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Iona and the Vikings: Survival and Continuity

The fire over Lewis played high in the heaven;
Far fled the folk; the flame rose from the houses¹

900 years ago, in 1098, that was a scene echoed all over the Hebrides as Magnus Barelegs visited them with fire and sword, burning and slaughtering from Lewis in the north to Kintyre and Man in the south. Nowhere was spared his wrath, except the small holy island of Iona. Here Magnus changed tack and instead of killing the inhabitants and torching the church, he gave the inhabitants quarter and peace.² Then, in a fit of reverence, he locked the door of the small church, dedicated to St Columba, saying that no one should afterwards be so bold as to enter. Then off he went to burn Islay. What stayed his hand? Why was Iona considered so holy by a Norwegian king?

We will see that the answer to Magnus' reverence lies several hundred years before his visitation. During the 9th century, the time of the Viking raids and settlements, an intimate relationship developed between the Norse settlers and the monastery, as each impacted on the other.

Initially, Iona was singled out for particularly harsh treatment by Viking raiders and the Norse impact on Iona, from the monastic point of view, was nothing short of a litany of disasters. In a thirty year period, violence the like of which had never been visited on Iona in all of its previous two hundred year history, made an unwelcome appearance on her shores. The Irish annals from 795 to 825 make grim reading. They record a catalogue of violent raids:

AI795³ Orcain Iae Coluim Chille
[Ravaging of Iona]

- AU802⁴ I Columbe Cille a gentibus combusta est
[Iona was burned by the heathens]
- AU806 Familia Iae occisa est a gentilibus, id est lxxviii
[The community of Iona, to the number of 68, was
killed by the heathens]
- AU825 Martre Blaimhicc m. Flainn o genntib in Hi
Coluim Cille
[Violent death of Blathmac son of Flann at the
hands of the heathens in Iona]

The only comfort that Iona could conceivably take from these outrages was that she was not suffering alone. She was not being singled out for uniquely abusive treatment; the Norwegian sea-raiders, having discovered that island monasteries were particularly vulnerable to attack, and as yet having not developed a respect for the holy places of a foreign religion, were widely plundering monasteries around the British, Irish and French littoral. The plunderers, burners and destroyers of Iona had exactly the same motives, and were part of the same movement, as those who looted Lindisfarne in Northumbria in 793, Inisbofin, Inismurray and Lambay Island in Ireland in 795 and Noirmoutier in France in 799.

These pillagers had the typical piratical desire for moveable wealth, whatever could be picked up and taken aboard ship, from bullion to women, was fair game. Like other monasteries, Iona was targeted because it was a site where wealth was concentrated. Indeed, Iona was undoubtedly the most important and identifiable centre of wealth in the Hebrides. Here would have been stored gold and silver in the form of reliquaries, book covers and hanging bowls. Gold and silver might also have been deposited in the monastery by local laymen for its protection (as was perhaps the case with the St Ninian's Isle hoard in Shetland).

The impact of these raids must have been psychologically devastating on a monastic community that, no matter how bad internicine strife got between Dal Riata and Pictland, had remained aloof from pillage and devastation. The last major recorded disaster to befall any monastic community in the Hebrides had been the slaughter of Donnan and his followers

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on Eigg in 617. The last thing expected was a foreign raiding party sailing out of the north. One can only speculate on the increasing trepidation felt by the community when it was realised that the raid of 795 was not an isolated event and that the marauders could arrive back at any time.

Iona was not a safe place to be and it would not be surprising if some of the surviving members of the community sought protection further from the Vikings' malign reach. Indeed, the *raison d'être* of building the monastery of Kells in 807 may have been as a refuge for demoralised members of the community. However, although the building of Kells may indeed have been spurred on by the Viking raids, and may have provided a temporary home for members of the community, there is plenty of evidence to show that the community of monks was made of stern stuff and that Iona was not completely abandoned to the elements after 807. Indeed, according to the *Dublin Annals of Innisfallen*⁵, after remaining in Kells for seven years, Cellach, the abbot who had constructed the new monastery, returned to Iona. He was not alone, as it appears that Iona became a destination sought by at least one holy man seeking the thrill of 'red martyrdom' in place of the more prosaic 'white' variety, namely violent death instead of mere exile. That figure was Blathmac. His martyrdom is treated to a full account in a contemporary poem by Walahfrid Strabo:⁶

Golden dawn shone forth, parting the dewy dusk, and the brilliant sun glittered with beautiful orb, when this holy teacher, celebrating the holy service of mass, stood before the sacred altar as a calf without blemish, a pleasing offering to God, to be sacrificed by the threatening sword. The others of the company were prostrate, commending to the Thunderer with tears and prayers their souls, about to depart from the burden of the flesh. See, the violent cursed host came rushing through the open buildings, threatening cruel perils to the blessed men; and after slaying with mad savagery the rest of the associates, they approached the holy father, to compel him to give up the precious metals wherein lie the holy bones of St Columba; but [the monks]

had lifted the shrine from its pediments, and had placed it in the earth, in a hollowed barrow, under a thick layer of turf; because they knew then of the wicked destruction [to come]. This booty the Danes desired; but the saint remained with unarmed hand, and with unshaken purpose of mind; [he had been] trained to stand against the foe, and to arouse the fight, and [was] unused to yield.

There he spoke to thee, barbarian, in words such as these:- 'I know nothing at all of the gold you seek, where it is placed in the ground or in what hiding-place it is concealed. And if by Christ's permission it were granted me to know it, never would our lips relate it to thy ears. Barbarian, draw thy sword, grasp the hilt, and slay; gracious God, to thy aid I commend me humbly.'

Therefore the pious sacrifice was torn limb from limb. And what the fierce soldier could not purchase by gifts, he began to seek by wounds in the cold bowels [of the earth]. It is not strange, for there always were, and there always reappear, those that are spurred on by evil rage against all the servants of the Lord; so that what Christ's decision has appointed for all, this they all do for Christ, although with unequal deeds.

Thus [Blathmac] became a martyr for Christ's name; and, as rumour bears witness, he rests in the same place, and there many miracles are given for his holy merits. There the Lord is worshipped reverently with fitting honour, with the saints by whose merits I believe my faults are washed away.⁷

Blathmac was martyred because he would not reveal the hiding place of Columba's shrine, which had been buried by the monks. The raiders dug frantically about, but apparently with little success. It is significant that in 825 Columba's shrine was on Iona, because this implies that, despite the vagaries of the previous 30 years, it had not yet become a poor depleted site, but still retained interest for sea-borne raiders. However, there was a far more significant feature of the presence of Columba's shrine on Iona, a political one. This was the shrine of the Columban paruchia's founding saint, and

within any given monastic paruchia of the Gaelic Church, the monastery which housed the relics of the founding father was the caput or political centre of the said federation. Therefore, in 825 Iona was still the political head of one of the leading monastic federations within the Gaelic Church, and was still one of the most influential of Gaelic monasteries. Whatever posited detrimental effect the Viking raids may have had on the psyche of the monks of Iona, they do not appear to have caused a full-scale evacuation, or to have diminished Iona's administrative role. Iona weathered the *Sturm und Drang* of the Viking raids.

The diminution of Iona's political role came in 849, when for reasons that do not seem to be directly attributable to the Vikings, Iona ceased to be the political head of the Columban federation of monasteries. In that year Columba's relics were divided between the monasteries of Dunkeld and Kells. That is to say, for about 24 years after the last recorded raid, Iona continued to be the most important Scottish monastery, and one of the premier monasteries in the wider Gaelic-speaking world. The demotion of Iona in political terms came about because of the policies of King Cinaed mac Ailpin.⁸ The division of Columba's relics appears to have been a plan of Cinaed's to bring the administrative centre of the Columban Church in Scotland east of Druim Alban into the area where his power was now based, having conquered the Picts. To placate Irish interests, some of Columba's relics had to be sent to Ireland, and the Columban Church was consequently split in two.

The last 9th century raid on Iona took place in 825 and after this, according to the annals, Western Scotland would appear to have entered into a more peaceful era. The main reason for this was not merely that the raiders, like locusts, had moved on to pastures new, but that the main Norse settlement event had taken place in Western Scotland.⁹ Settlement presupposes disruption in the social order, yet later in the 9th century there is no period comparable to 795-825 in terms of disruption in which to date Norse settlement. This leaves us with the intriguing suggestion that Iona remained the administrative head of the Columban paruchia for not only 24 years after the

last raid on Iona, but more importantly, for 24 years after the bulk of Norse settlement.

Although Iona lost status after 849, when it ceased to be the political centre of the Columban Church, it nevertheless continued in existence, as can be seen from the following obits of Iona churchmen:

- AU865 Cellach m.Ailella, abbas Cille Daro et abbas Ia, dormiuit in regione Pictorum.
[Cellach son of Ailill, Abbot of Cell Dara and Iona, fell asleep in the country of the Picts.]
- AU880 Feradhach m.Cormaicc, abbas Iae, pausauit.
[Feradach son of Cormac, Abbot of Iona, rested.]
- AU891 Flann m.Maele Duin, abbas Ia, in pace quieuit.
[Flann son of Mael Dúin, Abbot of Iona, rested in peace.]
- FM937¹⁰ Aonghus mac Muirchertaigh, saoi, angcoire ocus tanaisi abbaidh Iae¹¹, décc.
[Angus son of Muirchertach, a learned man, anchorite and Tanist abbot of Iona, died.]
- FM947 Caonchomhracc, abb Ia..., décc.
[Cainchomrac, Abbot of Iona, died.]
- AU978 Fiachra, airchinnech Ia¹², quiéuit.
[Fiachra, superior of Iona, rested.]

According to *AU*, in the year 986, the next abbot met with an unpleasant fate, when a new phase of Scandinavian marauding took place:

I Coluim Cille do arcain do Danaraibh aidhchi Notlaic coro marbsat in apaidh ocus .xu. uiros do sruithibh na cille.
[Iona of Colum Cille was plundered by the Danes on Christmas Night, and they killed the abbot and fifteen of the elders of the monastery.]

The annal entries indicate that business continued as usual in Iona after 849. Indeed, Scottish kings may have continued to be buried in the monastery graveyard, in preference to Dunkeld, long after the centre of the Scottish kingdom had moved east,

at least according to the *Chronicle of the Kings of Scots Version D*.¹³ The Chronicle claims Cináed mac Alpín was interred on Iona in 858, as was his brother Domnall in 862 and his sons Causantín in 877 and Aed in 878. It further claims Giric mac Dúngail was buried there in 889, and Domnall mac Causantín in 900. However, it makes an exception in the case of Causantín mac Áeda who died and was buried in St Andrews in 952, after serving as abbot of the *céli-dé* there. This could be the exception that proves the rule, certainly its existence strengthens the case for the authenticity of the tradition.

It would have been surprising if the continuing existence of such a cultural and religious centre did not exert a powerful influence on the minds of the newly settled Norse inhabitants of the Hebrides and we probably see one aspect of this influence in the fact that Iona remained free from pillage between 825 and 986. Iona's cultural and religious influence is clearly seen in a number of Icelandic traditions preserved in *Landnámabók*, The Book of Settlements, which records the tales of Iceland's first settlers including some from the Hebrides. These traditions show that some Norse Hebrideans had adopted Christianity by the 870s and were already strongly influenced by the Gaelic Church. Such a course of events is not unprecedented, because in England and Normandy there is evidence, at least amongst the upper levels of society, for the Scandinavian settlers quickly adopting Christianity. For example, King Guðfrið of York, who died in 895, 19 years after the Danish colonisation, became a Christian, and was buried in Yorkminster, while William Longsword (927?-942), son of Rollo the pagan 1st Duke of Normandy, was a convinced Christian who reestablished monasticism in the Duchy.

Landnámabók preserves a series of traditions about Christian settlers from the Hebrides in the 870s to 890s, including the following about the family of Ketill Flatnose, a ruler in the Hebrides in the mid-9th century.¹⁴ Of Ketil's daughter Aud it states:

Aud took possession of the entire Dales district at the head of the fjord, between the Dogurdar and Skraumuhlaups

Rivers. She made her home at Hvamm near Aurrida River Estuary, at a place now called Audartoft. She used to say prayers at Kross Hills; she had crosses erected there, for she'd been baptized and was a devout Christian.¹⁵

...That very night she [Aud] died, and she was buried at the high water mark as she'd ordered, because having been baptized, she didn't wish to lie in unconsecrated earth.¹⁶

Landnámabók also contains an account of Ketill Flat-Nose's grandson, Ketill the Foolish, so named by his pagan neighbours because he was a Christian.

There was a man called Ketil the Foolish, son of Jorunn Wisdom-Slope, Ketil Flat-Nose's daughter. Ketil went from the Hebrides to Iceland. He was a Christian. He took possession of land between Geirlands and Fjardar Rivers, above Nykomi.

Ketil made his home at Kirkby, where the Papar had been living before and where no heathen was allowed to stay.¹⁷

It almost appears as if Ketill had a predetermined destination in mind when he set off for Iceland. He may have intentionally headed for an abandoned pre-Norse settlement of Gaelic Church monks called *Papar*¹⁸, perhaps to reestablish a church or chapel of some kind there. This might seem far-fetched if it were not for the fact that we have, in the tradition concerning Ketill Flat-Nose's nephew Orlyggr Hrappson, the example of a settler being directed to find a specific place in Iceland by a Gaelic churchman, and being told to found a church there, dedicated to *Kolumkilla* or *Colum Cille*. This vignette is as clear a description as we are ever likely to get of the direct influence of the Gaelic church, namely Iona, on the Norse settlers in Western Scotland:

Hrapp, Bjorn Buna's son, had a son called Orlyg whom he gave in fosterage to the Holy Bishop Patrick of the Hebrides.¹⁹ He had a great desire to go to Iceland, and asked the bishop for guidance. The bishop provided him

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with church timber, an old iron bell, a plenarium, and consecrated earth which Orlyg was to place beneath the corner posts of his church. The bishop told him to settle at a place where from the sea he could keep two mountains in view, each with its valley. He was to make his home below the southern mountain where he was to build a house and a church dedicated to Saint Columba...

Orlyg and his men put out to sea, and had such a rough passage they'd no idea where they were. Then Orlyg made a solemn vow to Bishop Patrick that if they made land he'd name the place after him. Shortly afterwards they sighted land, having drifted west of Iceland. They came ashore at a place now called Orlygshaven, but the fjord that cut into the land from there they called Patreksfjord. They stayed there over winter. In the spring Orlyg got his ship ready to sail, but some of his crew settled down there, as will be described later. Orlyg journeyed east round Bard, and once he'd gone beyond Snaefellsness Glacier and sailed into the bay, he could see two mountains, each of them with a valley cutting into it. Then he knew this was the place he'd been guided to, so he made for the southern mountain. This was Kjalarness, which his cousin Helgi had already claimed. Orlyg stayed the first winter with him, and in the spring with Helgi's approval he laid claim to the land between Mogils River and Osvifs brook, making his home at Esjuberg where he built a church as he had promised. Orlyg and his kinsmen put their faith in St. Columba.²⁰

A particularly interesting aspect of this story is the fact that Orlyggr took a *plenarium* (*plenarius*) or plenary with him to Iceland. This is a book of the gospels or epistles and homilies read at the Eucharist. Such an item would have been useless to Orlyggr unless he could read Latin. It is certainly not impossible that some of the settlers in Iceland could read. Ári in his *Íslendingabók*²¹ (written sometime after 1122) relates that the *papar* left behind them 'bökr írskar ok bjöllur ok bagla' (Irish books and bells and croziers). He continues: 'Af því mátti skilja, at þeir váru menn írskir' (Therefore one could

perceive that they were Irish men). As V. Skard²² suggests, this presupposes that, amongst the settlers, there were people who knew enough about writing to realise that they were faced with Gaelic books. It was surely amongst those settlers who had come from Western Scotland and who had been influenced by the Gaelic Church, such as Orlyggr, that these people were to be found.

Contemporary Irish sources corroborate *Landnámabók's* impression that Christian influences were strong amongst the Norse settlers in the Hebrides. The Gall-Gaidheil (Scandinavian-Gaidheil) the name by which contemporary Irish annalists knew the mixed population of Norse and Gaidheil, which had developed in the southern Hebrides and along the western littoral of Scotland by the 850s²³, were regarded as Christian, at least in comparison to the 'pure' Scandinavians. Despite slanderous accounts to the effect that they had forsaken their baptism, they are clearly contrasted with the 'gennti' (heathens) in *AU*, under the year 856:

Cogadh mor eter gennti ocus Mael Sechlainn co nGall-ghoidhelaib leis

[Great warfare between the heathens and Mael Sechnaill supported by the Gall-Gaidheil]

Two tenth century runic inscriptions also corroborate strong Christian influence amongst the Norse inhabitants of western Scotland; one survives on the Kilbar cross-slab²⁴, and the other on a broken grave-stone from Iona. The Kilbar cross-slab on Barra was set up in memory of a woman, according to the inscription:

Eptir þorgerðu Steinars dottur es kross sjá reistr

[After þorgerð Steinar's daughter is this cross erected]

It is quite an impressive monument, indeed a unique monument in the Scottish context, consisting of a Celtic cross decorated with Scandinavian interlace ornament. It must have been an 'expensive' item, raised in commemoration of a woman of high social class. þorgerð was presumably a Barra noble-woman.

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The Iona inscription is on an 'expansional' cross with parallels in Ireland and reads as follows:

Kali Qlvisson lagði stein þensi yfir Fogl bróður sinn
[Kali Qlvisson laid this stone over his brother Fogl]

Liestøl²⁵ points out that Qlvir and his sons Kali and Fogl must have belonged to a leading family in the west for Fogl to have merited burial near the shrine of St Columba, and close to the road leading from the abbey to the cemetery of Reilig Odhrain. Alongside the runic inscriptions we can add fragments of a tenth century Norse poem composed by an anonymous Christian Hebridean.

Two fragments are all that survive of the lost, late tenth century poem *Haferðingadrápa* (The Lay of the Sea Mountains). A *haferðing* or 'sea mountain' was a type of huge wave, occasionally encountered off the coast of Greenland. Despite only being in fragments, this poem is extremely important: for one thing it is one of the very few surviving fragments of Hebridean Norse poetry, and for another it is explicitly Christian. Although composed in Old Norse, it expresses a hope in God's mercy, and in its description of God as a 'Master of monks' it expresses a Gaelic Church ethos. These fragments appear in versions of *Landnámabók* and *Grœnlendinga Saga*.²⁶

Let us hearken to the cup of the dwarves' halls [poetry]]

I beseech the immaculate Master of monks to steer my
journeys, may the Lord of the lofty heavens hold his strong
hand over me

As can be seen, there is clear evidence for the survival of a community of monks on Iona and for the spread of Christianity amongst the Norse settlers. However, an isolated Iona, no matter how influential, is unlikely to have converted the Norse single-handedly. It takes a church organisation with many chapels, monks and priests to effect such a change. So it is unlikely that Iona remained an isolated island of

Christianity whose mystique so impressed the Norse that they decided to abandon their traditional religion. Rather we must assume that the Columban paruchia of churches and small monastic centres, organised and administered from Iona, which had spread throughout the Hebrides prior to the arrival of the Norse, must have survived, and continued to be manned by her monks. This was surely not outwith the skill of the administrative centre of the Columban paruchia within Ireland and Scotland. The survival of church organisation through the Norse settlement period posited for Iona mirrors that suggested recently for Orkney by Lamb.²⁷ He argues cogently that the Pictish church organisation established in Orkney during the eighth century survived Norse settlement and that Orkney remained essentially Christian.

It is surely within the context of a surviving Columban paruchia of chapels, cells and monastic units that we should understand the *papar* place-names and many of the obscure Gaelic saints commemorated in church dedications.

The word *papar* is a borrowing into Norse of the Gaelic *papa/pupu* (father/priest), which is itself a borrowing from Latin *papa* (father). The Norse used it to refer to Christian priests. The author of *Historia Norvegiæ*²⁸ understood the *papar* to have been an important component of the population of Orkney prior to the arrival of the Norse:

These islands [the Orkneys] were at first inhabited by the Peti [Picts] and Papae...And the Papae have been named from their white robes, which they wore like priests; whence priests are all called papae in the Teutonic tongue. An island is still called, after them, Papey.

As indicated by the author of *Historia Norvegiæ*, *papa* appears as a generic in place-names, occurring in Scotland, the Faroes and Iceland. The generic appears at least 27 times in the Northern Isles and Hebrides. In the Hebrides, we have Pabbay (Skye), Pabay Mor and Beg (Lewis), Pabbay (Harris), two small islands called Pabbay (S. Uist) and Pabbay (Barra) all from *paparöy* 'priests' isle'. Bayble (Lewis), Paible (Taransay) and Paible (N.Uist) derive from *papabýl* 'priests'

dwelling/estate', and Papadil (Rum) from *papadalr* 'priests' dale'. The element occurs nowhere in the Hebrides south of Ardnamurchan, highlighting the greater norseness of the area north of Ardnamurchan.

The locations of these generics in the Northern Isles, the Papils in Unst, Fetlar, Yell and Burra, the Shetland island of Papa Stour, Papay and Papa Stronsay in the northern isles of Orkney, Papil in South Ronaldsay and the former parish of Paplay, are all characterised by tracts of prime-quality farmland. This is also the case in the Hebrides. Their importance can be gauged from the fact that the Pabbays on Lewis and Harris were from time to time the residence of the MacLeod chiefs. Similarly, Papa Stour, in Shetland, was the seat of powerful Norwegian officials in the Middle Ages and supported a population of several hundred in the last century.

The survival of the two fascinating church-dedications on Papa Westray, to St Triduana (called *Trollhöna* by the Norse) and to St Boniface, two saints whose orientation is definitely Pictish and eastern²⁹, add to the evidence that there was church continuity at papa sites. The *culti* of these two particular saints are hardly likely to have survived without the benefit of local tradition. The *papa* place-names are Norse, and according to Lamb³⁰ they imply Norse recognition of estates held by the church. It seems highly likely that this is the case in the Hebrides.

Taransay, off the coast of Harris, presents a similar situation to Papa Westray in Orkney. There were *papar* on the island as shown by the place-name Paible, and they would appear to have been in contact with the Norse, because Taransay, an unusual Norse place-name, means 'Taran's Isle', the Taran in question being St Tarannán or Torannán. His veneration continued for centuries on the island, where stand the remains of a church called Teampull Tharáin along with another called Teampull Ché (Keith). Martin Martin relates that the natives of the island believed that a man must not be buried in St Tarain's and a woman must not be buried in St Keith's.³¹ Similarly, on Pabbay (Harris), there are chapels dedicated to the Virgin Mary and to St Mo-Luóc, Abbot of Lismore (d. 592 *AU*) and there is also a rock dedicated to St

Curitan³², probably the Bishop of Rosemarkie who signed *Cáin Adamnáin* in 697³³ and possibly the same as the St Boniface aforementioned.

The church dedications throughout the Hebrides are overwhelmingly to figures of the Gaelic church, some famous but most obscure. Saints associated with Iona are common, as would be expected within the Columban paruchia. There are a number of commemorations to St Columba himself as befits the leading Hebridean saint³⁴, including chapels on Troday (Skye), on Fladda Chuain (Skye), at Howmore (S. Uist), on Berneray (Harris) and on St Kilda. There is a Teampull Chaluim Chille in Benbecula, a Loch Chaluim Chille in Benbecula and a Tobar Chalum Chille in North Uist. The medieval and now ruined cathedral of the Isles on Skeabost Island in Skye is dedicated to him, and, on Lewis, so is Eye Church and a now unidentifiable site in Barvas, recorded by Martin Martin. Finally, there is an Eilean Choluim Chille in Loch Erisort.

Other saints owe their commemoration to the influence of Iona. A. MacDonald³⁵ suggests that dedications to saints such as St Brénaid of Birr, St Ciarán of Cluain mac Nois and St Cainnech of Achadh Bó arose within the paruchia of Iona. There is a church to St Ciarán at Lianishader in Barvas, Lewis, and a Cill Choinnigh in South Uist.³⁶ Dedications to St Torranan and St Rónán probably have a similar origin.

St Rónán, as well as being commemorated at Teampull Rónain at Eorópie, is also associated with the remote island of North Rona or Ronaidh an t-Haf, the most northerly of the Hebrides. There is a Teampull Rónain there also, which consists of a bee-hive cell with associated chapel. As suggested, he is perhaps to be identified with Rónán, abbot of Cenn Garadh. The chapel of Saint Rónán, on North Rona, was being used by the inhabitants of Rona in the late seventeenth century³⁷. According to Ness tradition recorded in the last century³⁸, Rónán had a half brother called Flannán, whose name is retained in na hEileanan Flanain (The Flannan Isles), the remote island group off the west coast of Lewis. That the dedications to St Rónán originated within the paruchia of Iona is made evident by the fact that there is a dedication to

him on Iona itself. Teampull Rónaig is believed to have been Iona's old parish church.

Dedications to Saints associated with other monasteries in the West of Scotland also occur, for example St Donnán of Eigg, St Mael-rubha of Applecross and St Mo-luóc of Lismore. The annals are devoid of information concerning these sites during the ninth and subsequent centuries, but there is no necessity, nor indeed evidence, to suggest that these monasteries failed to survive the Norse settlement. In the case of Applecross, Ferchar mac an t-sacairt, who put down the MacWilliam revolt in Ross and Moray in 1215, is thought to have been the son of the lay patron of the monastery³⁹, which naturally implies that Applecross survived the Norse settlement period. The survival of the cults of their leading saints suggests that these monasteries did survive, and were responsible, along with Iona, for the continuity of the Gaelic Church.

In the case of Barra we appear to have in microcosm an example of the situation which existed throughout the west. Here there is clear evidence for the survival of the Gaelic church tradition through the Norse settlement period, because, along with the example of Taransay, we have a Norse island-name which takes its name from a Gaelic Church Saint, namely St Finbarr, or simply St Barr, of Cork, who died c.610. On the island there is a church dedicated to him still, *Cill Bharr*, Kilbarr, where Þorgerð was buried and commemorated in the 10th century and where, even as late as c.1700, there was a wooden image of the saint venerated.⁴⁰ Indeed, the inhabitants of Barra still venerate St Barr to this day.

It must now be apparent why Magnus showed such awe when he landed on Iona. Here was a monastery, the centre of the Gaelic church in the Hebrides, which had survived the violent raids of the early 9th century and gone on to convert the Norse inhabitants through its strong cultural presence and its extensive paruchia of churches and monastic centres. This was a monastery which had been venerated by the Norse for centuries prior to his visit. Indeed, he was not the first Scandinavian king to pay his respects. After his defeat at the

battle of Tara, Olaf Cuarán, king of Dublin, and sometime overking of the Hebrides, seeking solace, chose to go on a pilgrimage to Iona, recorded in *FM* under 980. He died there, and was presumably buried on the island, the most fitting testimony to Iona's influence:

Co ndeachaidh Amhlaoiph iaromh tar muir co nerbail
in Í Colaim Cille.

[After this Amlaib went across the sea and died at
Iona.]

Notes

1. From a poem by Bjorn Cripplehand, translation in *Heimskringla*, ed. E. Monsen (New York, 1990), p. 593.
2. *ibid.*
3. S. MacAirt, ed., *The Annals of Innisfallen* (Dublin, 1951).
4. S. MacAirt & G. MacNiocaill, eds., *The Annals of Ulster* (to AD1131), I, (Dublin, 1983).
5. See A.O. Anderson, ed., *Early Sources of Scottish History, AD500-1286* (Edinburgh & London, 1922), Vol. I, p. 259; from now on *ES*.
6. *Vita Sancti Blathmaic Martyris*, ed. Pinkerton, *Vitae Antiquae Sanctorum* (London, 1789), pp. 459-463.
Walahfrid Strabo was abbot of Reichenau when he died on August 18th, 849, see J.F. Kenny, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical* (Dublin, 1979), p. 550.
7. Translation from *ES* i, p. 265.
8. J. Bannerman, 'Comarba Coluim Chille and the Relics of Columba', *Innes Review*, Vol. xlv, No. 1 (1993), pp. 42-43.
9. For the argument see Chapter 6 of A. Jennings, *A Historical Study of the Gael and Norse in Western Scotland from c.795 to c.1000*, unpublished PhD Thesis, Edinburgh, 1993.
10. *Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616*, ed. J.O. Donovan (Dublin, 1848-51).

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11. A *tanaise abbad* was also a very important figure in the monastery. He acted as prior of the monastery and was the abbot designate. See K. Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society* (London. 1966), p. 211.
12. The title of *airchinnech* or *princeps* in Latin was often applied to an abbot from the tenth century onwards. It probably reflects his increasingly secular interests. K. Hughes, op. cit., believed that much of the abbot's energy was spent on trying to collect revenue and keep his church inviolate from physical harm in the face of Scandinavian pressure.
13. M.O. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1973; revised 1980), pp. 266-267.
14. Ketill Flatnose is likely to be the *Gall-Gaidheil* leader Caithil Find who appears in *AU* under 857.
15. Pálsson & Edwards, trans., *The Book of Settlements: Landnámabók* (Manitoba 1972), p. 52.
16. *ibid.*, p. 55.
17. *ibid.*, p. 123.
18. See *infra* for the *papar*.
19. We do not know of any 9th century bishop in the Hebrides called Patrick, but in fact we do not know the names of any 9th century bishops.
20. Pálsson & Edwards, *The Book of Settlements*, pp. 23-4.
21. *Islendingabók*, ed. J. Benediktsson (*Islenzk fornrit*, 1968).
22. V. Skard, *Norsk Språkhistorie*, Vol. 1 (Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø, 1973), p. 69: 'Ares tradisjon forutsetter altså at det blant landnamsmennene var folk som har kjent så mye til skrift at de kunne skjønne de her stod overfor irske bøker.'
23. For a detailed account of the geographical origins of the *Gall-Gaidheil* see A. Jennings, 'Historical and linguistic evidence for *Gall-Gaidheil* and Norse in Western Scotland', in P. Sture Ureland & I. Clarkson, eds., *Language contact across the North Atlantic, Linguistische Arbeiten* 359 (Tübingen, 1996), pp. 66-69.
24. The Kilbar cross has been dated to the late tenth or early eleventh centuries, see Close-Brooks and Stevenson, *Dark-Age Sculpture* (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 43, while the Iona cross-slab has been dated to the late tenth century, see A.

- Liestøl, 'An Iona Rune Stone and Man', in *Ninth Viking Congress*, p. 92.
25. *ibid.*, p. 87.
26. The first fragment occurs in *Hauksbók* and the second in *Sturlubók*. The translation of the first fragment is taken from Vigfússon and Powell, eds., (1883), Vol. II, p. 54, while the second is taken from Pálsson and Edwards (Manitoba, 1972), p. 50. The second fragment also appears in *Grœnlendinga Saga*, ed. M. Þorðarson (Reykjavik, 1935).
27. R. Lamb, 'Carolingian Orkney and its Transformation', in C.E. Batey, J. Jesch & C.D. Morris. eds., *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic* (Edinburgh, 1995).
28. *Historia Norvegiæ*, in *Monumenta Historica Norvegiæ*, ed. G. Storm (Christiania, 1880). Translation from ES i, pp. 330-1.
29. Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 262.
30. *ibid.*, p. 267.
31. M. Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (1716), p. 49.
32. R. MacilleDhuibh, *West Highland Free Press*, 3/5/91.
33. A.P. Smyth, *Warlords and Holymen* (London, 1984), p. 127.
34. For a list of commemorations to St Columba see Redford, *Commemorations of saints of the Celtic Church in Scotland* (M.Litt Thesis, Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 161-4.
35. A. MacDonald, 'Gaelic Cill (Kil(l)-) in Scottish Place-Names', *BUPNS*, Series 2, Vol. 2 (1979), p. 15.
36. W. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland* (Edinburgh & London, 1926), p. 276.
37. M. Martin, *Western Islands*, p. 22.
38. W. Watson, *Carmichael Watson Collection MS95*, pp. 48-55.
39. See J. Munro, 'The Earldom of Ross and the Lordship of the Isles', in *Firthlands of Ross and Sutherland*, ed. J.R. Baldwin (Edinburgh, 1986), p. 59.
40. M. Martin, *Western Islands*, p. 92.