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CENEL LOAIRN, CENEL nGABRAIN & THE MYSTERY OF MORAY:
NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE MORAY DEBATE

Katrina Pahl

Capstone

May 03rd, 2024

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Notes on Translations

Unless otherwise stated in the footnotes, all translations are mine. The Latin is from the original source, and it is there for other Latin knowers to translate at their leisure.

INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the eighth century, the Cenel (kindred) of Loairn likely ventured out of their lands in Dal Riata due to the pillaging of their lands by Oengus mac Fergus.¹ The land they went to was at the time known as Fortriu. Today however, it is known as Moray and one of the most famous members of this kindred is known by many—Macbeth. How, when, and why this all happened has been a heated debate for more than one hundred years, which sheds light on the fact that the entire story is not fully understood, despite thorough reading and archival research on early medieval Scotland. Each source that falls under the category “early medieval Scotland” comes with their own difficulties; even still, only a few in this plethora of sources shed light on the kingdom of Moreb, more commonly known as Moray. Due to this insufficiency, which will be covered in depth later on, the topic of Moreb has become a debate for many historians, on whether Moreb was its own separate kingdom or just part of the kingdom of Alba. The latter of the two does have evidence to support it, however, due to the overwhelming evidence of familicide that can be traced through annals, and the clan rivalry between Cenel Loairn and Cenel nGabrain that can be seen clearest through Mael Coluim I and Macbethad, there is more evidence to support the conclusion that Moreb was its own kingdom from the late eighth century under the family of Loairn until the clan member Macbethad (Macbeth) took the throne of Alba in 1040.

To fully understand the kingdom of Moreb, and the debate around it, one must first know the history behind the peoples and the kingdoms inside Scotland (Albania) in the eighth century. After this introduction, I will discuss the problem of sources, to help readers understand the

¹Sean, Airt, and Gearoid Niocaill, eds. *Annals of Ulster To A.D 1131*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. (Cork, Ireland: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983), AU 736.1.

predicament that lies behind the debate of Moreb. Second, I will discuss in depth the potential origins behind Loairn and the destruction of their Cenel that led them to Fortriu. Following this, an overview of the destruction of Fortriu will be investigated, and how that kingdom allowed Moreb to grow, with Fortriu protecting Moreb from the Viking onslaught. Moreover, this section will discuss Mael Coluim I and his invasion of Moreb and how this is evidence that Moreb was its own kingdom. Lastly, Macbethad will be discussed: his reign, his pedigree, and how his death led to the end of Cenel Loairn. While the topic of Moreb, and its mysterious nature has been looked at repeatedly, the unfortunate hurdle that will continue to cause this debate is that of sources.

A major challenge for historians in the eighth through eleventh centuries is the lack of primary sources from this period. Most sources that talk about this period are from the eleventh onwards, and as such, it makes this period a true “dark age.” This has some positives because it allows for multiple hypotheses to come to fruition. There are also negatives, the most prominent being that all historians are looking at the same sources, leaving little room for new ideas; moreover, with so many articles and books being published on the same sources, it is inevitable that over time biases have been and will be forced on people who have never read that source, and dismiss other sources outright.

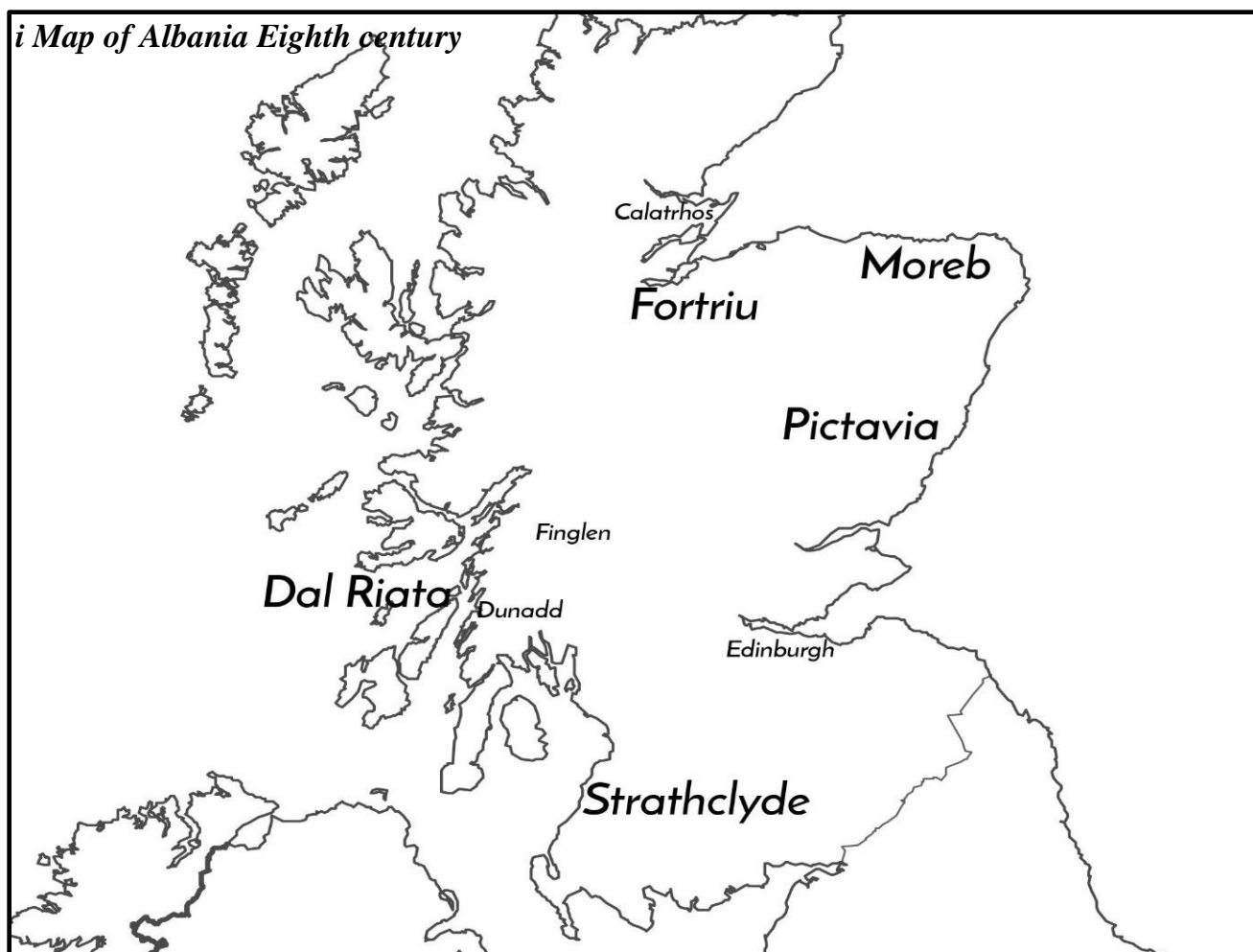
This dismissal is not always ill-founded. During the Middle Ages, most sources were written or copied inside of a church or monastery. The most obvious problem with such a method is scribe errors or less-than-average translations. This has caused issues over time because words can be taken out of context, they can be unreadable, or tell a different story altogether. The more insidious problem with the sources being used is that of bias. After the Gaels of Dal Riata took over Pictavia, the Cenel nGabrain, a house that would fight Cenel Loairn

multiple times, began funding the churches. This has potentially allowed for Alba to *remove* Moreb from history, or at the very least paint them in a bad light.² Historians such as Marjorie Anderson have tried tracing Scottish sources back to a common “parent” list, with some success, in her book *King and Kingship in Early Scotland*.³ Many Scottish historians, including myself, have used the alphabetical “King’s List” she made to help historians know where each list is from and when. This knowledge can be extremely useful at times, as it helps determine the legitimacy of the sources. A perfect example of this is the *Annals of Ulster* (AU). The original writing was done on what is known as easter tables, a calendar system starting on Easter Sunday, which used the Alexandrian calendar.⁴ This is important to know because the *Annals of Ulster* calendar is one year ahead of the Gregorian calendar. When the transcriptionists copied the information from table to manuscript, they did not fix this mistake. Other examples of mistakes like this are common, including the *Annals of Tigernach*. This is important because this can mean that dates are off, and that events may be missing. To the later point, if dates *are* missing, that could also provide meaning to why Moreb was not mentioned by Irish sources until the eleventh century.

² Kenneth, Veitch. “The Alliance between Church and State in Early Medieval Alba.” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 193–220, 210–11.

³ Anderson, Marjorie. *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*. (Edinburgh, Scotland Scottish Academic Press, 1973.)

⁴ Anderson, 205–08.



SECTION ONE: LANDS AND PEOPLE

The following section is meant to help ground one in the kingdoms that will be at play during our narrative, the role of a king and their kingdom, and to begin the discussion of the mysterious Moreb and its neighbor Fortriu. To begin, the land of Albania, which is known today as Scotland, in the mid eighth century was divided into four kingdoms: Dal Riata, Pictavia, Strathclyde, and Fortriu. Dal Riata was a Gaelic speaking kingdom, which originally included the north of Ireland; however, most historians agree that by the middle of the seventh century, the two halves were split.⁵ What set Dal Riata apart from the next three kingdoms is that of

⁵ Alex, Woolf. *Pictland to Alba: 789-1070*. 1st ed. Vol. 2. 10 vols. The New Edinburgh History of Scotland. (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2007, 7-8.)

kinship, or *Cenel*. *Cenel* is an old Irish word that has multiple meanings all based around the same idea—family.⁶ In many ways clans and family are the same in Gaelic society, so I will use the two words interchangeably. The kingdom of Pictavia was composed of a people known as the Picts, a tribe(s) of peoples living in Albania since before the Romans. The kingdom of Strathclyde exists below Dal Riata, in what is known today as the Southern Uplands. Strathclyde consisted of groups of Britons. With Strathclyde being so close to Dal Riata, it is hard to conclude where Strathclyde ends, and Dal Riata begins. The only conclusive border known to historians is Dumbarton, or Alclut as the Britons called it, which lays northwest of Glasgow. It served as a major strong point for the Britons. History knows this because the name *Dumbarton* means in Gaelic “fort of the Britons.”⁷

The last kingdom to be discussed is Fortriu. Historians still debate whether this kingdom even existed. This debate seems foolish due to the overwhelming number of Irish sources, such as the *Annals of Ulster* (AU) and the *Annals of Tigernach* (AT), that mention it frequently.⁸ This said, its location was debated for some time, and little evidence remains of its existence. For multiple decades, historians assumed that Fortriu lay in the center of Albania; however, Dr. Alex Woolf concluded that Fortriu must lay north of the Mounth, due to details of a battle established in *Chronicles of the Kings of Alba*.⁹ It is likely that Fortriu did exist, due to the overwhelming number of times the name is mentioned, in both Irish and Scottish chronicles. What remains undiscovered though, is when the kingdom was destroyed. No chronicle or annal mentions the

⁶ The word most likely comes from a proto-celtic word: *kenetlom*. It means race, kinship, family, and something along the lines of what we would call a nation.

⁷ William, Dickinson. *Scotland From Earliest Times to 1603*. Ed. Archibald Duncan. 3rd ed. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1977), 26.

⁸ Fortriu is mentioned in the AU 664.3 entry, up until CE 904 when Fortriu was destroyed.

⁹ Alex, Woolf. “Dun Nechtain, Fortriu and the Geography of the Picts.” *The Scottish Historical Review* LXXV, no. 220 (October 2006): 199.

destruction of Fortriu, but historian Benjamin Hudson has hypothesized that the Cenel Loairn took over Fortriu after they migrated to the north in 736.¹⁰ Dr. Hudson is incorrect in his assumption, as it does not explain why the name Fortriu comes up past the eighth century; in fact, the *Annals of Ulster* makes mention of Fortriu in CE 903:

AU 904.4: Imhar ua h-Imhair do marbad la firu Fortrenn, & ár már n-imbi.

AU 904.4: Ímar grandson of Ímar, was killed by the men of Fortriu, and there was a great slaughter around him.

While no annals mention communication between the Gaels and Picts, it could be possible that the two shared a similar language, based on that of Q-celtic. The Q-celtic languages are almost solely prescribed to Gaelic and Goidelic languages. Due to the nicheness of the Q-celtic language family, it is very likely the Gaels of Dal Riata and the Picts of Pictavia & Fortriu communicated. If correct, this would allow for the new kingdom of Moreb to form in the east and Fortriu to exist in the west. This would also account for why Moreb is not mentioned in the tenth century—they were protected by Fortriu. More evidence of this protection will be examined moving forward.

One last item to consider is that of administrative power. Due to the lack of sources, especially that on royal authority, a clear image of Pict or Gaelic authority is impossible. The oldest known laws of the Scots is the *Regiam Majestariam*, a detailed manuscript of all Scottish laws published in 1609.¹¹ The lack of contemporary sources on the laws has led many historians to turn towards Anglo-Saxon kingship or Irish kingship for answers. An alternative way of exploring kingship from this period is by looking at *Acts of Parliament* established by James I (1394-1437). This way of examining laws is not likely to be helpful, because by this time

¹⁰ Benjamin, Hudson. *Kings of Celtic Scotland*. (Westwood, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 33.

¹¹ This text will be examined in section four.

English royal customs, which were picked up by Norman-French customs, had found their way into Scottish court. Due to this, it will serve as a better template to use Irish customs, instead of Anglo-Saxon or English customs to paint a picture of law and kingship at this time.

Kings during this period acted not only as the head of a kingdom, but of a people.¹² In a word, to rule a kingdom (the dominion of a king) is to unite a people under a single banner. Due to this, kings would tour around their kingdom, staying with their *mormaers* (stewards). It was law that these mormaers pay tribute to the king when he arrives. What remains different from Anglo-Saxon customs, however, is that the king is subject to law as well.¹³ According to a book of laws called *Senchus Mor*, the king is not above the law, and if deemed a “False Judging King” they must pay their mormaers money or parts of their livestock.¹⁴ If this law existed inside Dal Riata, as well as Moreb and Alba, then one could suppose that their kingdoms were very agricultural-based. While Alba in the ninth and tenth centuries would go on to adopt Anglo-Saxon customs, Moreb would keep these agriculturally based customs such as Dabhach.¹⁵ It remains unclear though how different Alban and Morvian cultures truly were, and a land measurement is hardly enough to suppose different cultures outright; however, due to Pictavia and Dal Riata existing in the space for so long, it could suppose that Moreb remained more Gaelic than Alba. Likewise, the separation of Moreb and Dal Riata, and Alba later on, goes back to this word: Cenel. As stated previously, the word is tied to kinship, much like Clans later on.

¹² Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, 26.

¹³ W, Hancock. *Ancient Laws of Ireland*. Vol. 1. 6 vols. Ed Alexander Thom, (Abbey-Street; Hodges, Smith, & co., 104, Graftox-Street, 1865), 55.

¹⁴ Hancock, 55-57.

¹⁵ Ross, Alasdair. “The Dabhach in Moray: A New Look at an Old Tub,” essay, in *Landscape and Environment in Dark Age Scotland* (St. Andrews, Scotland: The Committee for Dark Age Studies, 2006), 57–74, 58-9. The Dabhach was a measuring tool only used in northeastern Scotland to space out land and collect taxes.

To quote the late William Skene, “Their rights were derived through the common ancestor, and their relation to him, and through him to each other, indicated their position in the succession, as well as their place in the allocation of the tribe land.”¹⁶ In short, when the fighting began between Loairn and nGabran, it was not only for the kingship of Dal Riata, for them, it was about the right to live and feed their people. Even in the early twelfth century, when the first book of Scottish law, *Acts of Parliament*, was written, many of the laws were tied to kinship. One such example is that of wounding another person, the former *must* apologize to their kin and kinship.¹⁷ This is a topic that will be explored more in-depth during the reign of Mael Column I; however, one ought to be empathic as they read through the familicide of Loairn. This is not just the story about a missing kingdom—it is the story about a people who were erased from history.

SECTION TWO: CENEL LOAIRN ORIGINS

The beginning of this tale starts in CE 718:

AT 719.4: Cath Finnglinne eter da mac Fearchair Fota in quo Ainbhcellach iugulatus est die quintae feriae sextid Septimbris.¹⁸

AT 719.4: The battle at Finnglen between the two sons of Ferchar the Tall in which Ainbhchellach was slain during the fifth day, the sixth of the ides of September.

When looking at the pedigrees of Cenel Loairn, many begin with the Cenel’s founder, Loarnd, or with Ferchar the Tall, whose death has been recorded to be 696.¹⁹ The Irish annals do not give

¹⁶ William, Skene. *Celtic Scotland*. Second. Vol. 3. 3 vols. (London, England: Forgotten Books, 2018), 334-335.

¹⁷ Fredrich, Seeböhm. *Tribal Custom in Anglo-Saxon Law; Being an Essay Supplemental to: (1) The English Village Community, (2) The Tribal System in Wales*. (London, England: Longmans, Green, and CO, 1911), 299.

¹⁸ Gearoid, Niocaill, ed. *Annals of Tigernach*. (Cork, Ireland: University College Cork, n.d.) <http://research.ucc.ie/celt/document/G100002>, AT 719.4. Alan Orr Anderson has argued that due to the calendar system, this date is incorrect. Looking at the calendar used, versus ours, the date would actually be Wednesday September 19th, 718.

¹⁹ AU 697.2

details of Ferchar the Tall's death, which is custom in this early period. What seems likely though is his death was caused by Picts, or Cenel nGabrain. To examine this, one must turn to the Kings list:

Chronicles of the Kings of Alba: Fergar longus xxi.
 Eochad habes curvum nasum filius Donegarth filii Doneual varii iij.
 Arinchellach filius Ferchar longi i. anno.²⁰

Chronicles of the Kings of Alba:
 Ferchar the tall twenty-one [years]
 Eochad had a crooked nose, the son of Donegarth,
 the son of Doneual, of various 3 [years]
 Arinchellach son of Ferchar the tall 1 year.

After Ferchar dies, a different Cenel takes over, that of nGabrain.²¹ It could be likely due to infighting that has lasted for decades between nGabrain and Loairn, Ferchar was killed by nGabrain and the throne given to them for three years, with Eochad taking the throne. After this, Ainbhcach was given the throne for a year. He then goes to exile in Ireland as a captive.²² The annals, nor the *Chronicles of the Kings of Alba* (CKA), give reason for this exile, but it is likely (from repetition) that nGabrain would exile him to remove Cenel Loairn from power. After this, the King's list goes back and forth between these two Cenel until CE 718 with the battle of Finglen. It is this infighting that led to Loairn moving up into Fortriu. Another possible way of determining why Loairn would move so far away from Dal Riata is by exploring the familicide that occurred during this time. *Senchus fer Alban* provides a pedigree for both families, and when

²⁰ William, Skene, ed. *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and Other Early Memorials of Scottish History*. (Edinburgh, Scotland: H.M General Register House, 1867), 130.

²¹ Anderson, Alan. *Early Sources Scottish History AD 500 to 1286*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Edinburgh, Scotland: Oliver and Boyd, 1922, cxii. Here Anderson states that the house is Knapdale, this is partly true. Knapdale was a house (family) though they existed under the kindred of nGabrain. Knapdale is roughly 81 miles west of Edinburgh.

²² AU 698.4

looking at the pedigree it shows that nGabrain had fewer family members in power than Loairn; however, it is Loairn that ends up destroyed:²³

Genelach Cenel Gabrain	Genelach Cenla Loairnd mair	Cenela Loairn
Congus	Ainbhcclach (Death 718)	Morgan (CE 930)
mac Consamla	mac Ferchair fotai	mac Domnall
mic Canai gairb	mic Feradaich	mic Cathmail
mic Gartnait	mic Fergus	mic Ruadrach
mic Aedain	mic Coluim	mic Mnredaig
mic Gabrain	mic Boetain	
	mic Ecdach	
	mic Muredaig	
	mic Loairnd mair (sixth century)	
	mic Eirc	
	mic Eachach muinremain	

Marjorie Anderson claims that *Senchus Fer Alban* was created “as early” as the seventh century.²⁴ This would make the *Senchus* one of the few contemporary sources of Dal Riata history. With Ainbhcclach dying in CE 718, and if this pedigree is accurate, then it could be determined that this is when the surviving Loairn left. The center column is Loairn during the eighth century, and the list to the far right starts the Cenel Loairn pedigree in about CE 930. Likely, this is due to a scribe(s) adding to the *Senchus Fer Alban*. Another hypothesis comes from Benjamin Hudson, another historian who argues the existence of Moreb as a kingdom. In

²³ Skene, *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and Other early Memorials of Scottish History*, 130.

²⁴ Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, 135.

his book *Kings of Celtic Scotland*, his genealogy tree of Loairn has two sons of Ainbhcellach.²⁵

The two sons listed are Muiredach and Ruidri. The absence of Muiredaach and his sons from the *Senchus* is due to them staying behind in Dal Riata. Evidence of them remaining behind is found in the AU, with Muiredaach's death:

AU 736.2: Bellum Cnuicc Coirpri i Calathros uc Etar Linddu inter Dal Riatai & Foirtrind, & Talorggan {folio & column H29vb} m.
Fergusso filium Ainfceallaich fugientem cum exercitu persequitur, in qua congressione multi nobiles conciderunt.²⁶

AU 736.2: In the battle of Cnuicc-Coirpri in Calathros at Etar Linddu the battle between Dal Riata [nGabrain] and Fotriu and Talorgann, Fergus' son pursued Ainfcellach's fleeing son [Muiredach] with his army. In this encounter many nobles died.

Assuming that this is Muiredach in this entry, two things can be inferred. First, that Muiredach stayed behind, and nGabrain is still attacking Cenel Loairn. Second, that Dal Riata now has incentive to fight Fortriu. While Fortriu has appeared earlier in the AU (664.3, 686, 693.1, and 725.7), this is the first mention of a full battle. During this time, Pictavia is still raiding Dal Riata, and so it would seem unlikely that Dal Riata would go fight another Pictish kingdom without reason. The reason in this case would likely be that Cenel Loairn now exists within the area of Moreb, and nGabrain has cause to kill them. Likewise, if Calathros is another name for Calrossie²⁷ the distance from the southeast of Albania to the north shows that they went up to fight Loairn. In other words, nGabrain travelled north to destroy the last of Loairn, but Fortriu defended them. This proves not only Loairn moved north, but also suggests that Gaels and Picts communicated in some way.

²⁵ Hudson, *Kings of Celtic Scotland*, 170.

²⁶ AU 736.2. A. Anderson states that it is Muiredach who the annal is referring to due to the three years he reigned (733-736). Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, 235.

²⁷ Northern Scotland near the Moray Firth

While Muiredach died, the other members of Loairn survived with their pedigree mentioned in *Book of Leinster* under “Rig Clainde Lulaig”:²⁸

(*Book of Leinster* Folio 336 column B: Mael Snechta m Gillai Chomgain m Mael Brigti m Ruadri m Dondgusa
column C m Morgain m Domnaill m Cathmáil m Ruadrí m Ailchellaig m Fherchair Fotai

Mac Bethad m Findlaich m Ruadri m Domnaill.)

While similar to the *Senchus Fer Alban*, more names have been added. It could be possible that MS Rawlinson B 502 (*Book of Leinster*) is made from the *Senchus*.²⁹ This would make it contemporary with Lulag mac Mac Bethad, which explains why the pedigree was added to.

Turning towards Cenel nGabrian, the list from the *Senchus* is very short, because many others were made, again from *Book of Leinster*:³⁰

Book of Leinster Folio 336 column B: Daid m Mael Choluim m Donnchada (m ingeni Mael Choluim) m Cinaeda m Mael Choluim m Domnaill m Constantin m Cinaeda m Alpín m Echach m Aeda Find m Domongairt m Domnaill m Echach Bude m Aedain m Gabrain m Domongairt m Fhergusa m Eirc m Echach Muinremair m Oengusa m Fheidlimthi m Fergusa m Feidlimthe m Senchormaic
Column C m Cruithluth m Find Feice m Achir Chirr m Echach Antóit m Fhiachrach .i. Cathmáil m Echach Riatai (is eside Carpre Rigfhota) m Conaire m Moga Lama m Lugdech m Corpri m Dare m Corpri m Conaire m Etersceoil m Eogain m Ailella m Dedaíd m Shin m Roshin m Morga m Fheradaig m Ailella Érand m Fhiachach Fir Mara m Oengusa Turbig. Causantin dano mc Culen m Illduilb (cuius filius Amlaeb) m Causantin m Aeda m Cinaeda m Alpin. Cinaed & Dub da mc Mael Choluim m Domnaill m Cinaeda m Alpin.

The stark contrast between both pedigrees must not be understated. In *Senchus*, Loairn was twice as long, and in *Leinster* nGabrain is now twice in size, with just kings alone. The reason for this

²⁸ Anne, O’Sullivan. *Book of Leinster, Formerly Lebar Na Núachongbála*. Vol. 6. 6 vols. (Cork, Ireland: CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts), n.d. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/G800011F/index.html>, Folio 336 columns B/C. This pedigree can also be found in “MS Rawlinson B 502.” Oxford, UK, 1100. Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/ea96c258-35fa-4d52-949c-5a0ef99ce659/>, Folio 79V C48. It is under Clann Duff.

²⁹ According to the archive it is from, MS Rawlinson B 502 was written in 1100.

³⁰ *Book of Leinster* Folio 336 columns A/B.

rise of power, aside from the overthrow of Loairn is due to the destruction of Pictavia, and the construction of Alba in 843CE under Cinead mac Alpin:

Chronicle of the Kings of Alba: Kinadius igitur filius Alpini, primus Scottorum, rexit feliciter istam annis xvi Pictaviam. Pictivia autem a Picitis est nomiata; quos, ut diximus, Cinadius delevit.³¹

Chronicles of the Kings of Alba: Therefore Cinead, the son of Alpin, the first of Scots, successfully ruled this Pictavia for sixteen years. Pictivia, was named by the Picts whom, as we have said, Cinead destroyed.

It is uncertain whether all of Pictavia was destroyed, or if this conquest happened over a long period of time, starting in CE 843. Alan Anderson claims that the Picts and Gaels reigned side by side,³² while Alex Woolf asserts that Cinead ruled by himself.³³ It is more likely that Cinead ruled by himself, since the scribe states that the Picts were “destroyed.”

The origins of Cenel Loairn are inconclusive, as are most events during this period. It is likely, however, that they did move up north and found Moreb. Evidence of this is found in the causality loss from nGabrian and them missing from *Senchus Fer Alban* after Ainbhcéallach’s recorded death. The *Senchus* was recorded in Dal Riata originally, and with Loairn gone, their pedigree would end. Moreover, Loairn’s absence in the CKA is most certainly due to the sheer amount of death Loairn faced at the hands of nGabrain; likewise, the absence is also due to scribes focused on the destruction of Pictavia, and/or the coming of the Vikings.

SECTION THREE: ORKNEY, FORTIRU AND FOUNDING MOREB

The point of this section will be to investigate the fall of Fortriu and the birth of Moreb. As it goes with anything in the ninth century, the Viking invasions must be Examined. The damage brought by the Norse throughout Britain was unprecedented. It caused the formation of a

³¹ Skene, *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and Other early Memorials of Scottish History*, 8. This list is deemed list A by M. Anderson.

³² A. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, 274-5.

³³ Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, 93-4.

kingdom in the south, that being England; however, in Albania, it caused the destruction of two kingdoms: Fortriu and Pictavia, and the birth of another kingdom—Moreb. This said, it is unknown when the first Viking incursion of Albania occurred. The *Annals of Ulster* states:

AU 794.7: Uastatio omnium insularum Britannie a gentilibus.³⁴

AU 794.7: Devastation of all the islands in Britania by heathens.

This is incredibly vague, but not useless. Of course, there had been raids in Northumbria, but no raids in any of the kingdoms of Albania were mentioned before then. A raid was mentioned in AU 795 with scholars believing it to be the island of Syke. Alex Woolf states that this is unlikely, and the translation is “shrine” not Skye.³⁵ Taking Woolf’s translation to be true, the more accurate first recorded raid would be in CE 798 with the Hebrides being raided.³⁶ While small raids such as the one in the Hebrides occurred, the major recorded Scandinavian raid was in the Orkney isles.

The kingdom of Orkney before this time was not mentioned in any sources. Likewise, little to no archeology has been found around this area in Orkney, making the dating of this kingdom difficult. This said, *The Orkneying Saga* translated by Alexander Taylor states the following in around CE 874:

Earl Sigurd became a might chief. He made an alliance with Thorstein the Red, the son of Olaf the White and Aud the Deep-Minded, and they conquered all Caithness and much more of Scotland, and Moray and Ross.

892: And he had a fort built there in the south of Moray. [possibly at Burghead] Sigurd and Maelbrigte Tusk, a Scottish Earl, came to an agreement to meet at a place appointed with forty men each, and settle their quarrel once and for all.³⁷

³⁴ AU 794.7

³⁵ Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, 45.

³⁶ A. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, 257.

³⁷ Alexander, Taylor. *The Orkneying Saga*. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1938), 139. Taylor’s translation here has been the most accurate, however, it is not clear where he gets his dates from.

To begin, the dates provided by Taylor is not inside the saga itself. This is not to say that the dates are wrong, rather, that one should be hesitant. In a similar vein, the writing of this saga was completed around CE 1250, but that is still up to debate. What makes this saga unique is the culture behind it. The *Orkneyinga Saga* was completed on the island of Iceland. Before this, there are no other sources that talk about Orkney; moreover, the Norse had no writing system that historians know of. As such, it is hard to determine whether this interpretation of events is reliable. Another Mael Brigte is mentioned in the *Annals of Tigenrach*:³⁸

AT 1029.5: Mael Colaim son of Mael Brighde son of Ruaidhrí, king of Scotland, died.

This is likely the same one referred to within the saga, with there not being any other Mael Brigte inside Moreb at the time. This said, another interpretation of events would be that Mael Brigte is the brother of Findaelch, as they would have the same father. One more piece of information that could infer that the kingdom of Orkney existed around 874 is a passage from a fragmentary piece called *Duald Mac-Firbis*.³⁹⁴⁰

CE 865: The destruction and devastation of Fortriu by the *la Lochlannaibh*⁴¹ and they took away many hostages in pledge of tax. And taxes were given to them multiple times afterwards.

This passage allows one to infer that the men and women of Orkney were raiding Fortriu, and with its “destruction” it could be possible that Moreb became the next target. This leads to the last mention of Fortriu:

³⁸ AT 1029.5

³⁹ Skene, *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and Other early Memorials of Scottish History*, 401-407. An English translation can be found in A. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, 292.

⁴⁰ The date in the document is under 864, the correct date is 865.

⁴¹ Anderson translates this as Scandinavians, but this is not the direct translation. The Lochlanns could be a specific type of Scandinavian, but where they are from is inconclusive; however, they could be from Orkney, due to then attacking Fortriu directly.

AU 904.4: Imhar ua h-Imhair do marbad la firu Fortrenn, & ár már n-imbi.⁴²

AU 904.4: Ímar grandson of Ímar, was killed by the men of Fotriu, and there was a great slaughter around him.

While the subject of Imar will be discussed in a later chapter, here instead one ought to question the last half of this sentence. Is this “great slaughter” a last stand for Fortriu, or is it Fortriu being victorious in driving out Imar’s grandson Imar? Both readings are completely valid, but each raise more questions than answers.

Let us assume that this entry is a last stand for Fortriu. About forty years earlier there is mention of Fortriu’s destruction, so this could be the last stand against the Danes, due to how little defenses Fortriu had left. Another piece of evidence to support this narrative is found in *Chronicum Scotturm*:

904: Ead ri Cruithentuai the do tuitim fri da h. Imair & fri Catol go d. cedoibh.⁴³

904: Ead king of the Picts fell by the two grandsons of Imar and along with five hundred [others].

This line has caused historians a great deal of difficulty for many reasons. First, different translations have had different numbers for men. It usually comes down to two hundred or five hundred. The second difficulty is who “Ead” is in this line. Alex Woolf has argued that the line is missing “Constatine mac...”⁴⁴ which makes the line “Constatine son of Aed king of the Picts...”. This is plausible, since Constatine was king of Pictavia at the time. Another hypothesis would be this Ead is king of Fortriu. Evidence for this theory is as follows: usually, Pictavia is spelled out in full “Pictaviam,”⁴⁵ which it is not here. Hence, the confusion could have come from a scribal

⁴² AU 904.4

⁴³ W. Hennessy, ed. *Chronicon Scottorum*. (Cork: CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts: a project of University College, Cork), 2012. Special thanks to Ian Oliver at Regis University for helping with this translation.

⁴⁴ Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, 129.

⁴⁵ P 11.

error; moreover, the event happens the same year as the AU entry and there is no mention of Constatine's son of Aed dying in AU 904. One would think that if *ri Pictaviam* was killed by Norsemen, the AU would mention such, as they had with other kings. So, if the king of Fortriu was killed, and Fortriu destroyed, what happened to the land? There is no evidence, be it archeological or textual, to help answer this question. One could propose that Moreb and Orkney fought over it, and it was not recorded (or lost).

Evidence that supports the theory that Fortriu survives, and the Norsemen were defeated, is less than the previous hypothesis. The name *Fortriu* appears one more time in the

Fragmentary Annals of Ireland:

?918: Almost at the same time the men of Foirtriu and the Norwegians fought a battle. The men of Alba fought this battle steadfastly, moreover, because Colum Cille was assisting them, for they had prayed fervently to him, since he was their apostle, and it was through him that they received faith. For on another occasion, when Imar Conung was a young lad and he came to plunder Alba with three large troops, the men of Alba, lay and clergy alike, fasted and prayed to God and Colum Cille until morning, and beseeched the Lord, and gave profuse alms of food and clothing to the churches and to the poor, and received the Body of the Lord from the hands of their priests, and promised to do every good thing as their clergy would best urge them, and that their battle-standard in the van of every battle would be the Crozier of Colum Cille—and it is on that account that it is called the **Cathbuaid** 'Battle-Triumph' from then onwards; and the name is fitting, for they have often won victory in battle with it, as they did at that time, relying on Colum Cille.⁴⁶

This mention of Fortriu is interesting in that the name Alba appears here, Alba being the kingdom that would transform into Scotland. This is likely referring to the battle of CE 905 where Imar is killed. The name *Colum Cille* is referring to Saint Columba. The men of Dal Riata and later Moreb/Fortriu would worship Columba—as is seen here.⁴⁷ While Fortriu is mentioned

⁴⁶ Joan, Radner. *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*. (Cork: CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts: a project of University College, Cork, 1978). The translation here is Radner's. The date here could be wrong, but scholars generally accept the CE 918 date to be correct. The difficulty comes with the fragmentation of the text and no dates being provided.

⁴⁷ Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, 100-101.

here, the date may be incorrect, as it is coming from a fragmentary piece. It is more likely that this is referring to the battle of CE 905 completely. It is likely then that Fortriu was destroyed in CE 905, and Moreb took over their land as well, with the surviving Picts assimilating into the kingdom. This would have made the Gaels in Moreb defenseless, with their only ally being wiped out by a nearby kingdom. This would leave Moreb open to attack, and with the Norse invaders all but quelled in Albania, the Cenel nGabrain would attack Moreb. There is no evidence of what happens between CE 904 and the invasion of Alba in CE 953. However, before discussing those events, it is necessary going forward to explain what happened to nGabrain after the conquering of Pictavia.

In CE 843 Pictavia was conquered by Cinead mac Alpin, the king of Dal Riata; however, between CE 879-889, the kingdom of Alba appears. The potential reasons for this name switch need not detain us, as it would take up the rest of this paper. The short answer to the name switch is again: Vikings. Sometime around CE 879, the Scandinavians destroyed Pictavia. Looking at the CKA, the most likely date for this is 876, with it stating that the Northmen occupied Pictavia.⁴⁸ The king who would remove the Northmen from Pictavia was Constantine mac Aed (r. CE 900-43). With the Vikings gone, and Alba now ruling a large part of Albania, one could infer that they were the most powerful kingdom in Albania at the time. Most of the writing about Albania that survives from CE 900-42 is about Constantine mac Aed. This presents a new piece of evidence that Moreb was a kingdom. The quietest part of northern Albanian history is during CE 905-42. The reason for this could be that nGabrain wanted no one to know that Moreb existed during this time. To this day, Constatine mac Aed is known as the first king of Scotland, largely due to his heroic victory against the Scandinavians; however, the story would change if

⁴⁸ Skene, *Pictland to Alba*, 08.

the knowledge that another Gaelic kingdom lay to the north, one that helped hold off the Vikings: Alba would have to share a spot in the CKA with Moreb. Moreover, the only reason that Moreb appears in the CKA at all is due to one reason—Moreb slew the king of Alba.



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⁴⁹ Map of Moreb and Aberdeen from *J. Blaeus grooten atlas, oft werelt-beschryving, in welcke 't aerdryck, de zee, en hemel, wort vertoont en beschreven: eerste deel des aerdkloots-beschryving, inhoudende de afbeeldingen en beschryvingen der landen op het aerdryck*, 170.

Starting with the word usage in Mael Coluim's reign section, there is a word that scholars have argued over: *Albidosi*. Alex Woolf states that the word comes from the Welsh word *Elfydd*, which is a cognate of the word Alba.⁵² This is likely the case, due to the fact that Britons, Anglo-Saxons, and Welsh all referred to the land of Scotland as Albania, or *Albidosi*, which just means "the peoples of Albania." With this being the case, one can conclude that not only did Gaelic speaking person not write this, but that a section was tampered with or removed from the CKA. Another observation that confirms this is the reign date.

The CKA is based on what is called the *Poppleton Manuscript*, however, it is commonly divided into two kings' lists. List A consists of folios 27vo.b and 28vo.a., while list E contains the other half of the manuscript with folios 29 and 30.⁵³ The problem of the manuscript is that it was written at different periods, with A likely being written after E. Likewise, there are likely to be multiple translations of both lists, but the *Poppleton Manuscript* is the only one that has been recovered so far. With this knowledge obtained, kings list A states that Mael Coluim I reigned for eleven years (xi.), while list E states that he reigned for nine year (ix.).⁵⁴ There are two events that could have happened. One, this is just a scribal error. These were common during this period, with handwriting being unreadable or the manuscript falling apart. Option two, the document was changed. M. Anderson states that Gerald of Wales (c. 1130) worked on the *Poppleton Manuscript*, and with Woolf's research, this would mean it is likely that Gerald worked on list A.⁵⁵ Of course this does not decisively conclude Gerald tampered with the list, the evidence that suggests that is in the text itself.

⁵² Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, 179.

⁵³ M. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, 235-6.

⁵⁴ See Skene, *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and Other early Memorials of Scottish History*, 10 for list A and Skene, *Ibid*, 131 for list E.

⁵⁵ M. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, 235-6.

In kings' list A, many of the kings of Alba have listed events that detail their reign. Mael Coluim I's reign is very long but the text covers only one event in-depth. This is his raid on England, and how Constantine mac Aed asked Mael Coluim for the throne of Alba back for a single week; moreover, these events take up two thirds of his reign section.⁵⁶ Expanding on the raid is where the Welsh word *Albidosi*, comes from—while the section about Constantine mac Aed is clearly folklore. The other few lines are in relation to Moreb, which detail Mael Coluim I killing a person named Cellach, and the men of Moreb killing Mael Coluim I.

CKA: Mael Colaim filius Domnaill xi. Annis regnavit. Cum exercitu suo Maelcolaim perrexit in Moreb, et occidit Cellach...Et occiderunt viri ua Moerne Malcolaim in Fodresach id est in Claideom.⁵⁷

CKA: Mael Coluim mac Domnall reigned for eleven years. Mael Coluim went with his army to Moreb and slew Cellach [first two lines] ...And the men of Mearns [Moreb] killed Mael Coluim in Fodresach, meaning, Claideum. [last line].

These are the first two lines and the last line of Mael Coluim I's entry, and while vague, gives historians much to work with. First, this tells the reader that the author of this (Gerald of Wales) wants people to know immediately that Mael Coluim killed Cellach of Moreb. Who Cellach is remains a mystery, as this is the first and last mention of them in any primary source. Moreover, it has no dates on when the battle happened, if one happened at all, or where the death took place. The last line of the entry is more in-depth, but again has no date, which is unusual. The location "Fodresach" could be Fetteresso, which is just south of Aberdeen on the coast in Morayshire. With all this evidence pieced together the conclusion is likely that Gerald of Wales removed sections of Mael Coluim I's reign to focus on his raid, removing parts that pertained to Moreb, painting them as the villains.

⁵⁶ Skene, *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and Other early Memorials of Scottish History*, 10.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

This kings' list tampering relates back to the argument of kinship and the Cenel. As discussed earlier, the Cenel Loairn became Moreb and Cenel nGabrain became the kingdom of Alban. No annals or chronicles discuss the reason(s) why Mael Coluim invaded, or if they did, they were removed, but I believe there is an answer: kinship and power. Assuming that the slaying of Cellach is one of the first actions Mael Coluim I took, then it could be assumed that Alba either declared war or raided Moreb. The idea of a raid on Moreb appears troublesome and ill-founded. Moreb was likely weak and did not have much livestock to raid at the time; moreover, anything they did have was likely taken by the Norse raiders. This is all to say, the more probable answer is a war. The reasons for an invasion by Alba could be numerous: expansion on territory, slaves, resources, etc., items that historians such as Skene, Woolf, and Hudson have all explained brilliantly—but the cause for war is likely much deeper than that.

As shown earlier, nGabrain and Loairn had a generations-standing feud, and this war is likely related to that feud. While the identity of Cellach remains unknown, scholars such as William Skene have argued that Cellach was the king of Moreb at the time.⁵⁸ Evidence for this exists in two places. First, the *CKA* do not make mention of people unless they are kings, so the existence of Cellach likely mean that he was the king of Moreb. Second comes from a poem known to historian as *Prophecy of Berchan*. This poem's issue is that there are almost no kings mentioned; however, each line is directed towards a king. This has left historians to argue over who each line is referring to. In some cases, this is very easy, since the poem begins with the first king of Dal Riata and continues to CE 1097. Due to this pattern, most events are easy to attribute to a king and year—other lines do not have this luxury. In a translation of the text by Benjamin Hudson, he attributes this line to Mael Coluim I:

⁵⁸ Skene, *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and Other Early Memorials of Scottish History*, 256.

In noble Scotland [Alba] of fine slopes, sooner or later the red scald-crow will take sovereignty; travelers of rank will be with him, of the foreign land, without neglect.

Nine years to him in his kingship, going around his boundary; on the brow of Dunnottar,⁵⁹ one day, the Gaels will shout around his grave.⁶⁰

Hudson claims that the first of these two sentences is referring to Mael Coluim I war with England, but this is false. The “red scald-crow” is referring to Cellach. Mac Bethad has the nickname of the “Red King” by multiple sources, one of them being *Berchan*, and it is likely then that Cellach could also being given the nickname of “red.” Likewise, the “red scald-crow” appears in Gaelic folklore as a sign of death, the death of a king perhaps. If this is true, then Alba invading Moreb and killing Cellach could once again be about this generations long feud. The Viking incursions are over, so the blood feud continued. In a similar vein, the men of Moreb killing Mael Coluim I is likely in retaliation for Mael Coluim I killing their king. Since Gerald of Wales removed sections of this kings’ reign from the *Poppleton Manuscript*, it will remain unknown how much more fighting truly occurred.

The reign of Mael Coluim I remains an important one for the history of Moreb, and it is truly devastating that so little survives. This is the first time Moreb appears in the annals of history. Not only that, but the continuation of a blood feud exists, showing that nGabraín still found Loairn a threat to them. This must mean that Moreb had some legitimacy to the Alban throne, or in the very least they had enough power to fight for the throne. This power dynamic could explain why there are no recorded fights between Moreb and Alba between this time and the reign of Mac Bethad. Both kingdoms saw themselves as equals, and with more Scandinavian raids coming, Moreb and Alba could have possibly settled peacefully. This is important for two

⁵⁹ This is certainly referring to Aberdeen Castle.

⁶⁰ Bengamin, Hudson. *Prophecy of Berchan: Irish and Scottish High-Kings of the Early Middle Ages*. (London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 87-88.

reasons; first, the peace between Moreb and Alba would allow both kingdoms to potentially grow in numbers, and with peace in the north Alba would have a chance to turn southwards towards Strathclyde. Second, one must understand that with the fall of Fortriu due to the Vikings, and the northern half of Albania being ravaged by war, it allowed Moreb to become its own as a kingdom, and for our purposes, show that Cenel Loairn survived the Viking onslaught. Moreover, the birth of this kingdom helped unite the surviving Picts and Gaels and create a new kingdom that would come to rival that of Alba. This is not to say that peace would last between Loairn and nGabrian, but rather, the second half of the tenth century would be the calm before the storm.

SECTION FOUR: MAEL BRIGTE AND HIS SONS

The second half of the tenth century in regard to Moreb is easily the most confusing period and is the center of the Moreb debate. Of course, the term Mormaer appears, but as has been examined, this is likely due to the church and Alba trying to discredit Moreb as a kingship. No—what has caused debate are two entries from the CE 1020:

AU 1020.6: Findlaech son of Ruaidri, king of Alba, was killed by his own people.⁶¹

AT 1020.8: Findlaech son of Ruaidri, mormaer of Moreb, was killed by the sons of his brother Mael Brigitte.⁶²

These entries have caused confusion for over a century, due to the titles used. It is likely that the *AU* is using “Alba” to describe the Gaels of Albania generally, much like the term “Pictavia” was used to describe either the kingdom or the peoples. The other question to consider is that of the “mormaer of Moreb.” The *Annals of Tigernach* is made up of many different chronicles, but all of them are not known; moreover, Alan Anderson speculates that the *Annals of Ulster* used

⁶¹ AU 1020.6

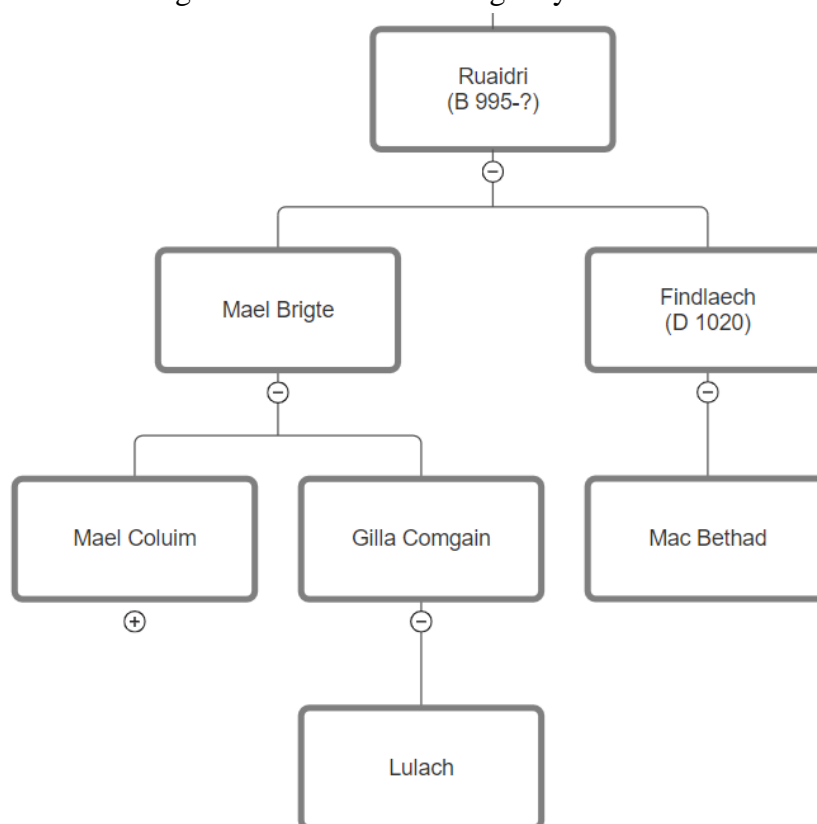
⁶² AT 1020.8

the *Annals of Tigernach* as its source.⁶³ Lastly, AU is connected to the Alban throne, with it being written in Northern Ireland, due to this, it is likely that the Alban church influenced many of the AU's entries.⁶⁴ If Hudson is correct, then that would make the AT the more reliable source to use, making the correct entry read something akin to:

Findlaech son of Ruaidri, king of Moreb, was killed by the sons of his brother Mael Brigte.

Once again, this is evidence that Alba used their ties to the church to remove Moreb from history. Before this correct translation, “ri Moreb” does not appear until the 1080, supposing that Moreb was under Alban control for sixty years or more.

With this information, it must be noted that CE 1019 is the first time Moreb appears since CE 954. This leaves little to go off of when discussing why Findlaech mac Ruaidri was killed.



⁶³ Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, XCV.

⁶⁴ Benjamin, Hudson, email message to author, February 20th, 2024.

A simple answer would be that the nephews wanted power. Findlaech mac Ruaidri is the father of Mac Bethad, so the rule would go to Mac Bethad upon his death. While the annals do not mention a rebellion, based on a CE 1032 entry from *Annals of Ulster*, it is likely that either Mael Coluim mac Mael Brigte and his brother Gilla Comgain took the throne of Moreb.⁶⁵ First in CE 1029 Mael Coluim mac Mael Brigte died, likely killed by Mac Bethad and then in 1032, Gilla Comgan was burned alive by Mac Bethad.⁶⁶ What also serves as evidence for a rebellion is Mac Bethad himself.

SECTION FIVE: MAC BETHAD

At some time between CE 1020 and 1029 Mac Bethad went to Alba and joined the army there as a commander. History knows this due to Marius Scotus, a historian who recorded the details at the time:

Marani Scotti Chronicon 1062: Donnachad rex Scotiae in autumnno occiditur a duce suo Macbethad mac Finnloech, cui successit in regnum annis 17. CE 1040.
⁶⁷

Marani Scotti Chronicon 1040: Donnachad king of the Scots was killed in autumn by his duke Mac Bethad, Findlaechs son, who succeeded the kingdom for seventeen years.

The word *duce* here has multiple meanings during the early Middle Ages. In one way it can mean the leader of a province, or, in this case it can mean a military leader. This passage has caused many debates about what Mac Bethad is, but it is likely that he is indeed a military leader exiled from his home. Moreover, it is this exilement that caused him to kill Donnachad, the leader of Alba at the time. The Cenel Loairn had a claim on Alba since the Loairn and nGabrain

⁶⁵ AU 1032.2: Gilla Comgán son of Mael Brigte, Mormaer of Moray, was burned together with fifty people.

⁶⁶ AU 1029.7 and AU 1032.2.

⁶⁷ Georg Heinrich Pertz. *Monumenta Germanie Historica*. (A. Hiersemann, 1965), 557.

come from the same ancestor, and since Mac Bethad needed a way to return to the throne of Moreb, he could use the throne of Alba to get it. So, Macbethad perhaps used the army given to him by Alba to retake the throne of Moreb. Then, he used his army to kill Donnachad in CE 1040. In the Shakespeare play “Macbeth,” the killing of Donnachad was very public, with Mac Bethad using his own soldiers to do it in Moreb. Moreover, Mac Bethad had multiple pedigrees made, connecting him back to his Cenel and the Alban throne.⁶⁸ This evidence suggests that during Mac Bethad’s reign, he wanted to state that he was from Cenel Loairn and they had a right to rule Albania.⁶⁹ The taking of Alba from nGabrain is important for many reasons. First, it allowed Moreb to unite the Gaelic peoples under one king, and this kingship would continue after Mac Bethad’s death. Moreover, this kingship perhaps allowed for the incorporation of feudal rule in the North, and also the spread of a more English-like church as well.

Under Mac Bethad’s reign, all of Alba would grow economically, with records stating that Mac Bethad scattered money like seeds.⁷⁰ In CE 1057, Mac Bethad would be overthrown and killed by Donnachad’s son, Mael Coluim III. The death of Mac Bethad separated the two kingships once again, with Lulach mac Gilla Comgain becoming king of Moreb for a year, after which he was also killed. The line of Moreb passed to Mael Snechta, who reigned from CE 1058-1085.⁷¹ The line would continue until king Oengus (sometimes spelt Angus) died in CE 1130.

AU 1030.4: Bellum itir fhiru Alban & feru Moreb i torcradar .iiii. mile d'fheraibh Moréb im a righ .i. Oenghus m. i imorro & uel centum quod est uerius d'fheraibh Alb an i frithghuin.⁷²

⁶⁸ These pedigrees are the ones discussed in the beginning of the essay.

⁶⁹ Professor Benjamin Hudson has a whole book about Mac Bethad and his pedigrees titled *Macbeth before Shakespear*.

⁷⁰ Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, 259.

⁷¹ Death date can be found in AU 1085.1

⁷² AU 1130.4

AU 1030.4: A battle between the men of Alba and the men of Moreb in which four thousand of the Moravians fell with their king, Oengus son of the daughter of Lulach; a thousand, or perhaps one hundred which is more accurate, of the men of Alba fell in a counterattack.

This is the last record of Moreb under the Cenel Loairn. The king at the time was David I, the son of Mael Coluim III, who likely wanted revenge for the death of his uncle. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* also has a record of this event, which leans heavily into this battle as a sign of vengeance.

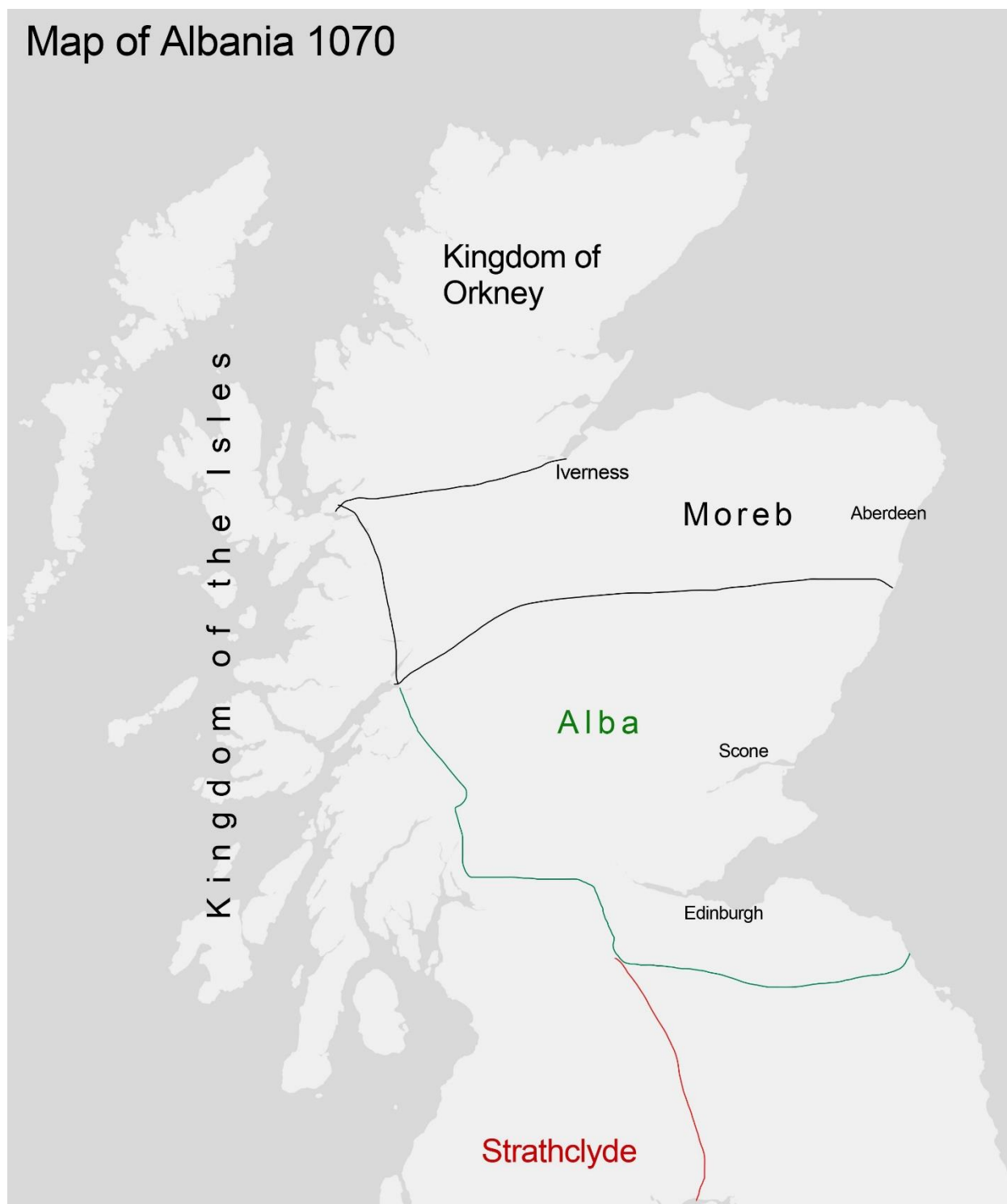
Anglo Saxon Chronicle: In this year [1130] Angus was slain by the Scots' army, and a great slaughter was made there with him. There was God's right avenged on him, because he was all forsworn.⁷³

The last sentence here is likely referring to David's right for revenge, with God being used as justification. After this battle, Moreb would be fully integrated into the Alban throne.

Interestingly, most records of these events come from English sources, justifying the taking of Moreb. This is due to the relationship between England and Alba being positive at the time, and as such, the writing is as well. Moreover, with many of these annals and writings being edited throughout the years, when England and Scotland became one, England likely needed reasons to keep Moray in the kingdom.

⁷³ Alan Anderson. *Scottish Annals From English Chroniclers A.D. 500 To 1286*. (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2007), 166. This is Anderson's translation of the chronicle.

Map of Albania 1070



CONCLUSION

There has been a recent revamping of medieval history, with the idea of it being “re-made,” and this is what I set out to accomplish with this story. For a long time, the history of Moreb was one of domination by Alba, with it being a small duchy in the north of Scotland; however, with new evidence and historians coming into the field of early medieval history: new discoveries ought to be made. Likewise, many people have steered away from the story of Moreb, likely due to the fear of nationalism. In the past, the teleology of Moreb begins after the death of Oengus. The north of Alba became home to the highlanders, who were overtime, assimilated into southern Scotland, or outright killed for being “backwards” or uncultured.⁷⁴ The highlanders spoke Gaelic, lived in clans and were only partly in the Scottish kingdom until 1745. This is indeed part of the story, but it is not all of it.

I have tried to stay away from the nationalistic tendencies of the past in this paper, which is to say, using the past to force nationalism on the present—instead—the purpose of this paper is to re-make the story of Moreb into something much deeper and meaningful. It is hard in the modern day to separate medieval history with nationalism, due to how romanticized it has become. An example of this is referring back to the highlanders. When people think of Scotland, they think of kilts and bagpipes, something that was not used during the period covered by this paper, this is a modern misconception that has polluted medieval history since the nineteenth century.

The purpose of this paper is to paint a picture over a muddied landscape. The story of Cenel Loairn and nGabrain was one of vengefulness and destruction. The two fought overland and territory for their respective families in the eighth century but overtime the war between

⁷⁴ The most relevant of these battles is the battle of Culloden.

them became about family and power. This, of course, ended with the Loairn Cenel being destroyed, but not erased from history—this paper proves this fact. With medieval scholarship being rewritten, my hope is that more stories of peoples long forgotten will be recovered, and their stories will come to light.

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