

## Columba (521-597) - Lecture 6 – ‘Politician and Envoy’

### 1. King Aedan of Dal Riata

- 559 – Victory of Bridei over the Scots of Dal Riata
- 560 – Conall becomes King of Dal Riata
  - 563 – Columba arrives in Dal Riata
  - 564 – Columba’s first visit to Bridei
- 574 – Conall dies & Aedan becomes King of Dal Riata
  - 575 – Druim Cett Convention
  - 580 (?) – The Succession Question & Aedan fights the Miathi
  - 584 – Bridei of the Picts dies
  - 597 – Columba dies
  - 603 – Battle of Degsastan
  - 606 (?) – Aedan dies

### 2. The Vision

- Columba on Retreat on Hinba
- Vision of Angel & Glass Book
- Reluctant to recognise Aedan as King, prefers Eoganan
- Eventually persuaded

### 3. The Prophecy

- Aedan will be invincible against all his enemies *unless* he is treacherous to Columba.
- Warning to Aedan’s descendants: *do not follow evil counsels and so lose the sceptre*’.
- Grandson, Domnall Brecc, acts unwisely: Aedan’s line *lost the sceptre*’.

### 4. A Smokescreen?

- Did Columba really prefer Aedan? Was the story altered by Adomnan?
- Was Aedan (and his line) *persona non grata* when Adomnan wrote?
- Finlay – Columba needed a STRONG king, not a WEAK one.
- Fraser – Adomnan wanted to rewrite history to fit in with current issues.
- But why have Columba arguing with the Lord’s angel?

### 5. A ‘Coronation’?

- Was it the case that Columba chose and appointed the new king?
- Did Columba simply give the church’s *approval* to what the tribe had already decided?
- Aedan was about forty years old when he became king.
- Aedan a strong man who could stand up for Dal Riata.
- Aedan was possibly not a professed Christian believer when he took power.
- Aedan’s crowning is FIRST known example of pagan king crowned by the Church.
- Did Columba CHOOSE Aedan to be king, or simply RECOGNISE him as king?
- Did Aedan seek the church’s blessing PLUS fulfilling other rituals?
- Is Adomnan giving a narrative designed to mould a new view of kingship succession?
- Aedan would undertake the normal secular inauguration of a Gaelic king.
  - Oath-taking
  - Acclamation.
  - Recitation of the king’s genealogy.
  - Setting of his foot in a sacred carved footprint (Dunadd or Dunaverty)

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### 6. The Convention of Druim Cett (575?)

- Aedan & Columba of Iona
- Aed & Comgall of Bangor
- Three issues:
  - The political relationship between the Irish and Alban kingdoms of Dal Riata.
  - The freeing of Scandlan who was a hostage held by Aed.
  - The poets, or bards, of Ireland. These Bards were under threat of banishment.
- *The Status of Scottish Dal Riata*
  - Originally a daughter kingdom, but now the stronger.
  - Dal Riata in Scotland under pressure from the North.
  - Dal Riata in Ireland under pressure from the south.
  - At Druim Cett agreement reached
    - Dal Riata in Scotland now seen as a fully independent kingdom.
    - No more tribute owed to High King of Ireland.
    - Military alliance where necessary with Dal Riata in Ireland.
  - Columba facilitated the discussions.
- Columba’s political principle: protect the kingdom = protecting the church/Gospel.

### 7. Aedan and the Picts

- Gabrain of Dal Riata lost in battle to the Picts (559/560)
- Conall of Dal Riata: ‘let sleeping dogs lie’.
- Aedan of Dal Riata: ‘I want to be the top man’!
- Columba – not a pacifist – strove to ensure Dal Riata as a Kingdom survived.

### 8. The Question of the Succession

- c. 580: Aedan sets off on campaign against Miathi of Stirling.
- Columba questions him about the succession if Aedan dies in battle.
- Aedan’s three older sons: *Artuir*, *Eochaid Find*, and *Domangart*.
- Younger son: *Eochaid Buide*: ‘*This one will survive to be king after you, and his sons will be kings after him.*’
- *Eochaid Buide*: ‘*leant on the saint’s bosom*’.
- Adomnan implying that legitimacy of succession issues from the bosom of the church?
- Is a change from *tanistry* to *primo-geniture* succession hinted at?

### 9. Degaстан

- Aedan had a victory at *Manu* sometime after the Orkney adventure.
- Was Manu the Isle of Man?
- 590 the Ulster *Annals* mention the battle of *Lethreid* in which Aedan was victorious.
- Battle with Picts at *Circhenn*, in which Aedan came off second-best.
- 597 – Columba dies.
- 603 – defeated by Northumbrians at *Degaстан*
- 14<sup>th</sup>-century John of Fordun: Aedan buried at south end of Kintyre near Dunaverty.
- Succeeded not by one king but by two: (a) His son Eochaid who became King of Kintyre; (b) Also by Connad who became King of Cowal.

Columba’s over-arching policy: support the king in protecting Dal Riata: in turn this ensures the church’s future. – Hawk or Dove?