sup>43</sup> that, because no assessment of the fighting strength of this kindred occurs alongside those of Cenél nÓengusa, Cenél nGabráin and Cenél Loairn in that part of *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* which appears to date from the last third of the seventh century, Cowal must in this period have been held in abject subjection by Cenél nGabráin.<sup>44</sup> This argument is a poor fit, however, with the assessment itself, which appears – although the utility of this information has been challenged by Professor Dumville<sup>45</sup> – to

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<sup>42</sup> 'Dalriadic regnal list', §§ 2-3, 5, 8-9; *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, §§ 8-10; *Cethri Primchenéla Dáil Riata*, §§ 50-55. The relevant obits are: two sons of Nectan mac Doirgarto (AU 710.4); Finguine *Longus* (AU 690.3 *mors*; CS 686); Dargart mac Finguine (AU 686.3 *iugulatio*; AT(i) 169); Fercar mac Connaeth Círr (AU 694.5, *recte* 650, cf. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 30-31); Conid Cerr, *rex Dál Riati* (AU 629.1 *cecidit*; AT(i) 140); Dúncad mac Conaill mac Comgaill (AU 576.3 *cecidit*; AT(i) 111); Conall mac Comgaill (AU 574.2 *mors*; AT(i) 111 *bass*); Comgall mac Domangairt (AU 538.3 *mors*; AT(i) 96 *obit*). In identifying Dargart mac Finguine as a son of Finguine mac Echdach, and the latter as Finguine *Longus* (Fota) of AU 690.3, I follow the arguments of T. O. Clancy, 'Philosopher-King: Nechtan mac Der-Ilei' [henceforth Clancy, 'Philosopher-King'], forthcoming. I am grateful to Dr Clancy for having allowed me to read this article in advance of publication.

<sup>43</sup> Sharpe, 'Thriving of Dalriada', 59; see also Anderson & Anderson, *Life of Columba*, xvii.

<sup>44</sup> Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 108.

<sup>45</sup> Dumville, 'Ireland and North Britain', 207-08.

enumerate what must be envisioned on such a model as the combined strength of Cenél nGabráin and the suppressed Cenél Comgaill at less than half that of Cenél Loairn.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, as far as can be told from our other contemporary sources and the Dalriadic regnal list, the descendants of Comgall outlined here did not emerge for the first time only in the early eighth century as Cenél nGabráin declined. They seem instead to have maintained credibility as rivals for the kingship of the Dál Riata throughout the sixth century, when it was Conall mac Comgaill who donated land for the establishment of Iona,<sup>47</sup> and on into at least the middle decades of the seventh. It was Conall's grandson Ferchar mac Connaid, who flourished in the 640s,<sup>48</sup> who seems to have earned the dubious honour of having been the target of Cumméne's lament that 'the *sceptrum* of this kingdom', held until 637 by Domnall Brecc, had passed into the hands of *extranei* at the time of the writing of *De Uirtutibus Sancti Columbae*. Marjorie Anderson argued that Cumméne envisioned the transfer to a descendant of Comgall of the *sceptrum regni huius* as a distinct development from the suppression of Domnall's kingdom by *extranei*, largely because she found it 'unlikely that Cumméne should have thought of Ferchar son of Connad Cerr in such terms'. This is an important point, for it cannot have been any earlier than the generation of Domnall Brecc and Ferchar, four generations removed from Domangart Réti and three from Gabrán and Comgall, that these different descendants of Domangart began to regard themselves as distinct kindreds.

Rather, Anderson argued, the *extranei* in question were not the descendants of Comgall, but the descendants of Ida the Bernician, thus explaining Adomnán's characterisation of the Bernician hegemon Oswald Aeðilfrithing, who died five years after the battle of Mag Roth, as having been 'overlord of all Britain' (*totius Britanniae imperator*).<sup>49</sup> It would seem doubtful, however, that around 640 Cumméne should have regarded it as a matter to 'fill the breast with sighs of grief' (*suspiria doloris pectori incutit*) that a kindred that had

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<sup>46</sup> *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, §§ 36-37 (Cenél nGabráin); §§ 43-44 (Cenél Loairn).

<sup>47</sup> AU 574.2 *sui qui obtulit insulam Iae Columbe Cille*; AT(i) 111.

<sup>48</sup> Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 110-11, 153 argued that his thirteen-year tenure of the over-kingship belongs to the period 637-50, during the first part of which he 'shared' it with Domnall Brecc (629-42).

<sup>49</sup> Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 156-57 (and again in Anderson & Anderson, *Life of Columba*, xxiv-vi); Adomnán, *VC* i.1. See also B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (eds.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* [henceforth *Bede, HE*] (Oxford, 1969), iii.6.

recently broken its supposed covenant with Columba had come under the dominion of an overlord who maintained direct and cordial relations with Cumme's uncle Ségene, fifth abbot of Iona, thus enabling the monastery to enjoy the both great prestige and great rewards.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Ferchar mac Connaid and his forebears can have been characterised as 'outsiders' by Cumme if already in his time a narrow view of the *genus regium* had obtained on Iona, a view that ought to have been greatly encouraged by the apparent orientation of the descendants of Comgall towards the episcopal church of Kingarth in the Clyde estuary.<sup>51</sup> Well known lines of Welsh verse preserved in the text of *Y Gododdin* indicated that Domnall Brecc and the warriors he led to defeat at Strathcarron in 642 had come there from Kintyre,<sup>52</sup> allowing us to entertain the possibility that after the battle of Mag Roth in 637 – or indeed after the flight of the *familia* of Domnall Brecc from unknown foes (perhaps led by Ferchar) at the subsequent battle of Glenn Mureson in 638<sup>53</sup> – Ferchar mac Connaid, whose reign in the Dalriadic regnal list dates from about this year, extended his lordship from Cowal in such a way as to constrain the hapless Domnall Brecc in Kintyre. It is true that one must make room for Oswald as *totius Britanniae imperator*, but it may be wondered whether the involvement in Dalriadic affairs thus implied stemmed from his taking tribute in return for supporting Domnall Brecc against his rivals in Cowal after the rise of Ferchar mac Connaid.

A further indication that the seventh-century descendants of Comgall ought to be taken more seriously than has recently been the case emerges from a consideration of the problem of Connad Cerr's pedigree. *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* makes Connad a son of his

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<sup>50</sup> Adomnán, *VC* iii.5; Bede, *HE* iii.3-7 etc. For a similar view of Iona's attitude towards Oswald, see J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), 230-31 (an addendum by Charles-Edwards and Wormald).

<sup>51</sup> I have put forward the evidence relating to the relationship between Cenél Comgaill and Kingarth in a forthcoming article, J. E. Fraser, 'The Seventh-century See of Kingarth, Clyde Rock and Cenél Comgaill'.

<sup>52</sup> The so-called 'Strathcarron Interpolation'; for recent editions see G. Gruffydd, 'The Strathcarron Interpolation (*Canu Aneirin*, Lines 966-77)', in *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 17 (1996), 172-78, at 174-76; J. T. Koch (ed.), *The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* [henceforth Koch, *Gododdin*] (Cardiff and Andover, 1997), awdl A.78.

<sup>53</sup> AU 638.1; CS 637 adds *in quo familia* [AT(i) 144 *muindter*] *Domnaill Bricc in fugam uersa* [AT(i) 144 *do teichedh*].



contemporary Eochaid Buide mac Áedáin,<sup>54</sup> and so a brother of Domnall Brecc, while the Dalriadic regnal list gives him only three months in the kingship, making him the successor of Eochaid, who as the successor of Áedán mac Gabráin is given a reign of twenty-one years.<sup>55</sup> Most of this is contradicted explicitly by the annal evidence that is both earlier in provenance and less likely to have been tampered with by later generations of Scottish genealogists, and in particular those dating from the period of the mac Alpín kings of the tenth and eleventh centuries. A clear distinction is made in the annal record of the battle of *Fid Euin* in 629 between Connad Cerr and those among the slain who were *nepotes Áedáin*,<sup>56</sup> implying that he not neither a grandson nor even a descendant of Áedán mac Gabráin. The Dalriadic regnal list is, moreover, in agreement on this point, making Connad a son of Conall mac Comgaill, and we ought to follow Marjorie Anderson in preferring this scenario to that put forward by *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*,<sup>57</sup> which may be thought to contain either an error or else a conscious alteration of Connad's pedigree. Moreover, Connad Cerr appears as *rex Dál Riati* in the annal record of the battle of Ard Corann in 627, and again two years later at his death at *Fid Euin*, indicating that he was king of the Dál Riata for at least three years prior to the death of Eochaid Buide, rather than for three months thereafter.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, § 13. Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 96-99, follows *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* on this point, thus envisioning Connad Cerr and his son Ferchar as Uí Áedáin kings as part of his centralist view of seventh-century Dál Riata.

<sup>55</sup> *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, § 13; 'Dalriadic regnal list', § 8.

<sup>56</sup> AU 629.3; a more complete record occurs in AT(i) 141-42 and CS 629: *et nepotes Aedhan ceciderunt. .i. Rigullan mac Conaing 7 Failbhe mac Echdach 7 Osirice mac Albirit rigdamna Saxan*. D. Dumville, 'Cath Fedo Euin' [henceforth Dumville, 'Cath Fedo Euin'], in *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 17 (1996), 114-27, at 114-16, has established that this record, though reliable enough, was nevertheless supplementary to the hypothetical 'original' record in the Chronicle of Ireland.

<sup>57</sup> Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 150. Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 97, objected that no son of a man who died in 574 can have succeeded to the kingship in 629, but failed to convince her (cf. Anderson & Anderson, *Life of Columba*, xxii-iii). On the proposed model, Connad can have succeeded as early as c.606.

<sup>58</sup> AU 627.1 (Connad Cerr appears as *ri Dálriada* in AT(i) 139, CS 627); AU 629.1, AT(i) 141-42. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 149-50, preferred to follow the regnal list in interpreting Adomnán's evidence, but her suggestion that Connad's title refers to a subject kingship in Antrim seems not to have convinced even her ('his own territory is likely to have been in Scotland'),

Such evidence that it was a grandson of Comgall, rather than Eochaid Buide, a grandson of Gabrán, who succeeded Áedán mac Gabráin as king of the Dál Riata is problematic only if we assume that there was only one king in Argyll in this period, and only one kingship to which Eochaid Buide can have succeeded as established by *Vita Columbae*. The annals, however, suggest that this was not the case, and that, whereas Connad Cerr was *rex Dál Riati*, Eochaid Buide was, famously, *rex Pictorum*,<sup>59</sup> which is more likely to be a mistaken latinisation of *rí Cruithne* than an indication of a Pictish kingship. If we allow for the possibility that Eochaid Buide mac Áedáin did indeed succeed his father in perhaps a personal lordship that is likely to have encompassed Kintyre, where according to later material Áedán died and was buried,<sup>60</sup> and some obscure part of Cruithnian territory in southern Antrim, we make room for Connad Cerr mac Conaill to have been *rex Dál Riati* after Áedán as the annals maintain. It may be pointed out that, in addition, we are provided with a scenario within which Domnall Brecc's participation in the battle of Mag Roth on the side of the over-king of the Cruithin, several years after succeeding his father in a kingship that may be thought to have included Cruithnian territory, may be more thoroughly understood. It is not difficult to envision a context within which Eochaid Buide, from whom, no doubt following a particular reading of *Vita Columbae*, the mac Alpín kings of Alba would claim descend in the tenth century, can have been given priority over Connad in the Dalriadic regnal list.

If there is good reason to believe that they were a robust force in Argyll politics into the 650s, on the surface the dynasts of Cenél Comgaill appear to have lost their *rigdamnae*, at least as regards the kingship of the Dál Riata, after the death of Ferchar, the last of them to appear in the Dalriadic regnal list.<sup>61</sup> There are indications, however, that this was not the case. For example, *Cethri Primchenéla Dáil Riata* identified a branch of Cenél Comgaill as one of its 'four principal kindreds' in the last years of the seventh century,<sup>62</sup> and the tractate even hints at 'elevating the descendants of Comgall above

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though Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 97, went down this same road. Anderson's alternative suggestion that the earlier entry is 'an anachronism introduced from the notice of the battle of *Fid Euin* two years later' is neither convincing nor necessary.

<sup>59</sup> AU 629.4

<sup>60</sup> On Áedán's death and burial, see Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 81.

<sup>61</sup> 'Dalriadic regnal list', § 9.

<sup>62</sup> *Cethri Primchenéla Dáil Riata* §§ 46-58.

those of Gabrán' by providing them with a fuller pedigree.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, Dargart mac Finguine, who was killed in 685,<sup>64</sup> has recently been identified by Thomas Clancy as the most likely candidate for having fathered the sons of Der-Ilei of Pictland,<sup>65</sup> indicating that he was a man of sufficient status to be deemed worthy of marriage to such a prominent Pictish bride. Clancy has put forward convincing evidence that Dargart's father was Finguine mac Echdach, who appears in the Cenél Comgaill pedigree outlined in *Cethri Primchenéla Dáil Riata* and has been identified as Finguine Fota (*longus*), whose death in 689 is noted in the annals.<sup>66</sup> We have seen that the Iona Chronicle's interest in Finguine Fota and his son is likely on balance to reflect its general interest in men who held the kingship of Argyll, or were at least serious competitors for it; this would also account for the *Cethri Primchenéla Dáil Riata* genealogist's interest in the ancestry of a man descended from Finguine. We may therefore suspect that Finguine Fota was king of the men of Cowal, perhaps, though not necessarily in immediate succession to Ferchar mac Connaid, and that he was entirely credible as a rival for the kingship of the Dál Riata in the wake of the killing of Domangart mac Domnaill Brecc *rex Dál Riati* in 672.<sup>67</sup> We may envision him as posing a challenge to the likes of the sons of Conall Crandamnae of Cenél nGabráin and Ferchar Fota of Cenél Loairn into the last ten years of the seventh century.<sup>68</sup> An explanation of the absence of an assessment of the fighting strength of Cenél Comgaill from the earlier sections of *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* might therefore be that whoever commissioned this assessment, and there is room for doubt about this,<sup>69</sup> received no assessment of Cenél Comgaill because at the time he did not have the capacity to call upon the fighting strength of the men of Cowal.

<sup>63</sup> Dumville, 'Cethri Primchenéla', 186-87.

<sup>64</sup> AU 686.3; the obit at AU 693.6 has no corresponding record in the Clonmacnoise group.

<sup>65</sup> Clancy, 'Philosopher-King' (forthcoming); note that the adoption here of the name-form Der-Ilei follows *idem*.

<sup>66</sup> Finguine *Longus* (AU 690.3 *mors*; CS 686); on this identification see Clancy, 'Philosopher-King' (forthcoming).

<sup>67</sup> AU 673.2. For further thoughts on Cenél Comgaill and its seventh-century political relationships, see Fraser, 'See of Kingarth' (forthcoming).

<sup>68</sup> Finguine can only have been viable as king of Cowal if either or both his grandfather Loingsech mac Conaill and father Eochaid had been kings before him; neither of these appears to have been king of the Dál Riata, but then again, neither do the ancestors of Ferchar Fota.

<sup>69</sup> Dumville, 'Ireland and North Britain', 207-10.

Persistent differing perspectives between the Iona chronicler and his contemporaries regarding who were the ‘principal kindreds of Dál Riata’, along with the possibility that the Iona Chronicle maintained a wider interest in the descendants of Áedán mac Gabráin than *Vita Columbae* does, must surely call the centralist thesis into serious question. The textual evidence taken as a whole, in contrast to the evidence provided by *Vita Columbae* alone, at least allows, if it does not prove conclusively, that seventh-century Argyll consisted of a typical Early Christian political landscape in which a handful of rival territorial kindreds, envisioning different degrees of relationship between themselves, were engaged in ongoing competition for political ascendancy both within and outwith their home territories. There are suggestions that outside help was sometimes called upon to resolve such struggles, whether from the Bernicians, in the case of the descendants of Eochaid Buide in the middle decades of the seventh century, or, perhaps, from Pictland in the case of Cenél Comgaill in the later decades of that century.<sup>70</sup> In the final analysis, Adomnán’s centralist thesis, perhaps inherited to some extent from his predecessors, that seventh-century Dál Riata had but a single *genus regium* thriving under the auspices of Iona and its patron saint tells us much about the monastery’s political outlook, but rather less, it would seem, about detailed political history.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, 156, was surely correct to suppose that in the twelve-year reign of Domangart mac Domnaill Brecc (660-72) the kingship of the Dál Riata was securely back in the hands of a descendant of Eochaid Buide for the first time since before the death of Domnall Brecc. If we may suspect that Bernician support (in return for tribute) played a role in helping this kindred get back on its feet, the killing of Domangart two years after the death of Oswig Aeðilfrithing in 670 may have been no coincidence.

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