

Eochaid/Eoganan mac Oengusa

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In 793 the holy isle of Lindisfarne was sacked, and by 795 there were raids in Ireland. In 802 Iona was attacked, and shortly after that viking raid, in 804, the Columban community in Iona received the grant of Kells for their headquarters in Ireland. In 825 the vikings again raided Iona, and among the monks slain was a Blathmac, who hid the shrine of Colum Cille (St. Columba) from the raiders. His martyrdom became internationally famous; it was known at the court of Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious and commemorated in a poem by Walafid Strabo. The vikings were using the sea as a highway, and prior to the raid of 839 in which Eoganan mac Oengusa was slain, the viking fleet had raided Lenister and Brega. In isolation those raids appear to be overwhelming, but in comparison with the attacks on Ireland of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom, the Scots were suffering no more than their neighbors. Although later writers would claim that the vikings contributed to the collapse of the Pictish kingdoms, it seems that the men of Dal Riata were facing a much more severe onslaught. Such a comparison could be false because of the sparse records for the period, but it seems clear that the collapse of the Picts was not due solely to viking attacks. The kingly families of both Cenel nGabrain and Cenel Loairn had begun their expansion into the lands of the Picts before the attacks of the vikings had begun, and Eoganan mac Oengusa was a Cenel nGabrain dynast who died defending his Pictish lands.

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