

= Macbeth , King of Scotland =

Mac Bethad mac Findlaíoch (Modern Gaelic : MacBheatha mac Fhionnlaigh ; Medieval Gaelic : Mac Bethad mac Findlaíoch ; anglicised as Macbeth , and nicknamed Rí Deircc , " the Red King " ; died 15 August 1057) was King of the Scots (also known as the King of Alba , and earlier as King of Moray and King of Fortriu) from 1040 until his death . Recent evidence is indicating he spent much of his time in and around the Forres area of Moray , defeating his cousin Duncan , then king of Moray , in battle at nearby Pitgaveny . He is best known as the subject of William Shakespeare 's tragedy Macbeth and the many works it has inspired , although the play is not an accurate portrait of the historical king .

= = Etymology = =

The name Mac Bethad (or , in modern Gaelic , MacBheatha) , from which the anglicized " MacBeth " is derived , means " son of life " . Although it has the appearance of a Gaelic patronymic it does not have any meaning of filiation but instead carries an implication of " righteous man " or " religious man " . An alternative proposed derivation is that it is a corruption of macc @-@ bethad meaning " one of the elect " .

= = Royal ancestry = =

Some sources make Macbeth a grandson of King Malcolm II and thus a cousin to Duncan I whom he succeeded . He was possibly also a cousin to Thorfinn the Mighty , Earl of Orkney and Caithness . Some historians claim , however , that Macbeth was Thorfinn 's half @-@ brother rather than his cousin . Much depends on whether Malcolm had three daughters or only two (one of whom married twice) ? a point which is likely to remain uncertain .

= = Mormaer and dux = =

When Cnut the Great came north in 1031 to accept the submission of King Malcolm II , Macbeth too submitted to him :

... Malcolm , king of the Scots , submitted to him , and became his man , with two other kings , Macbeth and lehmarc ...

Some have seen this as a sign of Macbeth 's power ; others have seen his presence , together with lehmarc , who may be Echmarcach mac Ragnaill , as proof that Malcolm II was overlord of Moray and of the Kingdom of the Isles . Whatever the true state of affairs in the early 1030s , it seems more probable that Macbeth was subject to the king of Alba , Malcolm II , who died at Glamis , on 25 November 1034 . The Prophecy of Berchan , apparently alone in near contemporary sources , says Malcolm died a violent death , calling it a " kinslaying " without actually naming his killers . Tigernach 's chronicle says only :

Máel Coluim son of Cináed , king of Alba , the honour of western Europe , died .

Malcolm II 's grandson Duncan (Donnchad mac Crínáin) , later King Duncan I , was acclaimed as king of Alba on 30 November 1034 , apparently without opposition . Duncan appears to have been tánaise rí , the king in waiting , so that far from being an abandonment of tanistry , as has sometimes been argued , his kingship was a vindication of the practice . Previous successions had involved strife between various ríghdomna ? men of royal blood . Far from being the aged King Duncan of Shakespeare 's play , the real King Duncan was a young man in 1034 , and even at his death in 1040 his youthfulness is remarked upon .

Because of his youth , Duncan 's early reign was apparently uneventful . His later reign , in line with his description as " the man of many sorrows " in the Prophecy of Berchán , was not successful . In 1039 , Strathclyde was attacked by the Northumbrians , and a retaliatory raid led by Duncan against Durham turned into a disaster . Duncan survived the defeat , but the following year he led an army north into Moray , Macbeth 's domain , apparently on a punitive expedition against Moray . There he

was killed in action , at Bothnagowan , now Pitgaveny , near Elgin , by the men of Moray led by Macbeth , probably on 14 August 1040 .

= = High King of Alba = =

On Duncan 's death , Macbeth became king . No resistance is known at that time , but it would have been entirely normal if his reign were not universally accepted . In 1045 , Duncan 's father Crínán of Dunkeld (a scion of the Scottish branch of the Cenel Conaill and Hereditary Abbot of Iona) was killed in a battle between two Scottish armies .

John of Fordun wrote that Duncan 's wife fled Scotland , taking her children , including the future kings Malcolm III (Máel Coluim mac Donnchada) and Donald III (Domnall Bán mac Donnchada , or Donalbane) with her . On the basis of the author 's beliefs as to whom Duncan married , various places of exile , Northumbria and Orkney among them , have been proposed . However , E. William Robertson proposes the safest place for Duncan 's widow and her children would be with her or Duncan 's kin and supporters in Atholl .

After the defeat of Crínán , Macbeth was evidently unchallenged . Marianus Scotus tells how the king made a pilgrimage to Rome in 1050 , where , Marianus says , he gave money to the poor as if it were seed .

= = = Karl Hundason = = =

The Orkneyinga Saga says that a dispute between Thorfinn Sigurdsson , Earl of Orkney , and Karl Hundason began when Karl Hundason became " King of Scots " and claimed Caithness . The identity of Karl Hundason , unknown to Scots and Irish sources , has long been a matter of dispute , and it is far from clear that the matter is settled . The most common assumption is that Karl Hundason was an insulting byname (Old Norse for " Churl , son of a Dog ") given to Macbeth by his enemies . William Forbes Skene 's suggestion that he was Duncan I of Scotland has been revived in recent years . Lastly , the idea that the whole affair is a poetic invention has been raised .

According to the Orkneyinga Saga , in the war which followed , Thorfinn defeated Karl in a sea @-@ battle off Deerness at the east end of the Orkney Mainland . Then Karl 's nephew Mutatan or Muddan , appointed to rule Caithness for him , was killed at Thurso by Thorkel the Fosterer . Finally , a great battle at Tarbat Ness on the south side of the Dornoch Firth ended with Karl defeated and fugitive or dead . Thorfinn , the saga says , then marched south through Scotland as far as Fife , burning and plundering as he passed . A later note in the saga claims that Thorfinn won nine Scottish earldoms .

Whoever Karl Hundason may have been , it appears that the saga is reporting a local conflict with a Scots ruler of Moray or Ross :

[T] he whole narrative is consistent with the idea that the struggle of Thorfinn and Karl is a continuation of that which had been waged since the ninth century by the Orkney earls , notably Sigurd Rognvald 's son , Ljot , and Sigurd the Stout , against the princes or mormaers of Moray , Sutherland , Ross , and Argyll , and that , in fine , Malcolm and Karl were mormaers of one of these four provinces .

= = = Final years = = =

In 1052 , Macbeth was involved indirectly in the strife in the Kingdom of England between Godwin , Earl of Wessex and Edward the Confessor when he received a number of Norman exiles from England in his court , perhaps becoming the first king of Scots to introduce feudalism to Scotland . In 1054 , Edward 's Earl of Northumbria , Siward , led a very large invasion of Scotland (Duncan 's widow and Malcolm 's mother , Suthed , was Northumbrian @-@ born ; it is probable but not proven that there was a family tie between Siward and Malcolm) . The campaign led to a bloody battle in which the Annals of Ulster report 3 @,@ 000 Scots and 1 @,@ 500 English dead , which can be taken as meaning very many on both sides , and one of Siward 's sons and a son @-@ in @-@ law

were among the dead . The result of the invasion was that one Máel Coluim , " son of the king of the Cumbrians " (not to be confused with Máel Coluim mac Donnchada , the future Malcolm III of Scotland) was restored to his throne , i.e. , as ruler of the kingdom of Strathclyde . It may be that the events of 1054 are responsible for the idea , which appears in Shakespeare 's play , that Malcolm III was put in power by the English .

Macbeth did not survive the English invasion for long , for he was defeated and mortally wounded or killed by the future Malcolm III (" King Malcolm Ceann @-@ mor " , son of Duncan I) on the north side of the Mounth in 1057 , after retreating with his men over the Cairnamounth Pass to take his last stand at the battle at Lumphanan . The Prophecy of Berchán has it that he was wounded and died at Scone , sixty miles to the south , some days later . Macbeth 's stepson Lulach was installed as king soon after .

Unlike later writers , no near contemporary source remarks on Macbeth as a tyrant . The Duan Albanach , which survives in a form dating to the reign of Malcolm III , calls him " Mac Bethad the renowned " . The Prophecy of Berchán , a verse history which purports to be a prophecy , describes him as " the generous king of Fortriu " , and says :

The red , tall , golden @-@ haired one , he will be pleasant to me among them ; Scotland will be brimful west and east during the reign of the furious red one .

= = Life to legend = =

Macbeth 's life , like that of King Duncan I , had progressed far towards legend by the end of the 14th century , when John of Fordun and Andrew of Wyntoun wrote their histories . Hector Boece , Walter Bower , and George Buchanan all contributed to the legend .

= = = William Shakespeare 's depiction and its influence = = =

In Shakespeare 's play , which is based mainly upon Raphael Holinshed 's account , Macbeth is initially a valourous and loyal general to the elderly King Duncan . After being flattered by Three Witches and his own wife , Macbeth rationalizes that murdering his king and usurping the throne is the right thing to do . Ultimately , however , the prophecies of the witches prove misleading , and Macbeth alienates the nobility of Scotland and is defeated in battle by Prince Malcolm . As the King 's armies disintegrate he encounters Macduff , a refugee nobleman whose wife and children had earlier been murdered by Macbeth 's death squads . Upon realizing that he will die if he duels Macduff , Macbeth at first refuses to do so . But when Macduff explains that if Macbeth surrenders he will be subjected to ridicule by his former subjects , Macbeth vows , " I will not yield to kiss the ground before young Malcolm 's feet , to be baited by a rabble 's curse . " He chooses instead to fight Macduff to the death . Macbeth is then slain and beheaded and the play ends with Prince Malcolm planning his coronation at Scone .

The likely reason for Shakespeare 's unflattering depiction of Macbeth is that King James VI and I was descended from Malcolm III via the Margaretson kings , the House of Bruce and his own House of Stewart whereas Macbeth 's line died out with the death of Lulach six months after his step @-@ father . He was also thought to be a descendant of Banquo through Walter Stewart , 6th High Steward of Scotland . Shakespeare was too astute to risk causing any offence to his own monarch .

In a 1959 essay , Boris Pasternak compared Shakespeare 's Macbeth to Raskolnikov , the protagonist of Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky . Pasternak explained that neither character begins as a murderer , but becomes one by a set of faulty rationalizations and a belief that they are above the law .

Lady Macbeth has gained fame along the way . In his 1865 novel Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District , Nikolai Leskov updated The Tragedy of Macbeth so that it takes place among the Imperial Russian merchant class . In an ironic twist , however , Leskov reverses the gender roles ? the woman is the murderer and the man is the instigator . Leskov 's novel was the basis for Dmitri Shostakovich 's 1936 opera of the same name .

= = = Other depictions = = =

In modern times , Dorothy Dunnnett 's novel *King Hereafter* aims to portray a historical Macbeth , but proposes that Macbeth and his rival and sometime ally Thorfinn of Orkney are one and the same (Thorfinn is his birth name and Macbeth his baptismal name) . John Cargill Thompson 's play *Macbeth Speaks* 1997 , a reworking of his earlier *Macbeth Speaks* , is a monologue delivered by the historical Macbeth , aware of what Shakespeare and posterity have done to him . Scottish author Nigel Tranter based one of his historical novels , *MacBeth the King* , on the historical figure . David Greig 's 2010 play *Dunsinane* takes Macbeth 's downfall at Dunsinane as its starting point , with his just @-@ ended reign portrayed as long and stable in contrast to Malcolm 's . British Touring Shakespeare also produced in 2010 *A Season Before the Tragedy of Macbeth* by dramatist Gloria Carreño describing events from the murder of " Lord Gillecomgain " , Gruoch Macduff 's first husband , to the fateful letter in the first act of Shakespeare 's tragedy

Billy Morrisette 's 2001 film *Scotland , PA* re @-@ imagines Shakespeare 's story in 1970s Pennsylvania , as a struggle for control of a successful hamburger restaurant .

Macbeth appears as a character in the television series *Gargoyles* with the Gargoyle Demona playing a crucial role in both his rise and fall as King of Scotland . He was voiced by John Rhys @-@ Davies .