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The Origin of Leod



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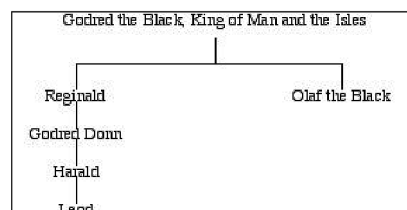
The MacLeods are, strictly speaking, the descendants of Leod. He is the eponymous or the person from whom their surname is derived. He was a person of considerable importance in his day and generation. His origin is still a matter of dispute. This is hardly surprising when we remember the lack of recorded evidence at such an early period. Often scholars have little to guide them except tradition, which may or may not be correct. So far as the Clan MacLeod is concerned, there is not lack of tradition. In a Manuscript Memorial of the Clan dated circa 1767, it is confidently claimed that it is 'universally acknowledged' that the MacLeods in Scotland are descended from the Kings of Man.

Apart from a challenge at the end of the last century, this idea has been generally accepted. Since 1977, however, a new viewpoint had appeared, through the work of an able Gaelic scholar and genealogist. The sheer size of the authoritative works he has consulted is proof that his theory has been arrived at only as a result of long and careful study.

It is advanced in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, Volume LI, where it is claimed that prior to the 17th Century the MacLeods had only a hazy notion that they were descended from some Norse kings. Some colour is lent to this if we examine the origin of the Clan as set forth in the Manuscript History of the Rosses of Balnagown, the Accounts of Captain Dymes and, indeed, John Morison, the Indweller of Lewis, Fraser's Wardlaw Manuscript and Sir Robert Gordon's Earldom of Sutherland. It will be noticed, however, that all these 17th Century authorities were not members of the Clan MacLeod and probably as a result had not made any great research into the matter. According to the new theory, the publication of Camden's *History of Britannia* had a profound effect on the genealogy of the Clan MacLeod. It contained the *Chronicle of Man*. It was widely read in the Highlands and was a source of consuming interest in the Isles. It was the publication of this book that led to the coupling of the hazy MacLeod genealogy with the dynamic House of Man and the Isles.

It is, however, a fact that genealogy was an important element in Gaelic culture centuries before the publication of Camden's *History*. On its exact preservation depended the social structure of the Clans and their stability. For example, the neighbouring clan, the MacDonalds of Clanranald, possessed bards and genealogists for some 18 generations. That their neighbors, the MacLeods, who shared the same language, culture and traditions should possess none of these functionaries previous to the 17th Century would be of course, quite incredible. They are not without some evidence on this point. Bannatyne McLeod does mention that the genealogists of the MacLeods in the 16th Century belonged to the Morrisons. Indeed he provides evidence where a Morrison genealogist played an important part in the inauguration of Iain a'Chuail Bhain as Chief of the Clan MacLeod. The fact that the recorded evidence is often not available must not always be taken as conclusive. All the Clans shared a common language, culture and institutions and if evidence is available on several of these that genealogies and old poems existed prior to the 17th Century, it can be taken as certain that these also existed in the case of Clan MacLeod. Though much of the earlier poems and genealogies have been lost, this did not mean that they did not exist. We possess the research and conclusions of no less an authority than Sir Norman MacLeod of Berneray, 1614-1705. He was an educated man who had attended the University of Glasgow. He was also an expert on the Gaelic language and culture, as bards not only from Scotland, but also from Ireland, testify. From them, he gleaned considerable information so that he became an expert both on the genealogy of his own clan and also on the pedigrees of the 'most honourable families' in the Highlands and the Isles. According to the Talisker Manuscript on the MacLeods, 'Magnus the last King of Man was the brother of Leod by Olaf's first marriage, and it was hoped that the following series of the Lairds of MacLeod from Olaf downwards will answer pretty nearly to the calculations by which the Chronicle is judg'd of, which is taken from a list of them written from Sir Norman MacLeod of Berneray's Account of the family, a man of very extensive knowledge and very versant in the genealogies of the most honourable families in Scotland, and from the old daans or poems.' Sir Norman may indeed have read Camden's *History* and found it of interest but that is no proof that it was his only source of information on the origin of his clan. He consulted Gaelic bards and genealogists, he had 'lists' of various clan families, which of course included his own, and he calculated that the MacLeods were descended from Olaf the Black, King of Man and the Isles. Bards composed panegyrics on departed Chiefs and these were preserved. These were available to Sir Norman as the Talisker manuscript states, though they have now disappeared, like so much else of the Gaelic culture. This is clear from the evidence of John MacKinnon on the O'MUIRGHERSAN bards of the Chiefs of HARRIS and DUNVEGAN. There is evidence that they reached as far back *at least* as the beginning of the 15th Century, c.f. MacEACHAIG's Panegyric on Iain BORB, 6th Chief of the MacLeods in Prof. Watson's 'Scottish Verse from the book of the Dean of Lismore.' This poem is a century older than Camden's *Britannia* or for that matter the Kilbride Manuscripts. The disappearance of these classical Gaelic poems is adequately explained by John MacKinnon. (see pages 99 and 100).

Contemporary with Sir Norman were, of course, Mary MacLeod, the 'inimitable bardess of the Isles' and also Martin Martin, who wrote a most interesting 'Description of the Western Isles'. Both knew Sir Norman personally and there can be little doubt that they regarded him as the authority on the origin of the Clan. Thus when the bardess referred to 'Olgair mac Ochraidh' she was referring to Olaf the Black, son of Godfrey. When Martin claimed that the MacLeod chiefs were descended from a 'Black Prince of Man' he was referring to Olaf the Black. With this viewpoint that the MacLeod chiefs were descended from the Royal House of Man, Sir George MacKenzie, first Lord Cromartie, was in agreement. He differed from Sir Norman only in particulars. He claimed that Leod was not descended from Olaf the Black, but from his nephew, Godred Donn, who was killed in Lewis. There is good reason to believe that Leod was born early in the 13th Century and this renders MacKenzie's pedigree too late for the birth of Leod as the following diagram shows:



About 1680, another genealogy of the MacLeods appeared. It dealt with the MacLeods of Assynt. It appears to have been written in Sweden. It traced the origin of the Chiefs of the MacLeods to Olaf the Black King of Man and the Isles. Canon Roderick MacLeod, no mean scholar of his Clan, was in no doubt that the Assynt Genealogy was correct. The tradition that the MacLeod chiefs were descended from Olaf the Black continued unchallenged into the 18th Century.

About 1767, a Memorial Manuscript of the Clan MacLeod was written. It is subscribed W. B. which seems to prove that it was the work of the distinguished antiquary and judge, Sir William MacLeod Bannatyne, alias Lord Bannatyne of Kames, a great grandson of Sir Norman MacLeod of Berneray. Apart from being a Lord of Session, Sir William was a founder member of the patriotic Iona Club and indeed its Vice President. He was most interested in all matters relating to the Highlands, its Gaelic culture, manuscripts and institutions. Due to his efforts not only the Glenmasson Manuscript but also the Kilbride Manuscripts were recovered and preserved for posterity. He provided 'much curious and valuable information to no less than Donald Gregory, who wrote the best history of the Highlands in Scotland. This able historian paid a glowing tribute to Lord Bannatyne. 'He early turned his attention to the history of the principal Highlands, in the elucidation of which his progress was so great at a time when for political causes, these subjects were generally neglected, as to make it a matter of regret that he never thought it proper to communicate his knowledge to the world.' Such a tribute from such a source deserves respect. There can be little doubt that Sir William was very interested in his own Clan and that the result of his research into its history is to be found not only in the Bannatyne Manuscript but also in the Manuscript Memorial of the Clan MacLeod. The Memorial states categorically that 'it is universally acknowledged that the MacLeods were descended from the Kings of Man'. With this traditional viewpoint of the origin of the Clan, Douglas of Glenbervie in his valuable work 'The Baronage of Scotland' concurred.

The triumphal procession of this tradition continued well into the 19th and 20th centuries -- though now and again dissentient notes were audible. In the 1830s the Bannatyne Manuscript was probably written by Dr. William MacLeod Bannatyne, who spent most of his life in India and Burma. His mother was a sister of Lord Bannatyne, and consequently as a medical student in Edinburgh, William lodged with his uncle in the Canongate. He, no doubt, gleaned a lot of information from his distinguished uncle and had also access to his papers. It is not surprising, therefore, that he was in a position to produce an invaluable manuscript which has greatly added to our knowledge of the various branches of the Clan MacLeod. This manuscript was given to Alexander MacKenzie, the famous Clan Historian, by Donald Grant MacLeod. He recognized its value and incorporated a good deal of its material into his 'History of the MacLeods' in 1889.

By this time new theories of the origin of the Clan were beginning to appear. Professor Bugge, a Scandinavian scholar of repute, convinced himself that Leod, the progenitor of the Clan MacLeod, was none other than Ljotr Niding in the Orkneyinga Saga, who lived in the 12th Century. Two objections to this theory are obvious; it is at least a century too early, and he lived in Sutherland rather than the Hebrides. Captain Thomas R. N., an Orcadian, produced a very able paper for the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, wherein he claimed that he had identified Leod as Ljotfulfr (ugly wolf) an important chief in Lewis in the 12th Century. At this early period, Harris was included in Lewis for the district was designated the 'Ardmeanach of Lodhus' in estate documents down to the 19th Century. This Lewis Chief also appears to have lived a century before Leod. It is not impossible that this 'ugly wolf' was an ancestor of Leod on the distaff side and that indeed Leod's name may have been derived from him. Still, the occurrence of the name Ljotr in Lewis, and also in Sutherland, indicates that the name was probably not so rare as we suppose.

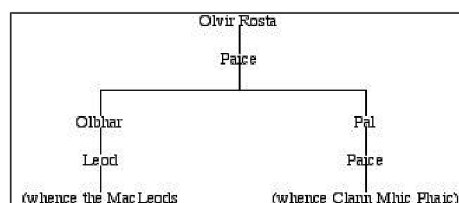
In the 20th Century the traditional origin of the MacLeods from the Royal House of Man and the Isles has been supported by such able scholars as Canon Roderick MacLeod, the Rev. Dr. Donald MacKinnon and Dr. I. F. Grant.

To sum up, the traditional view of the origin of the Clan MacLeod has received overwhelming support for four centuries by some of the most learned authorities in the Highlands. Dissentients there were, but they were remarkably few over such a long period of time.

Within the last few years, this generally accepted theory of the origin of Clan MacLeod has been challenged by a very able genealogist and Gaelic scholar in an article which appeared in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, Vol. LI. The extensive bibliography at the end of this article is proof that the author only arrived at this conclusions after long and intensive study of all available sources bearing on his subject at his command. his conclusions are of very great interest and deserve careful study as well as critical examination.

Briefly, this new theory claims that Leod was not descended from the Kings of Man and the Isles at all. The great grandfather of Leod is alleged to have been Olvir Rosta, a turbulent Norse Chief, who fled from Helmsdale and found refuge in the Hebrides. What happened to him subsequently is unknown, but he is presumed to have remained there and left descendants. his maternal grandfather was Liotr or Leod and this is a name more common amongst the Vikings than is generally supposed. It occurs in the Orkneys Hebrides, Caithness and Sutherland. It is common in Iceland. It should also be remembered that Godred Crovan was the son of Harald the Black of 'Ysland'. The name 'Ysland' has caused some confusion, some believing that it means Islay, but it is practically certain that it refers to Iceland.

In addition to these considerations, the new theory on the origin of Leod claims the support of four old Gaelic pedigrees. On this foundation, it was found possible to construct a genealogy which clearly showed that the Clan Mhicleoid and the Clan Mhic Phaic are sprung from a common origin, i.e., from Oliver Rosta. The pedigree can be diagrammatically portrayed as follows:



As this diagram demonstrates, Pal Baalkeson is made the grandson of Olvir Rosta. Here is evidence on record, however, that he was not. It is known that Pal was killed in Lewis as late as 1231. It can be reasonably presumed that he had at least reached middle age then, since he was the Sheriff of Skye. Readers of the *Chronicon Manniae*, a rare book, will notice another Pal Baalkeson under the year 1144. In that year, there was considerable dispeace in the Isles due to the tyranny of Godred the Black. in consequence, an invitation was sent to Dugal, son of Somerled, to come and rule the Isles. Pal Baalkeson reported the plan to Godred and in consequence a naval battle was fought off Ardnamurchan and the Kingdom of Man and the Isles was partitioned. This Pal Baalkeson of 1144 could not be the Pal Baalkeson who was killed in Lewis in 1231 but he could be and almost certainly was, his grandfather. This demolishes the case that the Clan Mhicleoid and the Clan MhicPhaic have a common origin. Pal Baalkeson was not Pal, son of Paice, son of Olvir Rosta; he was in fact Pal, son of Paice, son of Pal Baalkeson. it is true enough that Duncan Macrae (Donnchadh nam Pios) in a Gaelic poem on Roderick Morison, the Blind Piper, mentions that the MacLeods were descended from the Clan MhicPhaic. A better authority than Macrae, Sir Norman Macleod of Berneray, keenly interested in genealogy, did not believe this. The truth seems to be that the poem is really a 'flying', a species of poetry indulged in Scottish poets as a kind of verbal warfare to belittle or ridicule opponents. Duncan Macrae in fact had reason to be annoyed with the MacLeods: he had harboured the notion of becoming Chief of Raasay in 1688, but he was probably much piqued when the office fell to a cousin of the late Chief, a member of the MacLeods of Rigg, who were closely related to the Berneray family. He probably knew that Sir Norman claimed that the macleods were of royal birth and that it was this belief that told heavily against his own candidature because he was a Macrae. Hence in his 'flying' against the 'Blind Harper', he endeavored to demean the proud claims of the Clan MacLeod, by stating that they were simply descended from the Clan MhicPhaic.

Four pedigrees are provided to prove that the new theory on the origin of Leod is based on solid genealogical authority. Only one of the genealogical lists precedes the 17th Century and hence most of them can hardly claim to have precedence over the lists of Sir Norman MacLeod of Berneray so far as time is concerned. It is noticeable that individuals, used in a pedigree not of the MacLeods but of the MacLeans, are in one of the genealogical lists provided to prove the origin of Leod in the new theory. This list of the MacLeans came from the fertile brain of Duaid McFirbis. Duaid McFirbis, in fact, does provide a pedigree of the MacLeods which is radically different from his MacLean pedigree. This pedigree of the MacLeods, for some reason, has been omitted in the new theory but it will be included here, for it does show that very little reliance can be placed on Duaid McFirbis. All these early genealogies go far back in time, proving beyond a shadow of doubt that their authors did not lack imagination. It is reasonable to apply the flensing knife and cut them down ruthlessly to Leod's alleged great grandfather. He is styled variously as Olbur snaith, Olbhur snaige, Olmoir, in McFirbis' MacLean pedigree as Olbhur snoice, but astoundingly enough in his MacLeod pedigree as Fercussa.

According to the new theory, since in the Gaelic language 'mh' and 'bh' are practically equivalent, the person named above as Leod's great grandfather, with the single exception of McFirbis' pedigree, is Olvir and it is presumed that he is none other than Olvir Rosta who had escaped to the Isles and is presumed to have remained there. The word 'snaith', 'snaige', or indeed 'snoice' probably means 'white' (snaith). If that is the case, then according to these lists the great grandfather of Leod was Olvar the White, and not Olvir Rosta or the Turbulent. It is not often that the Vikings used different epithets to describe one and the same person!

As we proceed with our examination, it is helpful if we align these various pedigree theories. We add to those listed in the new theory McFirbis' genealogy of the MacLeods.

The Kilbride MS	McVurich MS	R.I.A. MS	McFirbis McLean MS	McFirbis McLeod MS
ca. 1550	17th c.	17th c.	17th c.	17th c.
Leod	Leod	Leod	Leod	Leod
Oloig	Olbhur	Olbhur	Gillemuir	Artuir
Oib	Raisi	Raioige	Raice	Balair
Oilmoir	Olbhur snaith	Olbhur snaige	Olbhur snoice	Fercussa

It will be noticed that Leod's grandfather in the oldest pedigree is given as 'Oib' but it is otherwise roughly the same in the 17th Century genealogies, except of course in McFirbis' MacLeod pedigree where it appears as 'Balair'. The new theory waives those difficulties and concludes quite firmly that the names Raisi, Raice and Raoige are the same and simply mean Paice. Of course, this operation would involve the alteration of the initial letter R to P and these letters are quite distinct and separate in the Gaelic language. When this alteration is not only carried out in one case but in three separate pedigrees, this is of course quite indefensible.

The father of Leod is also variously given in these pedigrees. Duaid McFirbis in his MacLeod Genealogy calls him Artuir, but in his MacLean Genealogy, the person called Leod has Gillemuir as his father. So far as the Kilbride MS. is concerned, the father of Leod, as previously printed by the Iona Club, was called Oloig, but this was subsequently amended by the venerable Society to Oloir. The McVurich and the Royal Irish Academy Pedigrees of the 17th century are so similar that they seem to originate from the same source. They both claim that Olbhur was Leod's father.

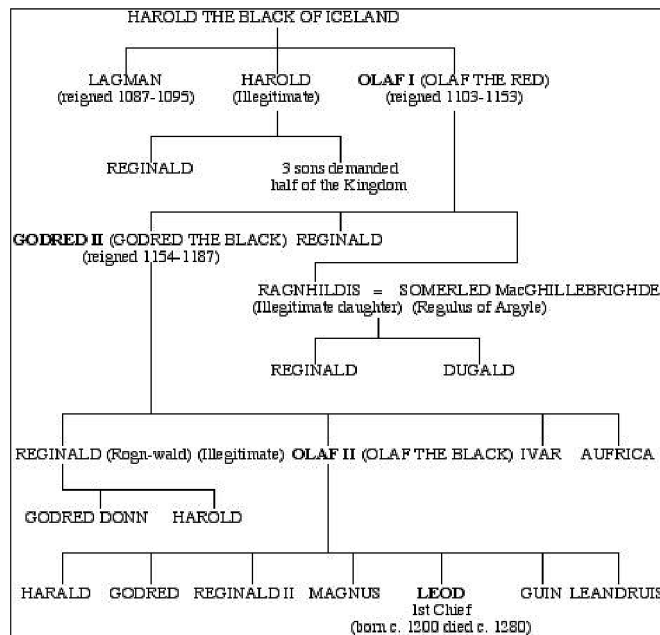
The late James Carmichael Watson in his attractive book on the Gaelic poetry of Mary MacLeod, drew attention to the name Olbhur or Olgair as the Norse progenitor of the Chiefs of MacLeod. The bardess, Mairi nighean Alasdair Ruaidh, like her hero and patron, Sir Norman MacLeod of Berneray, was in no doubt that the MacLeods were a royal race sprung from Olgair mac Ochraidh. As Sir Norman is styled by the bardess, 'the head of learning's company', it can be taken for granted that she held the same idea of origin of the MacLeods as her patron. The Talisker MS leaves no doubt that Sir Norman believed that the father of Leod was Olaf the Black, King of Man and the Isles and when Mary MacLeod refers to Olgair mac Ochraidh, she means Olaf, son of Godfrey.

James Carmichael Watson, however, translated Olbhur and Olgair as Olvar or Oliver. He had consulted Norse books and discovered in Landnamabok or the Book of the Settlement of Iceland no less than 17 instances of the name Oliver. While this is interesting, it does not go far enough. The important problem of pronunciation still remains. In their monumental work, the 'Origines Icelandicae', by Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, the pronunciation of Olver is not given as Oliver but always as Olwe, Alwe, Aulwe, Owle and Aulwi, which is practically the word Aulay, which the new theory of the MacLeods is quite prepared to accept as Olaf.

Dr. George Black in his well-known book on Scottish surnames, is in no doubt that Olver and Olbhur is not Oliver. He states that in Shetland (and presumably in the vicinity, in Orkney, Caithness and Sutherland) the old Norse name, Oleif'r or Olaf, was merged (sic) into the new name Oliver and indeed played an important part in the vogue of that peculiar name in Scotland. The name Oliver is French (i.e. Olivier), he contends, and it entered England with the Norman conquerors in 1066. It spread north in the wake of the feudal system in Scotland and Dr. Black's surnames provide good evidence of the spread of the name up to the Highlands.

The names Olaf, Oleifr, Olver, Olgair and Olbhur may indeed show variations of spelling, but were not different words. In the spoken language of the Norse, they meant Aulay or Olaf but never Oliver. As the Memorial of the Clan MacLeod in 1767 states, 'the father of Leod, the eponymous of the Clan MacLeod, was Olave, or Olgair, Olaus or Auleus, King of Man and the Isles'.

THE KINGS OF MAN AND THE ISLES



The Talisker Manuscript reads, 'Magnus, last king of Man was the brother of Leoid (progenitor of the MacLeods) by Olaf's first marriage and it is hoped that the following series of Lairds of MacLeod from Olaf downwards, will answer pretty nearly to the calculations by which the chronologie is judg'd of, which is taken from a list of them written from Sir Norman MacLeod of Berneray's account of the family, a man of very extensive knowledge and very versant in the Genealogies of the most honourable families in scotland and from Old Daans or poems'. The bardess, Mairi Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh speaks in the same strain. The MacLeods are descended from 'mighty Vikings' from the 'town of Bergen, which is the beginning of their history'. They are of the race of Ollaghair (i.e. Olaf Odhar or Olaf the Black or Swarthy) son of Ochraidh (i.e. Godfrey). With this viewpoint the Bannatyne Manuscript, written by a descendant of Sir Norman MacLeod, is in full agreement. The traditional Norse origin of the Clan is bluntly expressed in the Memorial Manuscript (dated ca. 1767) for Norman, the 22nd Chief. 'It is universally acknowledged that the Memorialist's family is lineally descended from the Norwegian Kings of Man and the Western Isles'.

We are not entirely dependent on MacLeod traditions for the claim that the Clan is of Norse origin. The Kilbride Manuscript of the MacLachlans, a MacLean genealogy, the family pedigree drawn up by Dubhaltach MacFirbisigh and writings of Captain Thomas last century also proclaim the Norse origin of the Clan, though they differ considerably in particulars. All these genealogies were collected and closely examined by Canon Roderick MacLeod. He decided that the traditional account accepted by the Clan for centuries was correct.

GODRED CROVAN reigned 1077-1087

The founder of the last dynasty to rule Man and the Isles was Godred Crovan, a son of Harold the Black of 'Ysland' (i.e., Iceland). His origin is obscure, although various conjectures have been made to trace his genealogy. It is, however, certain that he was not a mere adventurer. He derived a considerable amount of support from the Hebrides and he was successful in establishing a dynasty that lasted for two centuries and was never seriously challenged. These circumstances argue that he was in some way related to some of the previous Kings of the Isles.

He first came to notice in 1066, when we find him in conjunction with Godred, son of Sigtrygg, King of Man and the Isles at the time, assisting King Harold Hardrada of Norway and Tostig Godwinson, in their invasion of England. The invaders were routed by Harold Godwinson, King of England and a brother of Tostig at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. King Harold of Norway and Tostig were slain. The two Godreds managed to escape to the Isle of Man. King Godred Sigtryggson of Man and the Isles died shortly afterwards and was succeeded by his son, Fingal. Godred Crovan seems to have returned to Iceland, but in 1071 he is in Norway, busily collecting an army to invade the Isle of Man. He received strong naval support from the Hebrides, but for some reason, he met the stubborn opposition in Man. Despite two setbacks, he finally triumphed in battle at Scaefell. So grateful was he to his Hebridean supporters that he gave them a choice of taking possession of the island or plundering it. Eventually the Hebridean received the South part of the island in close proximity to his own residence; the people of Man were driven into the northern portion. All accounts agree that Godred Crovan was a powerful ruler: he conquered Dublin and a large part of Leinster: he forbade the Scots on the western seaboard of Scotland to build any vessel requiring more than three bolts for its construction. He was married and left issue, three sons, Lagman, Harold and Olaf. He died of a pestilence in Islay in 1087.

LAGMAN reigned 1087-1095

Lagman, who had been viceroy in the Hebrides before his father's death succeeded him on the throne. No sooner was the strong hand of Godred Crovan removed than dissensions broke out in the island kingdom. Civil war broke out between the North and South of Man. In the battle of Santwith between the rival factions, MacMaras (i.e. MacMaurice or Mac Gillemhoire) leader of the South, and Jarl Otter, leader of the North, were slain. Harold, Lagman's younger brother, frequently rebelled and in the end was barbarously punished. This so filled Lagman with remorse, that he undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and died in Jerusalem in 1095. He may have omitted to pay his 'scat' (10 marks of gold) on his succession to his superior, the King of Norway. King Magnus Barefoot of Norway now decided to teach the Islanders a lesson and made three savage incursions in 1093, 1098, and 1103. His skald exultingly details the devastation made in the Orkneys, Lोधus, Skye, Mull, Tیره, Islay, Man and Anglesey. Iona he treated with remarkable respect. He made a Treaty with King Malcolm of Scotland in which the Norse king was allowed to possess all islands lying west of Scotland between which and the mainland he could pass with a rudder carrying boat. The wily Norse king landed in Kintyre and caused his ship to be drawn across the isthmus to Tarbert, Loch Fyne. In this way he secured Kintyre 'which is better than the best island in the Sudreys except Man'. He left a tyrannical governor, Ingemund, to rule the Hebrides; the Islanders revolted and consigned him and his house to the flames. King Magnus Barefoot returned for a second time and doled out even more savage punishment to the Isles. Many fled out to sea; others went into temporary exile into the kingdom of the Scots. No doubt, most of them returned again to their devastated homesteads.

While in residence in the Isle of Man, Magnus Barefoot, who was furious that the Hebrideans had chosen Donald MacTade, an Irishman, as their governor, 'sent his shoes'¹ by an ambassador to one of the Kings of Ireland desiring he should carry them in presence to his court on Christmas day as a token of submission with threats of invading his territory if he did not comply. The Irish king complied rather than hazard his kingdom to the invasion of so powerful an enemy. Tempted by the favourable reports of the country made by his ambassador, Magnus eventually invaded Ireland but was killed in the very first engagement in August, 1104.

OLAF I (Olaf the Red)
reigned 1103-1153

Olaf, who succeeded Lagman, was a minor, when King Magnus Barefoot raided Man and the Hebrides. He is variously known as Olaf Klining or Bitling from his small stature or florid complexion. He reigned for some 50 years and brought a long period of peace to the Isles by keeping on good terms with the Kings of Norway, Scotland, England and Ireland. He married Ingibiorg, daughter of Earl Hakon of Orkney by whom he had one son, Godred the Black. Some chroniclers also state that he married Elfrica, daughter of Fergus, Lord of Galloway. He had several illegitimate sons and many daughters, one of whom, Ragnhildis (Raghnaid), married Somerled MacGhillebrighde, regulus of Argyle and progenitor of the great Clan Donald, later to be Lords of the Isles.

Olaf Bitling sailed to Norway at the end of the reign to pay his 'scat' of 10 marks of gold to his superior. In consequence, he was ceremoniously crowned at Trondheim and left his son Godred to be educated in Norway. On his return to Man, he found that the sons of his deceased brother Harold were conspiring to overthrow him. On the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, 1153, Olaf arranged a meeting with the conspirators to consider their claims. Unfortunately Reginald, son of Harold, took advantage of the opportunity to despatch his uncle with an axe.

GODRED II (Godred the Black)
reigned 1154-1187

Godred the Black succeeded his father in 1154. After conquering Dublin, Godred became a tyrant and his oppression was such that one of his leading vassals, Thorfinn, son of Ottar, went to Somerled, regulus of Argyle and proposed that Dugall, son of Somerled, should be appointed King of Man and the Isles. Thereafter, Somerled and Thorfinn sailed to the Sudreys (Hebrides) where they were joyfully received by most of the leading men. Paul Baalkeson (of whom the clan MhicBhaic or MacKillops in Berneray, Harris) hastened to Man to inform King Godred of what was happening. Godred now collected a fleet and sailed north to deal with the insurgents. He found Somerled ready for him with 80 sail near Ardnamurchan. Here a great battle was fought on the night of the Epiphany, 6th January 1156. There was much slaughter on both sides: Somerled seems to have been victorious. A treaty was drawn up by which the Hebrides (Sudreys) were divided between the rival protagonists. King Godred retained the island of Man and all the Sudreys north of Ardnamurchan. The Hebridean islands, south of this point fell to Dugall, son of Somerled. The arrangement did not bring peace. We find Somerled invading Man and driving Godred from his throne. The latter however made his way to Norway, where he received sufficient assistance to recover his territories. Godred reigned 33 years and died in 1187. He married Phingola (Fionaghuala), daughter of MacLochlan, son of Muirheartach, King of Ireland, with issue, one son, Olaf the Black. Cardinal Vivian, a Papal Legate visited the Isles about this time and insisted that Fionaghuala was Godred's legally married wife. This suggests that Godred had previously had a handfast marriage, for he had two illegitimate sons, Reginald and Ivar, who were older than Olaf.

REGINALD
reigned 1187-1228

As soon as Godred the Black died, the Islesmen chose Reginald as their king. Their choice was probably dictated by two considerations:

- (1) Olaf, the legitimate offspring of the late king, was only 10 years old.
- (2) Reginald was a man of great martial qualities, resembling the Vikings of old.

His chronicler proudly records that for three years he never slept 'beneath a sooty rafter'. He assigned Lodhus (comprising Lewis, Harris and Uist) to his younger brother, Olaf, for his maintenance. The latter was far from satisfied. He complained to King Reginald, who promptly seized him and handed him over to William the Lion, King of Scotland. For some reason, that monarch saw fit to imprison Olaf the Black in Marchmont Castle for a period of seven years. On the death of King William in December 1214, Olaf was released. He went on a three years' pilgrimage to St. James of Compostella in the North of Spain. Thereafter he made peace with King Reginald and settled down in his patrimony of Lodhus. He seems to have been married, before he was imprisoned in Scotland, to a 'lady of Kintyre', a cousin of the Queen of Man and the Isles. According to canon Roderick MacLeod, Leod, progenitor of the MacLeods, was a son of this marriage. In this particular, the Canon departs from MacLeod traditions (e.g. the Manuscript Memorial of 1767, the Talisker Manuscript and the Bannatyne Manuscript), which claimed that Leod was a son of Olaf's third marriage with Christina, daughter of Farquhar, Earl of Ross. Some time after his return to Lodhus, Olaf decided to marry again in 1218 to 'Jauon' (i.e., Joan) a sister of the Queen of Man. Reginald, the Bishop of the Isles, now took action and convening the Synod, demanded that Olaf must divorce his wife on the ground that she was cousin german to his first wife. Olaf complained that his first marriage was not confirmed: Bishop Reginald was adamant: Joan had to go. In 1222, Olaf married his third wife, Christina daughter of Farquhar, Earl of Ross, with issue four sons, Harold, Reginald, Magnus and Godfrey. The last son died early, but the other three successively followed their father, as Kings of Man and the Isles.

These marriage tangles were to involve Olaf the Black in considerable trouble. King Reginald's wife was furious that he had divorced her sister, Joan. She exhorted her son Godred Donn, who was then living in Skye, to assassinate Olaf the Black. He heard of the project, probably from Pol son of Boke (Paul MacBhaic), who was sheriff in Skye, owned lands in Harris and was the foster father of Leod, Olaf's son by the first marriage. Olaf managed to escape to his powerful father-in-law, Farquhar, Earl of Ross. After receiving assistance there and also from Paul MacBhaic, he landed in Skye and surprised Godred Donn 'in an island on a fresh water loch in Trotternish, in which there was a chapel and monastery dedicated to St. Columba'. Godred Donn was barbarously punished, though he was allowed to remain alive. The punishment was meted out by the Sheriff of Skye and Olaf felt it was much too severe.

In 1224, Olaf, aided by the bulk of the Sudreyans, invaded the Isle of Man with the intention of dethroning King Reginald. Both brothers however managed to reach agreement to divide the kingdom between them and Olaf returned to his old residence in Lodhus. In 1225, however, Reginald assisted by Allan, Lord of Galloway, tried to dispossess Olaf but far from being successful, he only incurred the displeasure of the inhabitants of Man. Now Olaf again invaded Man and in 1226 drove King Reginald out of the island, and became sole ruler. Reginald however returned but on February 7th, 1228, he was finally defeated and slain in the Isle of Man, at Tynwald Hill.

OLAF II (Olaf the Black)
Born 1146 Reigned 1228-1237

Godred Donn, King Reginald's son now left for Norway to plead his claim and was so far successful that it was agreed by Olaf that they should divide the Kingdom between them. Just when Olaf was on the point of proceeding to Norway to pay his 'scat', King Hakon, tired of the divisions in the Isles, decided to bestow the Kingdom on Husbac, whom he renamed Hakon, son of Owmund, a Hebridean. Husbac accompanied by Godred Donn sailed south to the Sudreys to deal with a Scottish invasion of the Isles, and they were joined off Islay by Olaf the Black. Here a naval engagement was fought, Arran was captured and a siege was laid to the strong castle of Rothesay in the Isle of Bute. The defenders hurled down huge stones and poured boiling pitch and lead on the besiegers. Olaf, however, caused his men to build wooden sheds for protection while they were busily undermining the walls. King Husbac was hurt by a stone, from the effect of which he died, and was later buried in Iona. After three desperate days and the loss of 390 men, the fortress was taken.

Olaf the Black and Godred Donn now proceeded to divide the island kingdom between them. Godred Donn received Lodhus, where obviously Olaf the Black still had considerable influence. In 1231, Godred Donn, to settle old scores, decided to kill Pol, son of Boke (Paul MacBhaic), who was the foster father of Olaf's son, Leod. Immediately, the people of Lodhus rose in revolt and Godred Donn was slain. The whole kingdom now fell in the hands of King Olaf once again and he continued to rule it until he died in 1237, on the 21st May on the Isle of St. Patrick, and is buried at Rushen Abbey, Isle of Man. His three sons, Harold, Reginald and Magnus, succeeded him on the throne in that order. Magnus, the last king of Man and the Isles, took part in Haco's expedition against

Scotland, which ended disastrously at the Battle of Largs in 1263. He died in 1265 and in the following year, by the Treaty of Perth, Man and the Isles were ceded to Alexander III, king of Scotland.

¹ Vide Manuscript Memorial (ca. 1767), p. 2, in Dunvegan Castle.



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