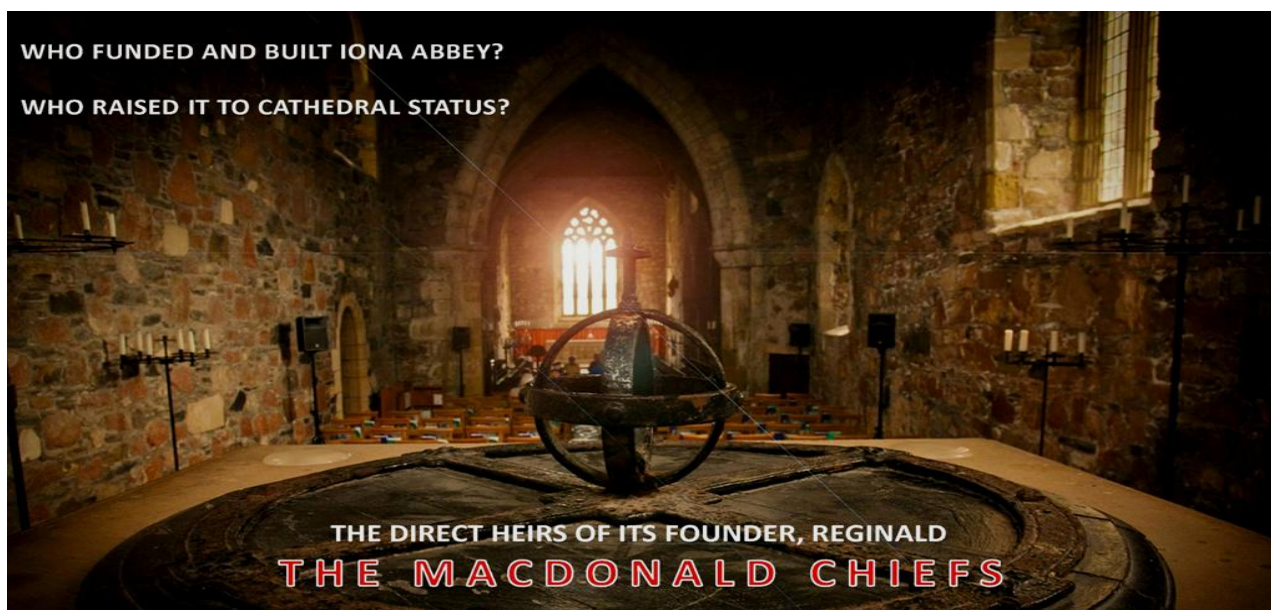


## WHO RESOURCED AND BUILT THE IONA "CATHEDRAL OF THE ISLES"? (Part 11)

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There is a manifest sequence of strategic events that were orchestrated by Clan Donald Lords of the Isles over eighty years (1386 - 1472) to raise their ecclesiastical capital on Iona to cathedral status. If successive clan Donald chiefs (1207-1493, "*heirs of the body*", patrilineal successors to King Reginald mac Somerled, Iona Abbey founder) had not firstly exercised their military superiority and then powers and responsibilities under the pervasive and persuasive (legal) precedents underpinning "*conditionality of endowment*" <sup>1</sup> and also directly through ecclesiastical legislation and jurisdiction (canonical law) of the Roman Cura, then the "*impoverished*" Iona abbey, under "*threat of total ruin*", would have "*collapsed*" and been unsustainable well over a century before its final 16th century dissolution (protestant reformation).

Instead, it eventually prospered and the abbey church was enlarged and enhanced by Clan Donald's long term strategic intervention, at both a temporal and spiritual level, financed by their infrastructure spending. Endowment is not a static once off event, it is dynamic and it's conditional, feudal in its nature. "*Whatever the particular institution, the church held its temporal property on the basis of three tenures : barony and knight service, divine service, and frankalmoign (free alms). The first two were justicable, at least in terms of its temporalities, in the royal courts while the last, frankalmoign, was a tenure outside the purview of common law (only adjudicated by the ecclesiastical ordinary)*" [John Wyclif, c.1320-1384; f/n1].

The conditions of tenure for Iona Abbey were :- "*divine or spiritual service*" - saving souls; compliance with the intended purpose of the abbey, proper use of its endowed assets and their income; and their integrity, maintenance. "***Of all the orders, the Benedictines have the most traditionally feudal relationships with their patrons, who are generally regarded as liege lords.***" A problem that arises is that of the old, sentimental view that Gaelic society in the West was somehow pure and uncorrupted, and that feudalism was a polluting influence that 'advanced into the highlands in the manner of Original' Sin, raising its ugly head in the Garden of Eden'.

Nothing could, in fact, be further from the truth; what little evidence there is suggests that feudalism was eagerly and easily adapted and utilised by the magnates of the West in the thirteenth century, and in many cases we see those same nobles adopting conventions of feudal society like knighthood, the building of castles, and the utilisation of charters to record transfers of land." <sup>2</sup>

In the 13th century, the Lordship of the Isles was "already well on the way towards such a hybrid status".<sup>3</sup> Sir Angus Mor's mother was the daughter of Walter, High Steward of Scotland; he certainly had been knighted <sup>4</sup>. The "*Gaelic Charter of 1408*" (land grant) by Donald of Harlaw is a later example of "*a strong Gaelic cultural and social element in the Lordship (of the Isles) as well as its documented and feudal aspect*". <sup>3</sup>

Endowment is an ongoing, revisable process by law, by the founder's heirs, albeit there can only be one founder. Clan Donald Lords of the Isles were "hands on managers" of their investment right from the start and throughout the three centuries of their control of their "*ecclesiastical tenant*". Endower dynasties and their abbeys valued each other - the cycle of reciprocal benefits continued down the centuries. **The Macdonalds were never subsidiary to the abbey. They were *always fundamental and central to it its whole medieval existence of 300 years.***

The Iona Abbot (of old, original Benedictine order) was not given tenure in free alms, *frankalmoign* – perpetual freehold, inalienable, 'hereditary' land endowment (*'in puram et perpetuam elemosinam'*) for the major estates distributed widely throughout the Western Isles and mainland. Under '*free alms*' tenure, the Abbot could only recognise one Lord – God. Religious houses in receipt of free alms could not recognise a secular lord. The relationship between the Abbot and Lord of the Isles in this case would have been at "*alms*" length', ie, subsidiary. But this was clearly not the case because the Iona Abbot always served as a Lord Spiritual on the Lordship's Council of the Isles and '*Macdonald, King of the Isles*', made solemn oaths (eg, land grants) to his vassals '*sworn on the black stones*' before witnesses, just west of the abbey church (Martin Martin, 1695). The 'Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland' (VOL 4; p.145) also concludes that some of the original Iona land endowments were re-allocated by Lord John Macdonald to his new foundation of Oransay Priory, c.1430 (Augustinian Canons) - meaning they were not originally inalienable, ie, not held in non-transferable frankalmoign tenure by the Iona Abbot.

"Perpetual free alms" tenure was for Reginald's Cistercian foundation at Saddell (new, *reformed order* <sup>4</sup>), their lesser "donations" (cows, pennies, tithes on goods) to other foundations, eg, to Paisley (new Cluniac order) and a small, very late grant by Angus Master, 1485, to Iona. It was not for the main estates of their major, old order foundation, Iona, with "conditionally" endowed income producing lands that required feudal "functional reciprocity" of the abbey providing divine service - spiritual service, salvation for the Lords of the Isles' souls *and* for his kin, descendants and ancestors. Episcopal lands and revenue, not of the whole diocese's, but those held personally by Bishops, as ecclesiastical tenants-in-chief ("*incapite*" of the crown), had feudal tenure of barony and knight service (thus "warrior bishops"). Only a minority of the Abbots of the many centuries old, larger Benedictine abbeys in England, just after the 1066 Norman conquest, were treated the same as Bishops. (Incidence:- entirely arbitrary, by localities in strife; summonses not well obeyed; by c.1300, this "corporal service" had mostly defaulted to payment-in-lieu, *scutage*, and fines; knight service superseded by other forms of military service, eg, paid contract troops, and formally replaced in 1385.)

From foundation in 1203, Iona Abbey's major estates in the west did not have a military obligation, in their case to provide Gaelic/Norse ship service or castle guard. Besides *divine service*, Iona Abbey in fact provided a whole range of reciprocal services for the Clan Donald Chiefs and gave them considerable prestige and status as well. It was a place of privilege for the elite :- refuge and sanctuary for "*unfortunate*" noble women of the Lord's family/kin; education, law and medical services; hospitality-hospitalisation, retirement home. In house canon lawyers: drafting Vatican petitions to secure release from disabilities imposed by strict letter of canon law:- marriage dispensations, remarrying; illegitimacy, etc. They also obtained personal spiritual guidance on matters of state, feuds, battle, health, times of disaster and the art of dying, death.

[..continued..]

**"IONA CATHEDRAL OF THE ISLES" was raised by CLAN DONALD HIGH CHIEF, LORD OF THE ISLES,  
"JOHIS DE YLLE COMIS ROSSIE DOMINI INSULARUM", c.1450-80**

**This political goal was the zenith of a many decade's long sequence of connected events.....  
BY SUCCESSIVE CLAN DONALD CHIEFS (FOUNDER'S HEIRS) and CLAN DONALD ABBOTTS, BISHOPS MANAGING  
"CONDITIONALITY OF ENDOWMENT".**

**1386.** Donald (II) becomes Lord of the Isles. Imposed abbey governance restrictions on "corrupt" MacKinnon excess :-*"the greatest tyrant who had his lands from the goods of the monastery"*.

**1387.** Split from the opposing polity, Isle of Man, *The Isles becomes a diocese in its own right - to York.*

**c.1395-1421. 25 YEAR PARTNERSHIP of :- Lord Donald (II) of Harlaw, and  
Clan Donald Prior and Abbott, John MacAllister.**

**c.1390-5 :- Donald II** defeated the "hateful and corrupt" MacKinnon's attempted inside coup of the Lordship (their reaction to his abbey governance). Their Chief was hung; their "wicked" Abbot Finguine [I] "neutered" by Donald and "confined", despite Pope confirming him "in possession" 1397, but removed 1405 by *commissio privationis*. He was expelled by Prior **John MacAllister**, obviously Donald's new Abbey "Manager", 1395, who then commenced the long, difficult process of tracing and recovery of MacKinnon's "usurped Abbey property" and reform of the impoverished, collapsed monastery. He "devoted much of his career to securing full control of the monastic revenues as a preliminary to the repair of the abbey". **THEY BROKE THE CORRUPTION AND NEPOTISM OF THE "NEFARIOUS" FINGUINES (1,2,3) MACKINNON FAMILY OF ABBOT, SON PRIOR, SON MONK (c.1350 – 1450) - THE "moral delinquency of those wicked and perverse noblemen; unlawful occupier, the greatest tyrant"**.

**1412-1421. Donald (II) of Harlaw (1386-1421), gifted the prestigious, precious and status raising reliquary of St Columba's body part, via Abbot John MacAllister; [clearly not to a MacKinnon!].**

**1421:** a. Lord Donald annexed three perpetual vicarages to the abbey to boost revenue and fund its reparation.  
b. Donald presents Dominic MacKenzie, from Ross, as the new Abbot to continue MacAllister's reforms.

**1433.** Donald II's son, Bishop Angus I, first "native Bishop of the Isles", removed the **Cathedra, Bishop's Seat from Skye to Iona. Petitioned for 12 cathedral canons/prepends. Buried in his 'monastic Cathedral'.**

**1443.** Under Donald II's son **Alexander**, the power of Clan Donald reached its high tide. He threatened to "**diminish the monastery**" by invoking the serious and real threat of removing the "*relics and bones of his progenitors who are buried therein (Iona) and the precious things which have been given.*" **He was in fact threatening to "shut the place down"**. [Why? The local MacKinnons were once again trying to 're-found' and continue their corruption through Finguine MacKinnon III.] By removing his ancestors bones (eg, to their Oransay, Saddell) the nexus of *divine service* for souls in return for endowments to the abbey was breached and under *functional reciprocity* there was no obligation to continue that recurring income. Alexander died in Dingwall, **1449**;

**1450-80. Lord John II MacDonald greatly enlarges and enhances the Abbey church to Cathedral standard. It was :-  
"So comprehensive a scale as to involve the destruction of nearly three-fourths (3/4s) of the structure."  
(1461 : John's Grand treaty of Ardtornish–Westminster with England..... What EXPECTATIONS!)**

**1472.** Donald II's grandson, Angus II, becomes the Lordship's second Bishop of the Isles.

**IONA CATHEDRAL IS CLAN DONALD'S LEGACY, "THE ROYAL FAMILY OF MACDONALD"  
"FORMERLY KINGS OF THE WESTERN PARTS OF SCOTLAND AND THE ISLES"**

**INTERRUPTIONS : OVER EARLDOM OF ROSS, 1402; KING JAMES I, 1406. Including Battle of Harlaw, 1411;  
Alexander imprisoned, 1427; Battle of Inverlochy, 1431.**

<sup>1</sup> "John Wyclif as Legal Reformer"; (Conditionality of Endowment); William E. Farr; Professor Emeritus of History, University of Washington; 1971. From Brehon and Custom law to Feudal law to Scots Common/Civil law to English codified law, viz., Gaelic maxim in *Bechbretha* that "*no-one is obliged to give something to another for nothing*". And "*DO UT FACIAS*" : "I give [you] that you may do or make [for me.]" A formula in the civil law, under which those contracts were classed in which one party gave or agreed to give land, money, in consideration the other party did or performed certain work. To the 2nd Statute of Westminster, 1285 (re-affirmed in the Commons, 1376), eg, sue a writ of *praecipue tali abbati* ["*Religious Orders, Volume 2*"; David Knowles] :- **Endowed tenurial lands of "Lords and their ancestors", alienated by their monasteries, can be recovered.** Albeit not frequently used. I'm not suggesting the Lords of Isles sued a writ as above or a "*contra formam collationis*". What is very clear is that "**The idea of confiscating church property was part of the ambience of the fourteenth century;**" "*practice sanctioned by long usage; fundamentally consonant with political realities.*" This is so, regardless that Wyclif's major aim of fundamental church reform failed (his evangelical concept:- ecclesiastical dispossession; repristinate Christ's Church). He was "*The Morning Star of the Reformation*".

<sup>2</sup> McDonald, R. Andrew; *The Kingdom of the Isles – Scotland's Western Seaboard c.1100-c.1336*, p.142; 1997. 3. Ibid., p.157. 4. Ibid., p.146.

<sup>3</sup> J. Munro and R. Munro, "*Acts of the Lords of the Isles 1336-1493*", Intro., ix; 1986.

<sup>4</sup> THE NEW ORDERS, post 1066 feudalisation - "They renounced all possessions and exploitation of feudal sources of wealth - a movement independent of secular control - economic units quite different to the greater black monk (old Benedictine) order" - D. Knowles (see f/n 1).