

Condal

by Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin

Condal (d. 797), daughter of Murchad, was *abatisa tige sruite* (abbess of the house of seniors) at Kildare. She belonged to the dynasty of Uí Dúnlainge, the political interests of which were closely associated with the ecclesiastical settlement of Kildare between the seventh century and the tenth. Her father Murchad (qv), who reigned as overking of Leinster, was married to Conchenn daughter of Cellach Cualann (qv) but it is not stated that Conchenn was the mother of Condal. She had at least four brothers or half-brothers, three of whom in turn – Dúnchad (qv), Fáelán (qv), and Muiredach – succeeded to the kingship of Uí Dúnlainge and Leinster, as did her nephew Cellach (qv) (d. 776), in whose reign Condal apparently came to prominence.

During her lifetime there was a reassertion of other dynastic interests, including those of Uí Fhailge at Kildare; it seems that Lerthan, who died in 773 as *dominatrix* (lady abbess) of Kildare, did not belong to her lineage. The interests of Condal's family, however, came to the fore at Kildare from about this time. As it happens, the site was burned on 11 June 779, which may be indicative of disturbance, although no details are forthcoming. Three years later, in 782, a battle was fought just outside the ecclesiastical settlement when two of Condal's nephews, Ruaidrí and Bran Ardchenn (qv), contested the kingship. Condal died in 797, apparently at an advanced age. Within a year of her death, a vacancy in the abbacy provided an opportunity for her great-nephew Fínshnechte Cetharderc (qv) to secure the appointment of one of his brothers to that office.

AU; AFM; Mac Shamhráin, Church & polity, 129; C. Harrington, Women in a Celtic church: Ireland 450–1150 (2002), 94