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The many lives of St Duthac of Tain: Tracing the origins of a late medieval Scottish saint

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IN late July 1560, Nicholas Ross, the provost and vicar of Tain (1549-66x67), travelled south to Edinburgh to attend the Scottish parliament.¹ He left the gold and silver encased relics of St Duthac in the safekeeping of his kinsman, Alexander Ross of Balnagown; they would never be seen again.² The Protestant Reformation brought an abrupt end to the official cult of St Duthac, although for the next century exiled Catholics like the bishop of Ross, John Leslie (1565-96), would continue to reminisce about the days when '*Kingis, Princis and the commune people*' flocked to the tomb of the northern saint.³ One of those '*Kingis*' was James IV (1488-1513) who visited Tain annually from 1493 until his death at Flodden, and it is in the context of this royal patronage that the saint and his shrine are perhaps best known.⁴ However, Duthac was popular across late medieval Scotland with the success of the cult reflected in the consistent marking of his 8 March feast day in Scottish liturgical calendars, in the numerous altars dedicated to the saint and in his commemoration in

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- 1 *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, ed. T. Thomson and C. Innes (Edinburgh, 11 vols, 1814-75), iii, 25.
 - 2 *Old Ross-shire and Scotland: As Seen in the Tain and Balnagown Documents*, ed. W. Macgill (Inverness, 1909), i, 8. These relics included the saint's head encased in silver, his breastbone in a gold container and the portable shrine which was silver with gold gilding; they were valued at £113.
 - 3 The quote is from Leslie's history of Scotland which will be discussed further below (Leslie, J, *Historie of Scotland*, eds. F. Cody and W. Muriston [Edinburgh, 2 vols, 1888], i, 335). Duthac is also mentioned in a work of 1631 by David Chambers (Chambers, D., *De Scotorum fortitudine, doctrina, & pietate, ac de ortu & progressu haeresis in regnis Scotiae & Angliae* [Paris, 1631], 112-13).
 - 4 See Macdougall, N., *James IV* (Edinburgh, 1989), 196-8, for a quick synopsis of the piety of James IV.

other new foundations from the fourteenth century to the Reformation.⁵ In this period Duthac was one of only a handful of Scottish saints who had a truly national cult, stretching from Orkney in the north to Ayr and Kelso in the south. This popularity was recognised by an English poet who identified ‘*Doffin their demigod of Ross*’, alongside Andrew and Ninian, as the main patrons of the Scots at the time of the Flodden campaign in 1513.⁶

In spite of the broad popularity of the Duthac cult in late medieval Scotland the saint has received little attention from modern scholarship.⁷ Extended discussion of the cult and shrine is limited to an article by John Durkan on the foundation of the collegiate church at Tain, a range of enthusiastic local histories and a recent edition of the Scottish Burgh survey.⁸

5 The feast day is marked in the majority of Scottish calendars from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for example in the *Holyrood Ordinale*, ed. F. C. Eeles (Edinburgh, 1916), 8, a breviary from Aberdeen, Edinburgh University Library, MS 27- fol.2, and the Perth Psalter, National Library of Scotland, MS 652 (see Eeles, F. C., ‘The Perth Psalter’, *PSAS*, lxxvi [1932], 426-41, at 427). The only calendar to mark the feast on a different date is that of the Ross-shire abbey of Fearn which has two Duthac feast days on 6 March and 30 December (see *Calendar of Fearn. Texts and Additions, 1471-1667*, ed. R. J. Adam [Edinburgh, 1991], 51-6). It is possible that the latter date refers to a translation which will be discussed further below. Altars, chapels and other late medieval dedications to the saint were found throughout Scotland in the later middle ages. For a full list see Turpie, T., *Scottish Saints Cults and Pilgrimage from the Black Death to the Reformation, c. 1349–1560* (University of Edinburgh, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 2011), 126-7.

6 The poem (*Battle of Flodden Field. A Poem of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. H. Weber [Edinburgh, 1868], 27) was by an anonymous northern English poet..

7 MacKay, ‘The four heid pilgrimages of Scotland’, *IR*, xx (1974), 76-7, included Tain as one of the four main destinations for court imposed penitential pilgrimages in the fifteenth century, known as the four ‘heid pilgrimages’. Duthac features fleetingly in Cowan, I., ‘Church and Society’, in *Scottish Society in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J. Brown, (London, 1977), 112-35, at 113, and Ditchburn, D., *Scotland and Europe: The Medieval Kingdom and its Contacts with Christendom, 1214-1560, Volume 1: Religion, Culture and Commerce* (East Linton, 2000), 52. See also a brief discussion of Tain as a pilgrimage centre in Ditchburn, D., ‘Saints at the Door Don’t Make Miracles’? The Contrasting Fortunes of Scottish Pilgrimage, c.1450-1550’, *Sixteenth-Century Scotland. Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch*, eds. J. Goodare and A.A. Macdonald (Leiden, 2008), 69-98, at 66-7. Yeoman specifically only includes Duthac in a section on the pilgrimages of James IV (Yeoman, P., *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland* [London, 1999], 106-109). Tain is also briefly mentioned by Fawcett in an examination of medieval Scottish churches (Fawcett, R., ‘The Architectural framework for the cult of saints: some Scottish examples’, in *Images of Medieval Sanctity, essays in honour of Gary Dickson*, ed. D Strickland [Leiden, 2007], 71-94, at 74). Duthac fell outwith the remit of the most comprehensive work on national saints by Alan Macquarrie, which finishes in 1093 (Macquarrie, A., *The Saints of Scotland. Essays in Scottish Church History, AD 450-1093* [Edinburgh, 1997]).

8 Durkan, J., ‘The Sanctuary and College of Tain’, *IR*, xiii (1962), 147-54. The most thorough local history is Munro, R. W. and Munro, J., *Tain through the Centuries* (Edinburgh, 2005). See also Slade H. G., *The Collegiate Kirk of St Duthac of Tain and The Abbey of Fearn* (Tain and District Museum Trust, 2000); Brequet, G. A., ‘The Early History of Tain’, *Transactions of the Inverness Scientific Society and Field Club*, vi (1899-1906), 26-44; and Innes, C., ‘The Croziary of St Duthac’, *PSAS*, ii (1859), 15. The burgh survey (*Historic Tain. Archaeology and development*, ed. R. Oram et al. [Edinburgh, 2009], see Appendix 1) includes a brief attempt to explain the late medieval cult,

Whilst this reflects the wider neglect of the cults of native saints in late medieval Scotland, it may also result in part from the difficulties of locating the Duthac cult chronologically. This essay will examine evidence of early dedications to Duthac and the various legends of the saint's origins to consider whether it is possible to make firm conclusions on the early cult and provenance of this popular late medieval saint.

In 1065 the Annals of Ulster recorded that '*Dubhthach the Scot, the chief confessor of Ireland and of Scotland, reposed in Armagh*'.⁹ The similarities of the name and correspondence of the Irish connection with the legend in the Aberdeen Breviary, have led to the identification of this holy man with the cult that developed centred on Tain in the later middle ages.¹⁰ Whilst Farmer accepts this premise, Durkan and Ditchburn have placed the death of the saint at c.1165, with the Bollandists preferring c.1250.¹¹ This confusion is not entirely surprising as even medieval Scots seem to have been a little unsure as to his provenance. The lessons in the Aberdeen Breviary place the saint in a distinct geographical context, delineating his area of cultural influence as Tain and the Dornoch firth, but show notable vagueness in locating Duthac within a historical timeframe.¹² Hector Boece, writing in the 1520s, is more precise, recording a legend that placed the career of Duthac in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century. In Bellenden's translation he is described as the '*preceptoure to sanct Gilbert*', a bishop of Caithness who died in 1245.¹³ However, Boece makes it clear that an alternative account of his origins was in circulation in

9 The reference to '*Dubhthach Albanach*' can be found in *Annals of Ulster: Text and translation Pt. 1*, eds. S. Mac Airt and G Mac Niocall (Dublin, 1983), 503, and in *Early Sources of Scottish History*, trans. A. Anderson (Edinburgh, 2 vols, 1922), ii, 10.

10 See Farmer, D. H., *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 1987), 124; *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, eds. H. Thurston and D. Attwater (London, 4 vols 1953-4), ii, 526; and Boyle, A., 'Notes on Scottish Saints', *IR*, xxxii (1981), 59-83, at 66-7. Both Watson and Mackinlay link the cult to '*Dubhthach Albanach*': Watson, W. J., *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926), 283-4; Mackinlay, J., *Ancient Church Dedications in Scotland. Non-Scriptural Dedications* (Edinburgh, 1914), 223. The section in *Historic Tain* is not tied down to a specific date and describes Duthac as a 'synthetic saint': *Historic Tain. Archaeology and development*, ed. Oram *et al.*, 132.

11 Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 124. The 1065 date is also accepted in *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, ii, 526 and in Boyle, 'Notes on Scottish Saints', 66-7. The Durkan and Ditchburn date may be an error for 1065 or connected to the second origin legend which we will discuss below (Ditchburn, *Scotland and Europe*, 52; Durkan, 'The Sanctuary and College of Tain', 147). The date in the *Acta Sanctorum. Martii*, ed. J. Bolland (Paris/Rome, 1865), 798-9, seems to be based on the Chambers description of the saint which will be discussed below.

12 *Breviarium Aberdonense*, ed. W. Blew (Edinburgh, 2 vols, 1854), i, fol. 65r.

13 Boece, H., *The Chronicles of Scotland*, trans J. Bellenden, eds. E. Batho and R. W. Chambers (Edinburgh, 2 vols, 1938-41), ii, 229. [hereafter *Chron. Boece*].

the early sixteenth century, stating that 'utheris sayis he wes lang yeris afor Bis tyme'.¹⁴

Early evidence for the Duthac cult is problematic. The church at Tain first enters the records in 1227.¹⁵ The shrine is first recorded in 1306, when William, third earl of Ross (d.1323), showing little respect for the saint, violated the sanctuary and captured Elizabeth and Marjory Bruce with their guardian John, earl of Atholl.¹⁶ It has been suggested that the earliest altar dedications outside of the north, at Haddington and Ayr, can be dated to the mid-thirteenth century.¹⁷ However, the altar in Haddington is first recorded in 1314 and appears to date from no earlier than the late thirteenth century.¹⁸ Similarly the altar in the Dominican friary at Ayr was first recorded in 1517, and there is no reason to suppose that it was founded earlier than the fifteenth century.¹⁹ An early date has also been posited for chapels dedicated to Duthac at Wick and Kirkwall, but once again it is difficult to date these with any confidence to earlier than the fifteenth century.²⁰

Church and place-name dedications to the saint are similarly problematic. A series of these dedications have been associated with the saint of Tain and

14 *Ibid*, ii, 229.

15 Brydinus the 'Vicar of Tene' is first mentioned in 1227: *Registrum Episcopatus Morviensis* (Edinburgh, 1837), 82.

16 The 1306 incident is mentioned in Barbour's *Bruce* (John Barbour. *The Bruce*, ed. A. A. M. Duncan, (Edinburgh, 1997), iv, 45-55) and in the *Gesta Annalia II* section of Fordun, Johannes de, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. W. F. Skene (Edinburgh, 2 vols, 1871-2), ii, 334.

17 Slade (*The Collegiate Kirk of St Duthac of Tain*, 9) suggests that the altars were founded in the two churches in 1242 and 1230 respectively, although there is no evidence to support this.

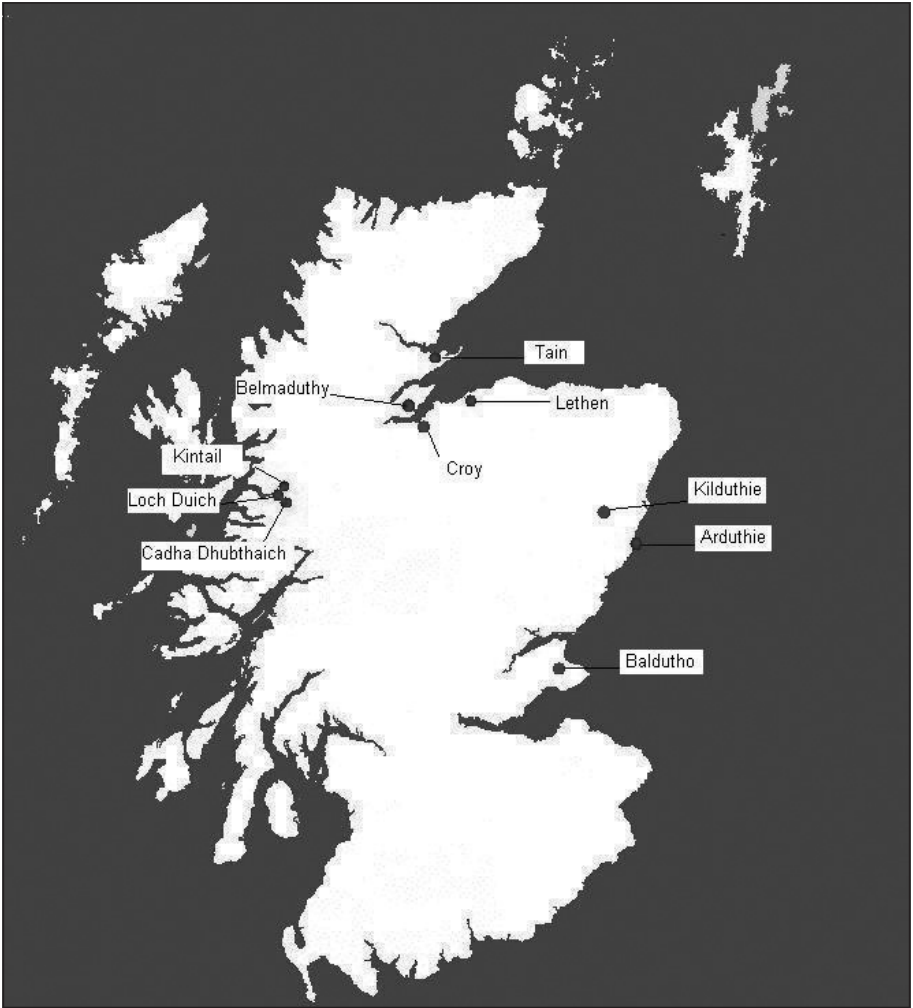
18 Dating this dedication is problematic. It appears to have been established sometime between the foundation of the church in 1242 and 1314, when minor nobleman John Congilton made a bequest to the altar. The earliest reference to this altar is in Douglas, who found it in a now lost family archive. Moir Bryce, who uses Douglas as his reference, describes the charter of 1314 in which John Congalton donated bread and wine to the Duthac altar for the souls of his parents who were buried beside it (Douglas, R., *The Baronage of Scotland* [Edinburgh, 1798], 521; Bryce, W. M., *The Scottish Grey Friars* [Edinburgh, 2 vols, 1909], i, 170, 177). A charter of 1314 is referred to by J G Wallace in National Archives of Scotland, GD1/413/25, 'Charters, writs and notices of the Grey Friars of Haddington', but is no longer extant.

19 There is no evidence to suggest that this altar was founded when the friary was built and it would be surprising if a dedication to Duthac was to be found in Ayr at that stage (*Protocol Book of Gavin Ros*, eds. J. Anderson and F. J. Grant [Edinburgh, 1908], 28, Murray, D., *Legal Practice in Ayr and the West of Scotland in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* [Glasgow, 1910], 27).

20 The chapel in Orkney is first mentioned in 1448 (Craven, J. B., *History of the Church in Orkney. From the introduction of Christianity to 1558* [Kirkwall, 1901], 101-4; Peterkin, A., *Rentals of the Ancient Earldom and Bishopric of Orkney* [Edinburgh, 1910], 35, 167-8). The Wick chapel is problematic and no dating is possible, *Origines parochiales Scotiae* [Edinburgh, 3 vols, 1855], ii, 772-3; Craven, J. B., *A History of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Caithness* [Kirkwall, 1908], 5

may indicate the early spread of the cult (see Map 1 below).²¹ The parish churches of Croy and Kintail were dedicated to the saint, but in neither case was he recorded as patron prior to the Reformation.²² The cluster of Duthac place-names around the church of Kintail, the village of *Clachan Dubhthaich*, body of water *Loch Duich* and the pass of *Cadha Dhubhthaich*, are a strong indication that the church was dedicated to a saint of that name, but it is difficult to be certain of a date for this cluster.²³ Watson has also suggested that the village of *Kilduthie* in Kincardineshire may also have been related to the saint of Tain, but once again this cannot be verified.²⁴ A series of other place-names, *Belmaduthie*, *Lethen Dubhthach* and *Arduthie* in the north, and *Baldutho* in Fife, also contain the name Duthac. However, there is no religious context for these dedications and these sites may have been named after individuals with the personal name Duthac.²⁵ Although it was not a common name, there are examples of its use in ninth-century Iceland, in tenth-century Ireland and Iona, and in the later middle ages.²⁶

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- 21 Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland*, 283-4; Watson, W., *Scottish Place Name Papers* (London, 2002), 219; Mackinlay, *Ancient Church Dedications in Scotland*, 226-7.
- 22 The dedication of the church at Croy is first mentioned in 1640 (NAS CH2/76, 'Records of Croy Kirk Session'). The dedication of the church of Kintail is mentioned in Mackinlay and Watson but was first attested in 1600 (Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland*, 284; Mackinlay, *Ancient Church Dedications in Scotland*, 226; Cowan, I. B., *The Parishes of Medieval Scotland* [Edinburgh, 1967], 116).
- 23 I am grateful to Simon Taylor for this suggestion and other comments on church and place-name dedications connected to the saint.
- 24 Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland*, 284.
- 25 For *Belmaduthie*, *Lethen Dubhthach* and *Arduthie*, see Mackinlay, *Ancient Church Dedications in Scotland*, 226, and Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland*, 284. For *Baldutho*, see Taylor, S., and Markus, G., *The Place-Names of Fife. Volume 3. St Andrews and the East Neuk* (Donington, 2009), 140.
- 26 A slave called *Dubthach* is recorded in Iceland in 870x3 and sons of an Irishman called *Dutthac* were on the same island in 870x900. In the *Senchus Fer n-Alban*, *Dubthach* was a son of *Erc*, *Eochaid's* son (*Early Sources of Scottish History*, trans. Anderson, i, 335, 345 and 430). The Annals of Ulster mentions the death of *Dubthach*, the abbot of Iona, in 938, *The Annals of Ulster*, eds. Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, i, 456. *Dubthach*, an Irish poet, is also mentioned in *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. C. Plummer (Dublin, 2 vols, 1997), i, p. cxxviii. A likely appearance of the name in lowland Scotland during this period is a *Duftah* who was the *Céli Dé* abbot of *Lochleven* in 1128 (*Early Scottish Charters prior to A.D. 1153*, ed. C. Lawrie [Glasgow, 1905], no.80). In the later middle ages there were a number of men named *Duthac*. *Carnegie*, *Lowman* and *Baker* who could be found in *Aberdeen* (Fraser, W., *History of the Carnegie Earls of South Esk and of their Kindred* [Edinburgh, 1867], 9-14; *Early Records of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1317, 1398-1400*, ed. W. Dickinson [Edinburgh, 1957], 94, 103, 185, 223, 232), *Wigmore* and *Ker* who were from *Edinburgh* (*Registrum Cartarum Ecclesie Sancti Egidii de Edinburgh* [Edinburgh, 1859], 77, 104; *Registrum S. Marie de Neubotle* [Edinburgh, 1849], 275-6), *Scott* who was from *Doone* (*Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, eds. J. Stuart et al. [Edinburgh, 23 vols, 1878-1908], ix, 565, 598, 620, 721) and *Rutherford* who was from the *Borders* (*Criminal trials in Scotland, from A.D. M.CCCC.LXXXVIII to A.D. M.DC.XXIV embracing the entire reigns of James IV. and V., Mary Queen of Scots and James VI*, ed. R. Pitcairn [Bannatyne Club, 1833], 26).



Map 1. Possible Duthac early church and place-name dedications.

Other evidence for the provenance of the saint and his cult comes in the form of a series of origin legends that were recorded between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. The first legend which probably originated in the area close to the shrine, linked the secular and ecclesiastical establishment of the town. This account was visualised on the burgh seal and was noted in an inquest held in the town in 1439. The choice of the urban hierarchy of Tain

to display Duthac on its seal was an illustration of the perceived patronal relationship between the saint and town and his role as guarantor of the burgh's rights and privileges.²⁷ This function was outlined more explicitly in the text of the 1439 inquest, which took place in response to the destruction of town records in a serious fire of 1427.²⁸ Presided over by the earl of Ross, Alexander MacDonald (d.1449), the inquest was attended by representatives of the two major local kindreds, the Rosses of Balnagown and Munros of Foulis, and a number of other individuals, possibly burgesses of the town.²⁹ It established that those dwelling within the sanctuary, designated by four crosses, were exempt from both royal and comital customs as a result of an immunity granted by Malcolm III (1058-93) in the mid-eleventh century.³⁰

The inquest of 1439 was also attended by the sheriff and a burghal representative from Inverness and it is in the context of relations between these northern burghs that this origin legend should be viewed.³¹ Although Tain paid stent in 1535, was represented in Parliament from 1567 and in the Convention of the Royal Burghs of Scotland, it did not obtain official burghal status until granted the rights by James VI (1567-1625) in 1588.³² The privileges granted in 1588 included the right to hold various market days, in particular that of St Duthac on 8 March, and control of communal land and fisheries.³³ It was presumably these privileges that the Inverness representatives had come to contest in 1439, apparently unsuccessfully. The continuing sensitivity of the

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- 27 The seal is featured in Urquhart, R.M., *Scottish Burgh and County Heraldry* (London, 1973), 61-2, and in *Scottish Heraldic Seals*, eds. J. Stevenson and M. Wood (Glasgow, 3 vols, 1940), i, 81. These are undated; an early seal from 1534 is on show at the Tain and District Museum.
- 28 This event is recorded in a sixteenth-century copy of the 1439 inquest printed in *Tain and Balnagown Documents*, ed. Macgill, 369, and was mentioned in the confirmation of the town charter by James VI in 1587-8 (*Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum*, ed. J. M. Thomson et al [Edinburgh, 11 vols, 1882-1914], v. no.1432 [Hereafter RMS]).
- 29 *Tain and Balnagown Documents*, ed. Macgill, 369. The inquest was witnessed by some of MacDonald's men, town baillie Alexander MacCulloch, Alexander and John de Sutherland, the local nobility, Hugh Ross of Balnagown, the descendant of Hugh the brother of William, the last native earl of Ross (1333-72), and George Munro of Foulis. Other names like John de Spens, John Monylaw (a Thomas Monylaw was provost of the Collegiate Church in 1482) and John Bayne not connected with these groups were possibly representatives of burghal families.
- 30 *Ibid*, 369. The inquest also stated that this immunity had been confirmed by Robert I, David II and Robert II, although there is no other extant evidence for this.
- 31 Sheriff William Leslie and burgess Ferchard Reid were present at the inquest, *ibid*, 369-70.
- 32 Pryde, G. S., *The Burghs of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1965), 24-5. Stent payments are recorded in *Records of the Conventions of the Royal Burghs of Scotland -with extracts from other records relating to the affairs of the Burghs of Scotland, 1295-1597* (Edinburgh, 1866), 514. Tain paid £16 17s 6d, around half of that paid by Elgin (£33 15s) and less than a third of Inverness (£56 5s).
- 33 RMS, v. no.1432.

Inverness commercial community was shown in 1457 and 1458 when James II (1437-60) and the new earl of Ross, John MacDonald (d.1503), were forced to confirm the rights of the burghers of Inverness when making grants to Tain.³⁴ This dispute rumbled on into the late sixteenth century, James VI's charter having been preceded by protests on the part of the Inverness representative in the Convention of the Royal Burghs of Scotland at the enrolling of Tain as a free burgh in 1581, 1583 and 1584.³⁵ Whilst Tain appears to have gradually evolved the commercial rights associated with a royal burgh on the strength of the sanctuary, the economic status of the town remained ambiguous until 1588, a fact regularly highlighted by the burghers of Inverness.

The legend of Malcolm's grant to the saintly burgh, which corresponds chronologically with the death of '*Dubthach Albanach*' in Armagh, has been incorporated into the local narrative of the development of Tain, as can be seen in the contemporary image of the saint which now hangs in the church (see Photograph 1 overleaf).³⁶ Local tradition explains the contradiction between the presence of relics of the saint in the town and the clear statement in the AU that Duthac died in Armagh, by suggesting that the relics were translated to Easter Ross in 1253.³⁷ Although it is possible that documents destroyed in 1427 would have confirmed this early provenance for the sanctuary at Tain and the career of Duthac, this origin legend must be viewed with caution. This may well have been how it was treated by the compilers of the Aberdeen Breviary who, perhaps confronted with contradictory sources regarding the saint, stopped short of placing Duthac in a historical framework.³⁸ The medieval civic authorities used the legend in their competition with Inverness and other local trading centres whilst their modern counterparts have utilised it to provide their town with a distinctive origin myth. The dependence of these authorities on an early provenance for their patron saint, in whom their town's economic and commercial freedoms were invested, and the lack of

34 *Tain and Balnagown Documents*, ed. Macgill, 207. *Acts of the Lords of the Isles, 1336-1493*, eds. J. Munro and R. W. Munro (Edinburgh, 1986), 101.

35 *Records of the Conventions of the Royal Burghs*, 115-16, 163-4, 190. The representatives of Tain when called upon to answer the claims of Inverness failed to attend the subsequent meetings and were fined £20. The dispute within the convention was somewhat one sided as the commissioner of Inverness was also the customar for all burghs between Caithness and Moray.

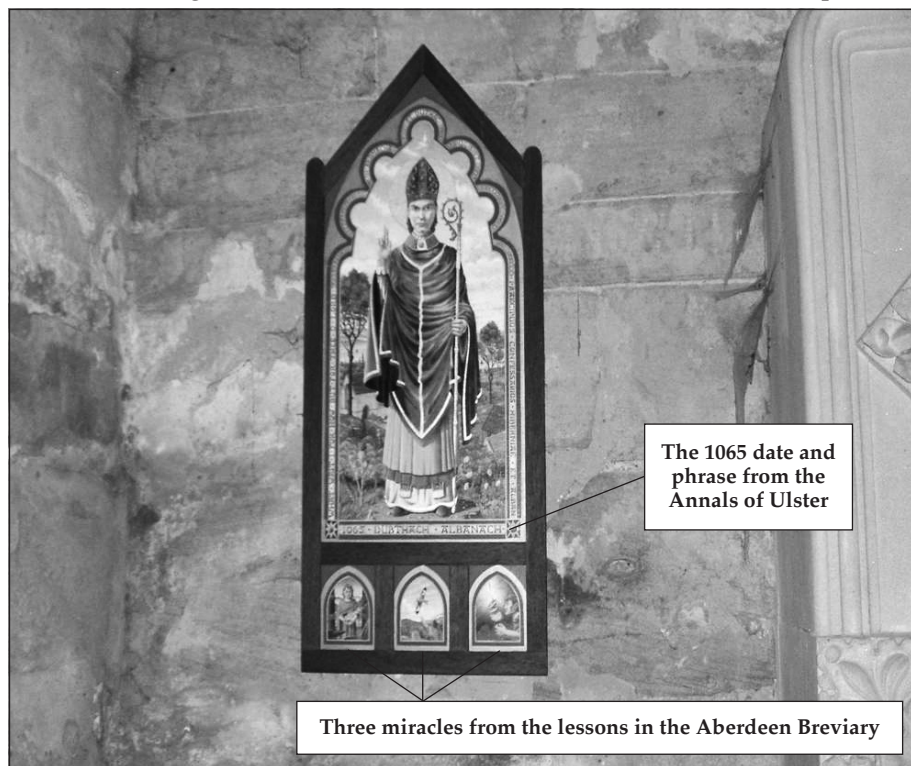
36 A stain glass image in the collegiate church at Tain dates Duthac to 1065. This is the date used in the excellent local visitor centre, Tain Through Time, which interprets the late medieval shrine.

37 Whilst this translation is often mentioned as being 'recorded' there is no trace of it, Munro and Munro, *Tain through the Centuries*, 16.

38 Lessons eight and nine discuss Duthac's death and the discovery, after seven years, that his body was incorrupt, but no date or historical context is mentioned, *Breviarium Aberdonese*, i, fol. 65r.

independent corroboration of this date requires us to treat the mid-eleventh century as a possible rather than probable source of the cult.

A second origin legend first appears in the petition for the canonisation of Duthac drafted by a prior of St Andrews, James Haldenstone (1418-43), in 1418.³⁹ The two-page letter was probably intended to be the first stage in a full canonisation process; however, there is no record of a reply or of further correspondence regarding the saint. Haldenstone presents Duthac as an austere bishop confessor with a national cult built upon a reputation for miracle working.⁴⁰ These were essential criteria for a canonisation request, as



Photograph 1. Modern image of Duthac in the collegiate church of Tain.⁴¹

39 There are various spellings of the prior's name, this study will use Haldenstone. The petition was intended to be presented to Martin V (1417-31) by Archibald, fourth earl of Douglas (d.1424). There is no record of a reply to the petition so it is possible that it was never carried through (*Copiale prioratus Sanctiandree*, ed. J. H. Baxter [Oxford, 1930], 4-6, 385).

40 He describes the cult as encompassing *tota Scotorum regio*, *ibid.*, 5.

41 Taken by the author.

laid out by the Fourth Lateran council in 1215, and the somewhat formulaic nature of the letter means that it provides limited information about Duthac's appeal or the range of his cult by 1418.⁴² The novel aspect of the petition is the connection that Haldenstone draws between the saint and his diocese, claiming that Duthac was transferred to the see of St Andrews from Ross.⁴³ Walter Bower was also aware of a tradition connecting Duthac to the diocese.⁴⁴ In the *Scotichronicon* Bower noted that whilst in Ireland Duthac had been the mentor of Maelbrigde, who became bishop of St Andrews in the late eleventh century.⁴⁵ As his source for this information Bower referred to a 'life of the glorious and excellent confessor', which may well have been a new *vita* commissioned as part of the canonisation process of 1418.⁴⁶ The designation of Duthac as a bishop of St Andrews in that period is unsupported and there seem to have been a number of processes at work in the development of this legend.⁴⁷ Firstly the choice of Duthac may have been influenced by the emergence in the fourteenth century of a small cluster of dedications to the saint in Lothian, based around the Franciscan friary at Haddington.⁴⁸ The catalysts behind the spread of the cult to Lothian are problematic, but there were clearly traces of the Duthac cult within the diocese of St Andrews, and more specifically close to the birth place of Bower, in the early fifteenth century.⁴⁹

James Haldenstone may also have had more specific reasons for promoting the Duthac cult. Although initially a supporter of the Avignon pope Benedict

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- 42 An excellent discussion of the boxes that needed to be ticked during the canonisation process is provided in Kleinberg, A. M., 'Proving Sanctity: Selection and Authentication of Saints in the Later Middle Ages', *Viator*, 20 (1980), 183-205. Significantly for Duthac, these included posthumous miracles and acceptance of his sanctity over a wide area.
- 43 *Copiale prioratus Sanctiandree*, ed. Baxter, 5.
- 44 *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower in Latin and English ed. and trans. D. E. R. Watt (Aberdeen, 9 Vols, 1987-99), iii, 343. [Hereafter *Chron. Bower*].
- 45 According to Bower, Duthac accurately prophesised that Maelbrigde would one day become bishop of the Scots, *ibid.*, iii, 343.
- 46 Sadly this is no longer extant. Bower does not give any specifics regarding where his source came from, *ibid.*, iii, 343.
- 47 Dowden notes that earlier writers Keith and Eubel placed Duthac as a bishop of Ross in the early thirteenth century (Dowden, J., *The Bishops of Scotland*, [Glasgow, 1912], 211-12). Watt mentions Duthac as a possible early bishop of Ross but does not include him in the St Andrews list (Watt, D., E., R., *Fasti Ecclesie Scotticanae Medii Aevi, ad annum 1638* (Edinburgh, 1969), 347).
- 48 An altar was dedicated to Duthac in the Franciscan friary at Haddington c.1314, the earliest liturgical reference to the saint appears in the *Kalendarium de Hyrdmanistoun* (c.1350) which belonged to the St Clair family (*Kalendars of Scottish Saints*, ed. A. P. Forbes [Edinburgh, 1872], 35-49, at 38 and 43). Lothian noble, James Douglas of Dalkeith, made a bequest to the relics of Duthac at Tain, as well as the friary at Haddington, in 1390 (*Bannatyne Miscellany* [Edinburgh, 3 vols, 1836-55], ii, 109).
- 49 For Bower's career, see *Chron. Bower*, ix, 204-9. There were a number of other dedications to the saint in St Andrews diocese by the Reformation which can be dated to after the careers of Bower and Haldenstone.

XIII (1394-1417), who had secured his election as prior of May in 1414, James had switched his allegiance to Martin V (1417-31) shortly before being elected prior of St Andrews in 1417. His election confirmed the chapter's support for the new pope.⁵⁰ Haldenstone subsequently became a keen supporter of Martin and the spokesman for the party, alongside the earl of Douglas, that prevailed in 1418 when Scotland officially withdrew support from Benedict.⁵¹ In February 1418, two months before the petition, Martin V provided Griffin Young, an exiled Welsh bishop who had supported the revolt of Owen Glyn Dower, to the vacant see of Ross.⁵² Young never seems to have occupied the see and was eventually transferred to the warmer climes of Hippo, replaced by a canon of St Andrews, John Bullock, in 1423.⁵³ By August 1419 it had probably become clear that Young would remain an absentee and a year after the canonisation petition, which had made the association between St Andrews and northern diocese, Haldenstone was enjoined to sequester the fruits of the see of Ross.⁵⁴ It is not clear whether Haldenstone had personal designs on the bishopric in the period 1418-23, was supporting his colleague Bullock or was merely after the fees. However, by identifying with an emerging local cult Haldenstone appears to have been smoothing the way for his intervention in the diocese of Ross, a process justified by the creation of a historical connection between St Andrews and the northern see.

Bower may also have had wider agenda which led to the inclusion of the Duthac-St Andrews connection in the *Scotichronicon*. This reference was part of the trend within the chronicle tradition in which a wider range and type of local saint were incorporated into the narrative of the development of the Scottish realm.⁵⁵ Diocesan bias was also a prevalent theme in the *Scotichronicon*, and it was this spur that seems to have prompted the integration of Duthac, as well as Triduana, into the story of the foundation and development of the see of St Andrews. In the chronicle these figures fulfilled the role of saintly

50 Watt, D. E. R., *A Dictionary of Scottish Graduates to 1410* (Edinburgh, 1977), 248-51. For a discussion of the controversy, see Hannay, R. K., 'A Chapter Election at St Andrews in 1417', *Scottish Historical Review*, xiii (1913), 321-7.

51 *Ibid.*, 321-7; Swanson, R., 'The University of St Andrews and the Great Schism, 1410-19', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xxvi (1975), 223-61, at 238.

52 *Copiale Prioratus Sancti Andree*, ed. Baxter, 389-90. Bishop Alexander de Waghmagh died on 4 February 1418; Young was transferred from Bangor on 14 February. John Bullock was provided by Benedict XIII but had to wait until 1423 to be confirmed by Martin V (Watt, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scotticanae Medii*, 268-9).

53 Bullock had competed with Haldenstone for the position of prior in 1417. The see of Ross may have been a consolation prize (*ibid.*, 268-9).

54 Haldenstone seems to have collected this money until Bullock was confirmed in 1423 (*Copiale Prioratus Sancti Andree*, ed. Baxter, 268-9).

55 For example, St Triduana of Restalrig was incorporated into the St Andrews origin legend by Bower (*Chron. Bower*, i, 315).

auxiliaries, alongside St Rule, to boost the sanctity and prestige of St Andrews as a sacred centre.⁵⁶ Bower's choice of Duthac and the decision to connect him to St Andrews was probably stimulated by the local dedications, the recent tradition of the 1418 canonisation petition and the wider popularity of the cult by the 1440s. In both the *Scotichronicon* and Haldenstone's petition there is also a sense that the writers were keen to bring the Duthac cult into the mainstream of the Scottish church by providing him with a place in the narrative of the kingdom's ecclesiastical development. This aim may have been driven by a sense that the Duthac cult, with its Irish connections and firm presence in the Hiberno-Norse world of the north, was to some extent outside of the control of the main centres of this national church.⁵⁷ The impression of something unofficial in the Duthac cult is suggested by the description of the saint as '*the demi-God of Ross*' by the English poet in 1513.⁵⁸ Without independent corroboration the Duthac-St Andrews connection must also be treated with caution.

A third origin legend, which located Duthac in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, but disregarded the St Andrews connection, was elaborated at length in two post-Reformation histories. The first of these, written by an exiled bishop of Ross, John Leslie, in 1578, emphasised the popularity of the pilgrimage to Tain amongst '*Kingis, Princis and the commune people*'.⁵⁹ Leslie dated Duthac to the reign of William I (1163-1214), describing him as the mentor of Gilbert of Caithness.⁶⁰ This connection had also been made by Boece in the 1520s, although as we have seen he indicated that contrasting stories of the saint's provenance were in circulation at that time.⁶¹ A similar time frame for the saint was posited by another exiled churchman, David Chambers, in his celebration of Scotland's Catholic past, printed in 1631.⁶² Chambers included a unique legend in which Duthac predicted Scottish calamities at the hands of

56 As Webb has commented, using the example of St Albans, it was sensible for church administrators to maintain 'as many pilgrimage attractions as possible' (Webb, D., *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* [London, 2000], 78). The clergy of York Minster employed these tactics in the fifteenth century. In addition to promoting St William, whose relics lay in the church, altars were dedicated to other northern saints like Cuthbert, John of Bridlington and prospective saints like John Scrope to widen the attractions for pilgrims (Hughes, J., *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire* [Woodbridge, 1998], 298-318).

57 This Hiberno-Norse identity of the cult was also emphasised in the small excerpt from the Martyrology of Aberdeen which described numbers of Irish pilgrims at the shrine, printed in *Kalendars of Scottish Saints*, ed. Forbes, 129.

58 *The Battle of Flodden Field*, ed. Weber, 27.

59 Leslie, *Historie of Scotland*, i, 335.

60 Gilbert was bishop of Caithness from 1222x3-1245 (Watt, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scotticanae*, 58; Leslie, *Historie of Scotland*, i, 335).

61 *Chron. Boece*, ii, 229.

62 Chambers, *De Scotorum fortitudine*, 112-13.

the English and Danes, and prophesied the victory over the Norwegians at the battle of Largs in 1263. He placed the death of the saint nine years before this battle in 1253.⁶³ Although neither the prophetic powers nor the relationship with Gilbert were included in the lessons of the Aberdeen Breviary, it may have been the case that both Leslie and Chambers were including stories that were part of the wider Duthac legend by the sixteenth century. The corroboration of the connection to Gilbert in Boece shows that it, at least, was a known component of the legends surrounding the saint prior to the Reformation.

However, as with the Civic and St Andrews legends these authors should be treated with caution as a source for the early cult of Duthac. Besides writing sometime after the fact, Leslie and Chamber's discussion of the Duthac cult was part of their wider Counter-Reformation agenda which was aimed at a royal audience.⁶⁴ Leslie was keen to enhance the reputation of both his defeated cause and his diocese, whilst Chamber's purpose was to emphasise the traditional relationship between the Stewart dynasty and popular Catholicism, as embodied in the cult of the saints.⁶⁵ Duthac was an ideal figure for this agenda, as both an establishment figure and a saint who had been the recipient of both popular and royal patronage in the century prior to the Reformation.⁶⁶ Whilst these works broaden our knowledge of the later medieval perception of Duthac, they are of limited use for determining the origins of the cult.

Although the various legends reveal more about the ambitions and anxieties of those involved in their transmission than the actual origins of saint and cult, they do have some material in common. What emerges from these sources is the image of a cult established around a holy man with Irish connections, who was based in the Tain/Dornoch firth area for at least part of his career. Although he is consistently described as a bishop in later sources, this may be attributed to the tendency in the central and later middle ages to incorporate saints into the church establishment or secular elite, a trend also apparent in the description in the Aberdeen Breviary of Duthac's noble roots.⁶⁷

63 *Ibid.*, 113. In his calendar of Scottish saints Chambers also includes what appears to be the local June feast day of the saint (*Kalenders of Scottish Saints*, ed. Forbes, 235, 238).

64 Leslie's work was dedicated to Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-67) and Chamber's was dedicated to Charles I (1625-49).

65 For Leslie's career, see Leslie, *Historie of Scotland*, xvii. For Chambers, see Halloran, B. M., *The Scots College Paris, 1603-1792* (Edinburgh, 1997), 14, 30-1, 205-6.

66 Counter-reformation works like these often attempted to resuscitate the somewhat discredited image of the bishop and other establishment figures.

67 Vauchez describes the trend of elitism particularly prevalent in northern European cults (Vauchez, A., *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. J. Birrell [Cambridge, 1997], 173-7). For the British Isles see Swanson, R. N., *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c.1215-C.1515* (Cambridge, 1995), 148, who describes the most common saint type in 1215-1515 as the well born who had held high ecclesiastical office.

Whilst the Duthac cult may have been based around the confessor who died in Armagh in 1065, he could equally have been Dubthach, the abbot of Iona who died in 938 or one of two Irish saints with similar names who feature in the Martyrology of Donegal.⁶⁸ What is also clear from the various legends is that something significant occurred in the early to mid-thirteenth century.⁶⁹ This prompted the connection between Duthac and this time period in Bower, Boece, Leslie and Chambers, and may have been the catalyst behind the early spread of the cult from the north.⁷⁰ This may have been a relic translation from Armagh to Tain, as local tradition suggests, or merely a change to his status within the reliquary church.

This event does tie in with the spectacular rise of a local family led by Farquhar Mactaggert, who was made earl of Ross by Alexander II (1214-49) in the 1220s.⁷¹ Alexander Grant has suggested that Mactaggert, whose name means 'son of the priest', was from a family of hereditary clergy in Tain.⁷² A grateful Mactaggert promoting his local cult, possibly even that of an ancestor, would neatly explain a translation in this period and the transmission of the cult outside of the north, as the new earl's family became prominent figures at the royal court. Unfortunately this premise does not stand up to further examination. Although Farquhar appears to have died in Tain he was buried at his own foundation, the abbey of New Fearn, and neither he, nor his descendants, displayed a conspicuous interest in Duthac or Tain.⁷³

The difficulty identifying the historical figure behind the cult of St Duthac of Tain is typical of the complexity involved in separating fact from fiction

68 There were two Dubthachs in the Martyrology, with feast days on 5 February and 7 October (*Martyrology of Donegal. A Calendar of Saints of Ireland*, ed. J. O'Donovan [Dublin, 1864], 40-1, 268-9).

69 The year 1253 is a date that appears in a number of local histories and in Chambers, *De Scotorum fortitudine*, 112-13.

70 The earliest spread of the cult from the north appears to have been at the end of the thirteenth century.

71 This is the version of his name used in Duncan, A. A. M., *Scotland. The Making of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh, 1975), 520.

72 Grant, A., 'The Province of Ross and the Kingdom of Alba', in *Alba. Celtic Scotland in the Medieval Era*, eds. E. J. Cowan and R. A. Macdonald (East Linton, 2000), 88-126, at 120-3. The recent work on the burgh of Tain refutes this suggestion (*Historic Tain. Archaeology and development*, ed. Oram *et al.* 20-1).

73 The seat of the earls of Ross was at Denly, close to Tain and although it is possible that Farquhar had an interest in moving the diocesan centre from Rosemarkie to Duthac's town, he is most closely related to the abbey of Fearn where he was buried in 1252 (Cowan I and Easson, D. *Medieval religious houses, Scotland: with an appendix on the houses in the Isle of Man* [Edinburgh, 1976], 101; Munro and Munro, *Tain through the Centuries*, 16; Slade, *The Collegiate Kirk of St Duthac of Tain*, 21-2). Fearn was a daughter house of the Premonstratensian abbey of Whithorn and was founded by Mactaggert, who endowed it with a relic of St Ninian probably sometime after 1235 when he was involved in the royal campaign in Galloway (Duncan, *Scotland. The Making of the Kingdom*, 531).

in the medieval cult of the saints. It is a process that has been carried out with similarly complicated and contradictory results for a number of Scottish saints whose main period of popularity was the later middle ages.⁷⁴ However, to some extent it is the legends themselves that are a more appropriate and productive field of study for the historian than attempts to identify the individual behind the cult. As we have seen with the Duthac case study, these legends can provide rich material on both the reception of the saint during his period of greatest popularity and the ambitions and anxieties of those involved in propagating a cult.

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74 See, for example, Simon Taylor on Fillan, Michael Penman on Monan and Helen Brown on Triduana (Taylor, S, 'The Cult of St Fillan in Scotland', in *The North Sea World in the Middle Ages - Studies in the Cultural History of North West Europe*, eds. T. R. Liszka and E. M. Walker (Dublin, 2001), 175-211; Penman, M., 'Christian Days and Knights: the religious devotions and court of David II of Scotland 1329-71', *Historical Research*, lxxi (2002), 249-72; and Brown, H., 'Saint Triduana of Restalrig? Locating a saint and her cult in late medieval Lothian and beyond', in *Images of Medieval Sanctity, essays in honour of Gary Dickson*, ed. D. Strickland (Leiden, 2007), 45-69.

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