

Kenneth II of Scotland

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Cináed mac Mail Coluim (Modern Gaelic: *Coinneach mac Mhaoil Chaluum*^[1] anglicised as **Kenneth II**, and nicknamed **An Fionnghalach**, "The Fratricide";^[2] before 954 – 995) was King of Scots (*Alba*). The son of Malcolm I (Máel Coluim mac Domnaill), he succeeded King Cuilén (Cuilén mac Iduilb) on the latter's death at the hands of Amdarch of Strathclyde in 971.

The *Chronicle of the Kings of Alba* was compiled in Kenneth's reign, but many of the place names mentioned are entirely corrupt, if not fictitious.^[3] Whatever the reality, the Chronicle states that "[h]e immediately plundered [Strathclyde] in part. Kenneth's infantry were slain with very great slaughter in Moin Uacoruar." The Chronicle further states that Kenneth plundered Northumbria three times, first as far as Stainmore, then to *Cluiam* and lastly to the River Dee by Chester. These raids may belong to around 980, when the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records attacks on Cheshire.^[4]

In 973, the *Chronicle of Melrose* reports that Kenneth, with Máel Coluim I (Máel Coluim mac Domnaill), the King of Strathclyde, "Maccus, king of very many islands" (i.e. Magnus Haraldsson (Maccus mac Arailt), King of Mann and the Isles) and other kings, Welsh and Norse, came to Chester to acknowledge the overlordship of the English king Edgar the Peaceable.^[5] It may be that Edgar here regulated the frontier between the southern lands of the kingdom of Alba and the northern lands of his English kingdom. Cumbria was English, the western frontier lay on the Solway. In the east, the frontier lay somewhere in later Lothian, south of Edinburgh.^[6]

The *Annals of Tigernach*, in an aside, name three of the Mormaers of Alba in Kenneth's reign in entry in 976: Cellach mac Fíndgaine, Cellach mac Baireda and Donnchad mac Morgaínd. The third of these, if not an error for Domnall mac Morgaínd, is very likely a brother of Domnall, and thus the Mormaer of Moray. The Mormaerdoms or kingdoms ruled by the two Cellachs cannot be identified.


The feud which had persisted since the death of King Indulf (Idulb mac Causantín) between his descendants and Kenneth's family persisted. In 977 the *Annals of Ulster* report that "Amlaíb mac Iduilb [Amlaíb, son of Indulf], King of Scotland, was killed by Cináed mac Domnaill." The *Annals of Tigernach* give the correct name of Amlaíb's killer: *Cináed mac Mail Coluim*, or Kenneth II. Thus, even if only for a short time, Kenneth had been overthrown by the brother of the previous king.^[7]

Adam of Bremen tells that Sweyn Forkbeard found exile in Scotland at this time, but whether this was with Kenneth, or one of the other kings in Scotland, is unknown. Also at this time, *Njal's Saga*, the *Orkneyinga Saga* and other sources recount wars between "the Scots" and the Northmen, but these are more probably wars between Sigurd Hlodvisson, Earl of Orkney, and the Mormaers, or Kings, of Moray.^[8]

The Chronicle says that Kenneth founded a great monastery at Brechin.

Kenneth was killed in 995, the *Annals of Ulster* say "by deceit" and the *Annals of Tigernach* say "by his subjects". Some later sources, such as the *Chronicle of Melrose*, John of Fordun and Andrew of Wyntoun provide more details, accurately or not. The simplest account is that he was killed by his own men in Fettercairn, through the treachery of Finguala (also called Fimberhele or Fenella), daughter of Cuncar, Mormaer of Angus, in revenge for the killing of her only son.^[9]

The *Prophecy of Berchán* adds little to our knowledge, except that it names Kenneth "the kinslayer", and states he died in Strathmore.^[10]

Kenneth II	
	
King of Alba	
Reign	971–995
Predecessor	Cuilén
Successor	Constantine III
Issue	
Malcolm II, King of Alba	
Boite mac Cináeda?	
Dúngal?	
House	Alpin
Father	Malcolm I, King of Alba
Born	before 954
Died	995
	Fettercairn?

Kenneth's son Malcolm II (Máel Coluim mac Cináeda) was later king of Alba. Kenneth may have had a second son, named either Dúngal or Gille Coemgáin.^[11] Sources differ as to whether Boite mac Cináeda should be counted a son of Kenneth II or of Kenneth III (Cináed mac Duib).^[12]

Notes

- ↑ *Cináed mac Mail Coluim* is the Mediaeval Gaelic form.
- ↑ Skene, *Chronicles*, p. 96.
- ↑ Duncan, p. 21.
- ↑ *ESSH*, p. 512; Duncan, p.25.
- ↑ *ESSH*, pp. 478–479; *SAEC*, pp. 75–78.
- ↑ Duncan, pp.24–25.
- ↑ Duncan, pp. 21–22; *ESSH*, p. 484.
- ↑ See *ESSH*, pp. 483–484 & 495–502.
- ↑ The name of Cuncar's daughter is given as Fenella, Finele or Sibill in later sources. John of Fordun credits Constantine III (Causantín mac Cuilén) and Kenneth III (Cináed mac Duib) with the planning, claiming that Kenneth II planned to change the laws of succession. See *ESSH*, pp. 512–515.
- ↑ *ESSH*, p. 516.
- ↑ *Annals of the Four Masters*, s.a. 998: "Dúngal Cináed's son, was killed by Gille Coemgáin, Cináed's son." It is not clear if the Cináeds (Kenneths) referred to are Cináed mac Mail Coluim (Kenneth II) or his nephew and namesake Cináed mac Duib (Kenneth III). Smyth, pp. 221–222, makes Dúngal following *ESSH* p. 580.
- ↑ Compare Duncan, p.345 and Lynch (ed), *Genealogies*, at about p. 680. See also *ESSH*, p. 580.

References

*For primary sources see also **External links** below.*

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External links

- CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts (<http://celt.ucc.ie/index.html>) at University College Cork (<http://www.ucc.ie/>) The **Corpus of Electronic Texts** includes the *Annals of Ulster*, *Tigernach* and *the Four Masters*, the *Chronicon Scotorum*, as well as *Genealogies*, and various Saints' Lives. Most are translated into English, or translations are in progress
- The Chronicle of the Kings of Alba (<http://www.kjhskj75z.talktalk.net/pictish.html#third>)

<p>Kenneth II of Scotland</p> <p>House of Alpin</p> <p>Born: bef. 954 Died: 995</p>		
<p>Regnal titles</p>		
<p>Preceded by</p> <p>Cuilén</p>	<p>King of Alba</p> <p>971–995</p>	<p>Succeeded by</p> <p>Constantine III</p>

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