Appendix

The *Scottish Legendary*: authorship, dialect, and arrangement

The question of who was the author of the *Scottish Legendary* dominated scholarship on the collection in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Henry Bradshaw, the discoverer of the manuscript, was the first to suggest John Barbour (c. 1325–95), a claim further substantiated by Carl Horstmann, the first editor of the compilation. Their arguments are influenced by the unhappy coincidence of the discovery of the Scottish fragments inserted in Lydgate’s *Troy Book* that contain the lines ‘Her endis the monk and begynnys barbour’ and ‘Her endis barbour and begynnys the monk’. Henry Bradshaw made these fragments public together with the discovery of the *Scottish Legendary*, although the latter had been known to him for some time and he had not been able to ascribe it to an author. Obviously heavily influenced by his belief that Barbour was the author of the Troy fragments, Bradshaw concluded that:

> when we consider that John Barbour the Archdeacon of Aberdeen, was engaged from 1375 onwards in writing the *Brus*, and that he lived till 1395, and apparently at Aberdeen, I think there can hardly be a doubt that this poem should also be added to the meagre list of the productions of the father of Scotch poetry.¹

In hindsight, one might wish Bradshaw had been more careful in ascribing the poem to Barbour, for his ascription encouraged the first scholars who worked on the *Scottish Legendary* not to consider the contents and narrative design of the compilation but almost exclusively to discuss the question of whether or not Barbour was indeed a likely candidate for its authorship.² John Barbour was archdeacon of Aberdeen at St Machar’s cathedral, and enjoyed the patronage of Robert II, who granted him positions at the Scottish court in the 1370s. After the reign of King David II (r. 1329–71), the last monarch of the House of Bruce, Scotland was ruled by
Robert II (r. 1371–90) and Robert III (r. 1390–1406), followed by a line of Stewart kings. Barbour is most famous for his epic *The Bruce* (1375) on the Wars of Independence. This work is composed in octosyllabic couplets, like the *Scottish Legendary* – but so are many other pieces written in late medieval Scotland, such as Andrew of Wyntoun’s *Original Chronicle*, *Ratis Raving*, and the *Buik of Alexander*, the last of which was also ascribed to Barbour.

The information the narrator of the *Scottish Legendary* provides about himself has been regarded as further substantiating Barbour’s authorship. The following arguments were typically reiterated as speaking in favour of Barbour: (1) the narrator refers to himself as a man of the church (Prol. 34: ‘mynistere of haly kirke’); (2) when he starts writing the *Scottish Legendary*, he is already old and feeble (‘fore gret eld & febilnes’; Prol. 35); (3) the compilation is not his first literary attempt; he has already written a life of the Virgin and Christ, the contents of which are sketched briefly in the Prologue (39–94);† (4) he must have travelled in his youth, since he worked in various locations when he was young (see Julian, XXV, 1–2: ‘Qwene þat þunge mane I was, / I trawalyt oft in sere place’); (5) he mentions a certain John Balormy from Elgin as an old friend (Ninian, XL, 1366–7: ‘for I kend hyme weile mony day. / Iohn balormy ves his name’) and seems to know the local geography rather well (Machar, XX, 789–800). It hardly needs reminding that the narrator is a textual construct and that his statements ought to be treated with caution with respect to the real author’s life. That the poet was of clerical background is the least controversial statement; otherwise his literacy, his choice of subject matter, and his access to a library would be very difficult to explain. However, old age and feebleness, in view of such a massive undertaking as the composition of the *Scottish Legendary*, do not necessarily have to refer to the author’s real age, but could well belong to the literary topoi of complaint with no claim to autobiographical accuracy. Likewise the brief mention of travels in his youth might be no more than a motif adding a personal touch to the story that should not be taken at face value. What is more, it is important not to misunderstand ‘trawalyt’ (XXV, 2). The verb can mean ‘to travel’ but also ‘to torment, brother, vex’ and ‘to exert oneself, to labour, work’. The narrator may well use the word metaphorically in the latter sense, i.e. that he has read many a text when he was young, and that he came across the hagiographic stories while studying his books. In which case, the travel is imagined and does not allow for drawing conclusions about the poet. The local references are
more difficult to judge. Of course, the inclusion of Machar and an apparent knowledge of the region, coupled with the existence of a cathedral dedicated to St Machar in Aberdeen, suggest the author’s real life experience of this place. Yet, one cannot rule out the possibility that the source(s) he used for his version of the legend of Machar already contained these references, which he then simply copied, and since there were quite a number of religious houses in late fourteenth-century Scotland, the poet could easily have been based somewhere else.

An interesting contribution to the question of the *Scottish Legendary*’s author was put forward by George Neilson, who concentrates on an incident in the legend of Ninian in which the treachery of three counts of Carlisle against the noble Scottish knight ‘sir Fargus Magdouel’ (XL, 818) is recounted. Through Ninian’s intervention, the knight is warned and his minstrel ‘Jak Trumpoure’ (XL, 889) gives a warning signal with his trumpet. Although Neilson could find no evidence for a Fergus Macdowall (or Macdougall) during David II’s reign, there was a Dougal (variously also spelled Dugal or Duncan) who gave lands in Dumfriesshire to a John Trupour, which Neilson reads ‘Trumpour’. There is no evidence for a direct link to Barbour, i.e. that he may have heard the story from this John Trumpour, and even Neilson concedes that ‘one may not dare so greatly as to suggest so much’. Neilson goes on to claim that a comparison of the episode from the Ninian legend with two passages from *The Bruce* (VII, 375–615; IX, 815–942) heightens ‘the significance of the complete unity in the style and method of narration, in the illustrative points furnished, and in the language used’.

It was on the grounds of a detailed analysis of the rhyme scheme, assonances, and the semantic range used in the *Scottish Legendary* in comparison with Barbour’s linguistic idiosyncrasies, that Peter Buss’s careful and thorough analysis of 1886 gave rise to justified doubts about the ascription to Barbour. For instance, the *Scottish Legendary* rhymes be, he, me, thre, gle, etc. with he (‘high’), ee (‘eye’); also, words that end in e are rhymed with words that originally ended in a guttural after the e, which are never rhymed in *The Bruce.*
(since the guttural was still sounded during the earlier poem’s earlier period of composition). There is also a difference in the use of French u, which occurs often in the *Scottish Legendary* and rhymes indiscriminately both with pure u and ou, but does so only once in *The Bruce*. What is more, while the *Scottish Legendary* constructs the present plural of a verb used as a noun on -are (e.g. ‘forthirmare’, I, 399; ‘lare’, III, 567; ‘care’, X, 95), *The Bruce* favours -ere, and identical rhymes feature in the *Scottish Legendary* only. Last but not least, neither *The Bruce* nor the *Trojan War* make use of assonances, except for one case in *The Bruce* (*Bretane, hame*; VIII, 473–4), which indeed can be seen as the exception to the rule: ‘for *Bretane* is a proper name, and some slight poetical licence is allowable in the case of proper names’. Buss’s study, in D’Evelyn and Foster’s words, ‘successfully countered’ the Barbour-argument, to the extent that seven years later, Alois Brandl, in his treatment of the *Scottish Legendary* in a literary history of Germanic philology, already maintained that although Barbour’s authorship was in many ways tempting, the linguistic evidence rather pointed to a later poet and priest, albeit to one who must have come from the same area as Barbour.

In the 1980s, Matthew McDiarmid revived the question of authorship in suggesting that the author was a colleague of Barbour’s at Aberdeen, William of Spyny (or Spynie), a churchman with both Aberdeen and Elgin links. Spyny, originally from Elgin, was Precentor there before he became Dean of Aberdeen and finally Bishop of Moray; he died in 1406. McDiarmid and Stevenson’s argument is based on the local references in the lives of Machar and Ninian, which lead them to conclude that the author ‘appears to be residing in the town [of Aberdeen] or to have resided there’. Very similarly to Neilson but giving real substance to his findings, McDiarmid and Stevenson identify a Fergus MacDouwel, who ‘was made constable of Kirkcudbrightshire in 1345’, while his brother, Sir Dougal, was head of the clan. Moreover, research into the author’s alleged friend John Balormy, who according to the life of Ninian was cured of an illness, revealed that this friend’s son or grandson, Thoma de Balhormi, appears as a witness to a transaction in Elgin cathedral, found in the Register of Moray under the year 1414. Spyny would definitely have had access to the cathedral libraries of Aberdeen and/or Elgin, and Spyny fits the bill if one takes the *Scottish Legendary* narrator’s statements as autobiographical when he complains about old age and feebleness. This is equally true with regard to the topographical references to
north-east Scotland, especially to the Aberdeen area. Moreover, the poet’s north-eastern origin would rule out Barbour as a possible author on the basis of ‘a regional, not a temporal, explanation’; Barbour, being based in the south-west, used a less characteristically linguistic register of Scots because of his geographical proximity to northern England and its language and literature.16

Melissa Coll-Smith has suggested three further potential authors on the basis of their biographies. William Gerland, Thomas of Edenham, and Thomas of Barry.17 William Gerland (c. 1351–98) worked together with William of Sypny as a notary for the Aberdeen bishop; he studied in Paris and also worked for the bishop of Moray at Elgin. Thomas of Edenham, a clerk working in Caithness and Aberdeen, lived from 1352 to c. 1405, and spent many years on the continent. However, there is no evidence that either of them engaged in the composition or compilation of literary works. Thomas of Barry (1342–c. 1405) studied in Paris, and parts of his Latin compositions have survived embedded in Walter Bower’s *Scotichronicon*. However, Barry has no links to either Aberdeen or Elgin, and his known works seem to have been exclusively in Latin. Since there is an attested link to St Kentigern (Barry was active in the diocese of Strathclyde and made a donation to Glasgow cathedral, which is dedicated to St Kentigern), the saint’s absence from the *Scottish Legendary* also rather speaks against Barry.18 McDiarmid’s and Coll-Smith’s various suggestions for and against Sypny, Gerland, Edenham and Barry sound plausible, although the paucity of the evidence means that it is doubtful whether the ultimate proof will ever be forthcoming.

Finally, another point of dispute concerns the question of single or multiple authorship: Was the *Scottish Legendary* really written by a single author, or were the narratives in fact written by several authors, and later put together as a collection? Metcalfe is the strongest advocate of this latter view. Although in theory it might be conceivable that the first fourteen legends were written by the same person and the rest by another or several others, or that both Machar and Ninian were written by someone else especially interested in Scottish saints, it seems far more likely that a single poet wrote all 33,000 lines. It is true that the first fourteen legends seem to have been planned more carefully as regards their order and introductions than the rest, and that the order of the compilation does not conform to the standard ordering of medieval hagiographic collections. That the compilation is massive in its scope is also true, but can scarcely be taken as a counter argument
against its being the work of one poet. The language, the consistent references to the author, including those to his earlier work, the round figure of fifty legends in total, three verbally very similar passages of miracles that occur in Machar, Ninian, and Alexis, and the recurrent coda at the conclusion of almost all the lives in the collection are strong arguments for one author only.

Scribal practice

The bulk of the text is the work of one hand, clearly a Scottish one, with two other principal hands adding and filling in material apparently left out by the first scribe. The main hand dates to the fifteenth century and is small, cursive, careless, and very difficult to read. The second scribe was active between folios 18r and 21v as well as between folios 108r and 199v, whereas the third mostly inserted glosses and notations. There are also traces of additions by a fourth hand. Although the leaves and the hands date from the fifteenth century, the binding of the manuscript is not contemporary, as Metcalfe (following Bradshaw) erroneously maintains. Its dilapidated state and evidence of attempts to mend it led Metcalfe to conclude that the *Scottish Legendary* must once have been ‘in much request’. Melissa Coll-Smith was able to prove that the Aberdeen binder Francis van Hagen bound the manuscript in its present form since the stamping on the calfskin is identical to a stamp used by him, which allows for narrowing down the date of the binding to sometime between 1626 and 1637. The fly-leaf at the end of the manuscript bears the name ‘Katherine Greham’ and was evidently used for taking notes, but the handwriting is now almost illegible. Coll-Smith suggests that this seventeenth-century owner of the manuscript was Lady Katherine Graham of Montrose, daughter of John, the fourth earl of Montrose (1573–1626). Overall, the text is often corrupted, and the rhymes bear witness to missing lines. Based on the paper evidence and the watermarks of three of the six paper stocks, R. J. Lyall maintains that the manuscript can rather confidently be assigned to c. 1480–85. As is typical of Older Scots writing, which had not yet undergone any processes of standardisation, the spelling throughout the manuscript varies strongly. Thus, we find variously *haf*, *haue*, *haff*, *haffe* and *wer*, *were*, *ware*. Proper names – sometimes capitalised, sometimes not – are often less than immediately recognisable: for instance, ‘thesalunuca’ (II, 15) denotes Thessaloniki, and ‘marcel’ (XVI, 215) refers to Marseille.
Dialect and dating

William Metcalfe does not specify the region of the dialect used in the manuscript any further than the geographical area north of the Forth in the Scottish Lowlands: ‘if any traces of local dialects ever existed in the legends, they have been almost completely obliterated’. The inclusion of the Scottish saints Ninian of Whithorn, patron saint of Elgin, and Machar, who according to the legend settled in Aberdeen where later a church was erected in his name, may suggest the author’s connection with these places or at least the north-eastern regions, but there is no external evidence to support this view. The fact that an Aberdeen binder got hold of the text in the seventeenth century might be further evidence for its northern origin. Attempts to date the *Scottish Legendary* on the basis of the dialect have so far not been successful either. In his groundbreaking study of the vowel system of Older Scots, Adam J. Aitken argued that only from the late fourteenth century onwards did Early Scots begin to change in accordance with the Great Vowel Shift (GVS), in which the long stressed monophthongs (both back and front vowels) changed their sound quality. The analysis of Barbour’s *Bruce* and the *Scottish Legendary* in comparison with later works (e.g. by Henryson or Dunbar) showed that the Great Vowel Shift was not yet in full swing at the point of their composition, which ‘suggests a *terminus post quem* of the late 14c for the beginning of GVS’. This means, however, that Aitken does not question the dating of the *Scottish Legendary*; he assumes it was composed around 1400 and takes this as evidence for the dating of the Great Vowel Shift in Early Scots. Comparing the *Scottish Legendary* to other early Scottish writings, Metcalfe suggests the span of ‘somewhere between A.D. 1375, and A.D. 1425’ and reaches the conclusion that ‘the Legends stand nearer to *The Bruce* (A.D. 1375) than they do to Wyntoun’s *Orygynale Cronykil* (A.D. 1419–30)’. The *terminus ante quem* of the *Scottish Legendary*, however, can be determined by references within the legends themselves: in the legend of Ninian, the author claims that a miracle happened in his own time (XL, 816) and concludes the episode with the words ‘pis wes done but lessinge, / quhen sir davi bruys ves king’ (XL, 941–2). David II reigned from 1329 to 1371; if this is indeed a miracle recounted by the author for the first time and not taken from a source text, the hagiographer’s life coincided with the king’s reign and, ‘as the author speaks of it as already in the past, the legend must have been written not earlier than 1370, but later’.
As to specifying the location of the dialect used in the *Scottish Legendary*, the interactive website of the *Linguistic Atlas of Older Scots, Phase 1: 1380–1500 (LAOS)* is a useful tool. The project, set up by the historical dialectology department at the University of Edinburgh, aims at filling the lacunae of Early Scots examples in the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English, 1340–1450 (LALME)*. The advantage of this computer database is that the site is searchable. I have checked selected features of the *Scottish Legendary* against the tagged material, which consists of non-literary texts only (i.e. wills, letters, charters, record books, and ecclesiastical muniments), dating from c. 1375 to 1500 and containing (more or less accurate) information about their respective geographical origins, if available. Up to now, 304 feature maps (providing 152 features) are available. These maps show where a certain linguistic feature or form is attested in the corpus, distinguishing between the periods 1380–1449 and 1450–1500. Although the time span is wide, one can still map where certain features were used, since language change is a rather slow process. Frequently occurring linguistic features of the *Scottish Legendary* could therefore provide new insights into the original place of composition. Of the 152 features available in *LAOS* for the earlier period, I have taken twelve as the basis for a first analysis (Table 3).

Of the twelve features, eleven are attested in the immediate coastline around the Firth of Forth; only *ilke* is an exception, which is attested further in the south on the eastern coast, but not directly around the Forth. Although some of the features (*consel, was/wes, agan, sex*), can be found in the Glasgow area, the west coast in all likelihood can be ruled out as the area of origin since out of a total of 130 hits or ‘dots’ that mark the (major) occurrence of a linguistic item, only sixteen are located on the west coast. In contrast, thirty-eight hits occur in the immediate environment of the Firth of Forth, and, interestingly, fourteen in the Aberdeen area and its vicinity. If one takes the hits of a smaller proportion of occurrence into account as well, in fact all features, without exception, turn out to be attested for these areas.

This is a very preliminary analysis of linguistic features found in Early Scots non-literary texts and used in the period from 1380 to 1449, which clearly has to be extended in terms of linguistic items and made much more specific in its temporal reference to identify the location of the dialect with any certainty. But it allows...
for drawing the following tentative conclusions: the *Scottish Legendary* seems to have been composed either on the shores of or close to the Firth of Forth, or in the Aberdeen area. Around the Firth of Forth, a number of (collegiate) churches, cathedrals and monasteries could have housed the *Scottish Legendary*’s poet, in places ranging from Dunbar, Leith, Edinburgh, Stirling, and Dunblane to Crail and St Andrews. In both places he would have had access to major libraries (Aberdeen and St Andrews). While in no way justifying earlier attempts to identify the anonymous author with John Barbour, the evidence of the linguistic features may be regarded as hinting at an Aberdeen location. This would correspond to and stress the impression gained from the legend of Machar, where the poet appears to know Aberdeen from personal experience. Elgin and the northern region of Scotland, however, are not supported at all by the *LAOS* findings as a potential linguistic base of the author.

### Table 3. Occurrence of features from *LAOS* in the *Scottish Legendary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features (from <em>LAOS</em>)</th>
<th>Occurrence in the <em>Scottish Legendary</em> (total number of hits)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>– numeral 6; spelled sex</td>
<td>15 (total number of hits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– verb <em>affere</em> (spelled with initial a, not e)</td>
<td>14 (aferit, -is, -yt, -e; with initial e 2 hits only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– adverb <em>agan</em> (‘again’)</td>
<td>8 (again once)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– adverb <em>alswa</em> (‘also’)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– adverb <em>away</em></td>
<td>156 (away 8 hits only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– verb ‘to be’ in the preterite pl.: <em>vas</em> and <em>ves</em></td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– verb ‘to be’ in the preterite pl.: <em>was</em> and <em>wes</em></td>
<td>2378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– noun <em>bruthir</em> (‘brother’) in all cases</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– nouns <em>consel</em>/<em>consal</em> (‘council’) in all cases</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– adjective <em>ilke</em> (‘each’)</td>
<td>112 (ilk and ilka 7 hits altogether)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– adjective <em>ful</em> (‘full’) with single ‘l’ ending</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– adjective <em>full</em> with double ‘ll’ ending</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dedications to the saints

As I have argued before, many of the saints in the *Scottish Legendary* are noteworthy for their entertaining stories rather than their cults and active veneration. Yet, a large number of the fifty saints are included in extant Scottish Kalendars of Saints, which is not surprising in view of the European and hence pan-ecclesiastical status of many of them. Other than the apostles, evangelists, Barnabas, Mary Magdalene, Martha, and John the Baptist, who are always included because of their roles in Scripture and their intimate connection with Jesus, two-thirds of the thirty-two other saints are commemorated in the three Kalendars prior to the date of the *Scottish Legendary* as edited by Alexander P. Forbes. The exceptions are Mary of Egypt, Christopher, Alexis, Eustace, Theodora, Eugenia, Justina, Pelagia, Thais, Christina, and Thecla. Of these, the first five legends contain a very high degree of secular motifs and topoi, which may well have discouraged their use in church. Another interesting case is the inclusion of Adrian in the *Scottish Legendary*, especially since there is very little evidence of his veneration in Scotland in the first place. According to a local legend in Fife, however, Adrian arrived there together with 6,606 companions and lived on the Isle of May in the Firth of Forth, after having made the island inhabitable. The group was killed upon the arrival of the Danes. A chapel on the Isle of May, dedicated to Adrian and believed to contain his sarcophagus, became a holy place and destination for pilgrims. Whether the poet of the *Scottish Legendary* knew about this legend, or included the saint for other reasons altogether, is not known; certainly, Adrian’s legend in the *Scottish Legendary* does not contain any hint as to his Scottish connection.

If one runs all fifty saints of the collection through the *Survey of Dedications to Saints in Medieval Scotland*, a project set up at Edinburgh University containing more than 11,000 records of saints and their dedications, the evidence for widespread devotion to the saints in the *Scottish Legendary* is scant. According to the database, of the fifty saints in the collection only six are relatively frequently the object of dedications. These are, in descending order, Nicholas (105 dedications), Andrew (100 dedications), Lawrence (88 dedications), Mary Magdalene (61 dedications), John the Baptist (52 dedications), and Peter (51 dedications). Nicholas was widely venerated throughout Scotland as the patron of sailors, and especially in Aberdeen, where he was patron saint of the city.
Twenty-one saints of the *Scottish Legendary* are either not included in the database due to their rarity, or lack of dedications or attestation in the period up to 1400; these are James the Less, Martha, Mary of Egypt, Blasius, the Seven Sleepers, Alexis, Julian, Eustace, Theodora, Eugenia, Justina, Pelagia, Thais, Adrian, Agnes, Agatha, Cecilia, Christina, Anastasia, Euphemia, and Juliana. A further fourteen saints have fewer than ten dedications made in their name so that evidence for their popularity is equally exiguous: James, Thomas, Phillip, Simon and Jude, Matthias, Barnabas, Christopher, Clement, Margaret, George, Vincent, Cosmas and Damian, Lucy, and Thecla. On the basis of these findings – although one has to bear in mind that the database is not exhaustive in the sources covered, and that the sources themselves are limited and hence partly insufficient in the snapshot they provide of medieval Scottish religious practices – one can conclude that the *Scottish Legendary* contains a choice of saints’ lives that for the most part has little relation to medieval lay devotion to the saints in Scotland. This underscores the impression that the compilation seems to have been written not with a specific local audience in mind (one which venerated, for instance, John the Evangelist), but for a general Christian audience who was, from the poet’s perspective, in need of (further) education and edification concerning saints and their lives.

**Arrangement of the legends**

The arrangement of the legends in the manuscript has never been satisfactorily explained. The *Scottish Legendary* is different, not only from the rest of the extant religious verse from medieval Scotland but also from other hagiographic compilations. Bearing in mind that the author of the *Scottish Legendary* had already written a life of the Virgin and Christ, and hence a *temporale*, one may be inclined to assume that the *Scottish Legendary* was originally planned as a *sanctorale*. However, this hypothesis does not hold for long as the legends do not follow the order of the ecclesiastical year. The first seventeen legends, i.e. the apostles, evangelists, Mary Magdalene and her sister Martha, are not controversial since they are arranged in terms of their association with Jesus, with Mary and Martha taking on the roles of co-apostles (XVI, 49). Although Paul does not belong to the apostles, he follows Peter as his equal (‘paule, þat was peteris fere’; II, 2) and, together with Peter, was regarded the prince of the apostles. Barnabas is included because
he is sometimes also counted among the apostles: ‘Swme men wenis þat barnabas / ane of þe apostolis was; / bot þai wene wrang’ (XV, 1–3). As to the rest of the legends, Carl Horstmann believes that they are ordered according to the saints’ respective deaths and dominant characteristics of their lives: Mary of Egypt, four martyrs, the Seven Sleepers as a transition, four confessors, eight saints fighting satanic temptations, five more martyrs, and, lastly, ten virgins.\textsuperscript{39} Metcalfe rightly criticises Horstmann’s arbitrariness in mixing aspects of the saints’ lives and deaths, their status, and their actions. Yet, Metcalfe’s own opinion, that apart from the first twelve or fourteen legends, ‘in the arrangement of the collection as a whole no definitive principle has been followed or attempted’, is equally difficult to maintain. He believes that the structure is determined ‘by the supply of what printers call “copy”’, i.e. the author increased the collection ‘by adding copies of such sacred legends as he could fall in with, or perhaps had in the meantime procured’.\textsuperscript{40} From this perspective, every saint’s life would stand independently from the others and neither gain nor lose anything when seen in relation to the rest of the \textit{Scottish Legendary}, since the overall result would be an arbitrary one. In any case, the compiler has taken great pains to begin almost all legends with a short prologue and closes with a formulaic final prayer, thus demonstrating the overall unity of the collection, which clearly hints at the poet’s sense of cohesion.

The Apostles’ Creed is an interesting starting point for further consideration of the \textit{Scottish Legendary}’s purposeful structure.\textsuperscript{41} According to tradition, each of the apostles speaks one article in the Creed, Peter starting with \textit{Credo Deum Patrem omnipotentem}, followed by the other eleven apostles. There are different lists of this succession, depending on whether one takes Matt. 10:2–4, Mark 2:16, Luke 6:14–16, Acts 1:13, or an entirely different order as the basis.\textsuperscript{42} The most widely spread story, as transmitted by Rufinus Aquilensis’s \textit{Commentarius in symbolum apostolorum}\textsuperscript{43} and in more detail in the anonymous work \textit{De symboło},\textsuperscript{44} provides the order of the apostles in exactly the same way as the \textit{Scottish Legendary} (with the exclusion of Paul, who did not belong to the Twelve in the first place).

Another potential source for the order of the \textit{Scottish Legendary} in its entirety is the order of the Canon of the mass (= the \textit{Communicantes}). The Canon is an integral part of the mass, set between the offertory and the communion, and it seems as if the author of the \textit{Scottish Legendary}, probably because of his daily experience with the liturgy as a priest or monk, used this text as
a principle of arrangement. The Canon includes both Paul and Matthias, whose position could vary, either being the last in line or put before Simon and Jude. What is more, another part of the liturgy, immediately following the consecration, is the Commemoratio pro defunctis, in which the union of the saints is evoked; they are prayed to and praised. The basic text established in Pope Pius V’s 1570 Missal addresses John, Stephen, Matthew, Barnabas, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Felicitas, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, and Anastasia, and all other saints (et omnibus sanctis tuis). Ten out of these fifteen saints can be found in the Scottish Legendary. Although Pius’s Missal is of course much later than the Scottish Legendary, its text was not a completely new invention, but was based on the Missale secundum consuetudinem Romanae curiae, which had been widely used all over Europe, including Scotland, since the beginning of the Middle Ages. This Missale was subject to many changes and additions implemented due to local preferences and habits.45 Thus, we can well imagine that a church dedicated to Ninian would include ‘their’ saint into the Commemoratio, bearing in mind how important a part the liturgy played in the veneration of saints.46 One can conclude that the author of the Scottish Legendary may well have followed the order of a local Missale, based on the one approved by Rome, but altered slightly to meet the local audience’s demands. The first twelve legends would then be modelled on the Communicantes, the rest on the Commemoratio. Since thirty-eight names are too long for this part of the mass and together would rather make for a litany, one could assume that the author instead adheres to the saints that are generally (i.e. not in every single mass, but in several masses throughout the liturgical year) mentioned in the local church of his monastery or town. He might have added the lives as he became aware of other saints mentioned at mass; the groups Horstmann distinguishes could stem from feast or special commemoration days of martyrs, virgins, confessors, etc. This explanation would account for the apparent disorder of the Scottish Legendary by disclosing an underlying structural pattern.

Another possible source, related in its structure to the Communicantes and Commemoratio, is the litany of All Saints (Litania sanctorum). In the sixth century, litanies (from Latin litania meaning ‘supplication’) were officially acknowledged by the Church (though of course in use for a long time) and often prayed as part of processions. Thus, when Gregory the Great in 590 ordered the Litania septiformis to celebrate the end of the plague
in Rome, the litany of the saints was prayed, among other texts, during the procession of the seven groups of the Christian community (clergy, laity, monks, virgins, matrons, widows, the poor and children) moving from seven churches towards one. Also in the sixth century in Rome, the so-called Litanía maior was established as the official prayer at the processions on St Mark’s day (25 April), which in effect was very similar to the litany of saints prayed to by Gregory. The first part of this litany, after the invocation of the Virgin and the Archangels, is composed of the apostles and evangelists, the order of which is exactly the same as in the Communicantes and hence the Scottish Legendary. Matthias is followed by Barnabas, Luke and Mark; the Scottish Legendary changes this order slightly to Mark, Luke, and then Barnabas. All in all, the original text of the Litanía sanctorum contains twenty-eight saints of the Scottish Legendary, which are – apart from the apostles, evangelists, and Barnabas – John the Baptist, Lawrence, Vincent, Cosmas and Damian, Nicholas, Mary Magdalene, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, Katherine, and Anastasia.

The overlap is striking and becomes even more so if one compares the lives of the Scottish Legendary with a specifically Scottish litany, to which the Aberdeen Breviary bears witness. As with the Commemoratio, individual parishes could adapt the litany of the saints for their own purposes, for example, by including additional saints according to local interests of veneration. The Aberdeen Breviary was one of the first books printed in Scotland and dates to 1509/10. Although much later than the Scottish Legendary, it nevertheless offers interesting insight into the form and structure of the mass and prayers used in Scotland. It contains a litany of All Saints that is indeed an expansion of the original and adapted to its use in a Scottish diocese. For instance, Scottish saints such as Kentigern, Columba, but also Ninian and Machar are included. A close examination of the many saints invoked in the Breviary reveals a correspondence between forty-four of the saints treated in the Scottish Legendary. The six exceptions are George (probably due to the development of a Scottish national identity separate from England’s), the two ‘holy harlots’ Thais and Pelagia, Theodora, who committed adultery and entered a monastery to do penance, Alexis, and the Seven Sleepers.

A further argument in favour of the litany of All Saints as a potential model for the layout is the employment of final codas in thirty-three of the fifty legends. These always (with slight variations in spelling and word order) use the phrase ‘but det, shame &
dedly syne’. The litany contains a long list of prayers that explicitly ask for God’s deliverance from all evil, sin, and debt:

V: Ab omni peccato.
V: Ab ira tua.
V: A subitanea et improvisa morte.
V: Ab insidiis diaboli.
...

V: A morte perpetua.

These invocations suggest themselves as the model for the author’s recurrent coda.

Another possible source of inspiration for the choice of saints, albeit one that is purely speculative, may be the images of saints on the walls or the rood screens used in the poet’s church, which often depicted selections of saints according to their roles (evangelists, virgin martyrs, confessors, etc.) and were highly localised. Because of the general lack of information about the decoration of churches in medieval Scotland, though, this possibility is very difficult to prove. As a priest, the author of the Scottish Legendary may have taken a special interest in liturgical practices, the litany of the saints in particular, and found it a useful basis for his task of composing a collection of saints’ lives as regards the choice of the legends. With the exception of the apostles, though, the order of the Scottish Legendary does not correspond to the order in the litany. The question of why he picked these fifty saints and decided against others (e.g. why not take Gregory, or Martin, or Jerome, or Francis?) cannot be solved by this possible source either and once again we may have to be content with accepting that the author based his selection entirely on personal preference.

Notes


2 See similarly William M. Metcalfe (ed.), Legends of the Saints in the Scottish Dialect of the Fourteenth Century, Scottish Text Society 1st ser. 13, 18, 23, 25, 35, 37, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1896), Vol. 1, p. xxii, who regrets ‘that the name of Barbour was ever associated with the legends as their author’.

Based on the author’s summary, the structure of this earlier work was as follows: (a) the conception, birth, and youth of Mary up to the conception of Jesus (Prologue, 45–50); (b) the birth of Jesus (51–3), the flight to and return from Egypt, the youth of Jesus up until the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee (54); (c) the subsequent life of Jesus until the Ascension (58–62); (d) the Descent into Hell (64–8); (e) the legend of Longinus (69–79); (f) the life of Mary continued (81–90); (g) the compassion of Mary, the Assumption and coronation of Mary (91–2); (h) sixty-six miracles of Mary. The passage is introduced as follows:

I hafe translatit symply
some part, as I fand in story,
of mary & hir sone Ihesu,
þat, as I tre[w], is notyt now
in syndry placis in wryt,
to gere deuot men think on It (Prol. 37–42)

Lyall, R. J., ‘The Lost Literature of Medieval Scotland’, in J. Derrick McClure and Michael R. G. Spiller (eds), *Bryght Lanternis: Essays on the Language and Literature of Medieval and Renaissance Scotland* (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen Press, 1989), pp. 33–47, at p. 46 n20, sees a potential ambiguity in lines 40–1: ‘is “That … is notyt now / In syndry placis in wryt” referring to copies of the Scots translation, or does the compiler mean that the legend of the Virgin exists in many versions?’ This, however, cannot be answered satisfactorily.

See the entry ‘Traval, v’ in the *DSL*.


‘There is an undoubted stroke over the first vowel’ (Neilson, ‘John Barbour’, p. 104).


thai mycht nocht do be mycht / thai schupe thaime for to do be slycht’ (XL, 829–30), with what Neilson believes to be the corresponding ‘dagger-thrust of quotation’ (‘John Barbour, John Trumpour’, p. 106) from The Bruce, ‘Schapis thaim to do with slycht / That at thai drede to do with mycht’ (II, 324–5). However, the similarity – which is only remote and not exact – suggests not so much that the passages were composed by the same author but that two poets obviously relied on a common stock of formulaic phrases and rhyme words.


15 McDiarmid and Stevenson, Barbour’s Bruce, p. 26. R. L. Graeme (ed.), Vol. I of the Buik of Alexander, Scottish Text Society n. s. 17 (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1925), pp. ccxx n23, offers yet another possible candidate for Sir Fergus: according to a petition to the pope by David II in 1364, this Fergus had married, ‘in ignorance of the law,’ a woman bearing the same or very similar surname as Barbour’s colleague as Clerk of Audit, Eglinton or Cunningham.

16 McDiarmid and Stevenson, Barbour’s Bruce, p. 26.


20 Coll-Smith, ‘The Scottish Legendary’, p. 46 n131, provides a list of the respective passages of the third scribe’s notations: 7r, 23v, 25v, 30r, 31v, 41v, 53v, 54v, 71r, 76r, 218v, and 234r.


24 For a discussion of the scant information about Katherine and her possible use of the Scottish Legendary, see Coll-Smith, ‘The Scottish Legendary’, pp. 55–60.


27 Ninian was a very prominent and widely venerated saint in the Middle Ages who it is assumed lived in the sixth century and founded a house of monks and a church dedicated to St Martin in Whithorn, Galloway. He is mentioned in Bede, and figures prominently in an anonymous eighth-century Latin poem, Miracula Nynie Episcopi, and Ailred of Rievaulx prose life from the twelfth century. Excavations in Whithorn in the 1980s corroborated the authenticity of Ninian’s date and show evidence of an early settlement the layout of which suggests individual ‘cabins’ for monks. See in more detail Daphne Brooke, Wild Men and Holy Places: St Ninian, Whithorn and the Medieval Realm of Galloway (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1994), especially pp. 1–33. For the textual evidence, see Alan MacQuarrie, ‘The Date of St Ninian’s Mission: A Reappraisal’, Records of the Scottish Church History Society, 23 (1987), pp. 1–25, and his The Saints of Scotland: Essays in Scottish Church History AD 450–1093 (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1997), as well as John MacQueen, St. Nynia: A Study of Literary and Linguistic Evidence (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1961), and, by the same author, St. Nynia: With a Translation of the Miracles of Bishop Nynia by Winifred Macqueen (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990). See also Thomas Owen Clancy, ‘Scottish Saints and National Identities in the Early Middle Ages’, in Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (eds), Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 397–421, for a study of Ninian in the context of two other famous Scottish saints, Kentigern (Mungo) and Columba.

Appendix

from the Beginnings to the Eighteenth Century, ed. Caroline Macafee, Scottish Text Society 5th ser. 1 (Glasgow: Booksourse, 2002).

29 Aitken, The Older Scots Vowels, p. 113.
30 Metcalfe, The Legends of S. S. Ninian and Machor, pp. 18; 19.
32 See the webpage http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/laos1/laos1.html for further details.
33 See Angus McIntosh et al. (eds), A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English, with the assistance of Margaret Laing and Keith Williamson, 4 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986). A ‘daughter’ atlas of LALME is the Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English, 1150–1325 (LAEME), also set up by the University of Edinburgh.
34 I only counted dots that express the relative proportion p of a feature greater than 0.5.
35 Alexander P. Forbes (ed.), Kalendars of Scottish Saints, With Personal Notices of Those of Alba, Laudonia, and Strathclyde (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872). The Kalendars taken into account are the Kalendarium Drummondiense, Kalendarium de Hyrdmanistoun, and Kalendarium de Culenros. Forbes provides introductions and further information to these texts.
36 See online at www.shc.ed.ac.uk/Research/saints/.
37 Note that in each case the period was limited from the earliest records to 1400 since later dedications do not play a role for the Scottish Legendary.
38 See Gordon Hall Gerould, Saints’ Legends (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), p. 177, who maintains that the Scottish Legendary presents us with ‘the completest temporale of the sort found in the South-English Legendary of which we have any record in English’.
39 See Carl Horstmann (ed.), Altenglische Legenden: Neue Folge, Mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen (Heilbronn: Henninger, 1881), pp. lxlix–ci. M. M. Maxwell Scott, contemporary to Horstmann, is of the same opinion, although he does not specify the features neighbouring legends share when he writes that the author ‘does not seem to have followed any definite plan, but would appear to have grouped together the stories of the Saints with regard to the interest merely of particular legends and their reference one to another’ (‘Barbour’s Legends of the Saints’, Dublin Review, 17:2 (1887), pp. 265–77, at p. 267).
41 See Horstmann, Barbour’s, des Schottischen Nationaldichters, p. ci.
43 See cap. 2 (= Patrologia Latina 21, 337).
See *serm.* 240 (= *Patrologia Latina* 39, 2189). The text is sometimes attributed to Augustine, but evidence is scant.
