The Composition of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*

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Abstract. An examination of the manuscripts of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* reveals the various stages in the composition of the work and argues that Adomnán died before he completed revising the text.

Keywords: Adomnán, Columba, Colum Cille, *Vita Columbae*, Dorbbéne, Iona, manuscripts, written culture.

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INTRODUCTION

The Schaffhausen manuscript of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* is an important witness to the early Insular world: its text records the political history of Ireland as well as the kingdoms of Northumbria and Dál Riata; its script shows the written culture of Iona; its language reflects the state of the Latin and Irish languages at the beginning of the seventh century. All of these aspects come together in one place, namely the insertion of material from Cumméne the White at p 108. Cumméne, the author of the inserted text, used records kept in the sixth century and composed it in the seventh; his text was then inserted into the Schaffhausen manuscript for political reasons in the script of the early eighth century. Although this passage has often been discussed, it is only one of several that appear to be inserted or displaced in the *vita*, almost all of which have been noted by Alan and Marjorie Anderson, Ludwig Bieler, and Thomas Charles-Edwards.[1] By considering these passages together, however, we can see the stages in Adomnán's composition of the *vita* as well as the fact that he did not complete revising the work.

Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* represents a common genre: the life of the holy man. Like many *vitae* it is an effort to represent the life of a man important to a monastic community in a literary work composed from stories, fragmentary documents, and previously collected material. As Adomnán tells us in the first sentence, his book was written about their patron at the insistence of his brothers on Iona.[2] In composing the work Adomnán chose three themes as the basis for the three books: prophecies revealed to Columba, divine miracles (*uirtutes*) performed by him, and the appearance

1. A. O. & M. O. Anderson (ed.), *Adomnán's Life of Columba* (London & Edinburgh 1961), revised by M. O. Anderson, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford 1991) [hereafter VC]; L. Bieler (review of Anderson and Anderson (1961)), *Ir Hist Stud* 13 (1962) 175–84; T. M. Charles-Edwards (review of Anderson and Anderson (1991)), *Cambr Mediev Celt Stud* 26 (1993) 65–73.

2. VC Praef. 1, 'Beati nostri patroni Christo sufragante uitam discripturus, fratrum flagitationibus obsecundare uolens ...'.

of angels to him and heavenly light around him.[3] In composing the *vita* in this way, Adomnán moved the earthly life of the saint, the chronological catalogue of deeds, away from its organising role. Indeed, he is so conscious of this fact that he describes the first book as being 'out of order'.[4] Although Jean-Michel Picard and Gertrud Brüning maintained that Adomnán drew upon the *vitae* by Evagrius and Sulpicius Severus, these structural parallels are largely unconvincing, as Maire Herbert and T. M. Charles-Edwards have argued.[5] In Sulpicius' *Vita Martini*, for example, Martin advances through a sort of *cursus honorum* that organises the work: he is converted, resigns from the army, lives with Hilarius, and becomes bishop; his status as miracle-worker is confirmed by his posthumous miracles. Adomnán's *vita*, on the other hand, shows us three sorts of divine intervention always present in Columba's life, not a journey through time toward increasing holiness. Indeed, the only saint to whom Adomnán specifically compares Columba is Germanus of Auxerre as the latter overcame contrary winds to sail to Britain and expel heretics.[6]

Although Columba's life does not have an organising role in his *uita*, Adomnán often locates his stories in time, one of the features that makes *Vita Columbae* an important historical source. Thanks to the existence of the Schaffhausen manuscript, it is also an important source for how manuscripts were written. Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, Generalia 1 has 69 folios (225×290 mm) with text written in two columns.[7] At the end of the manuscript the scribe, Dorbbéne, has inserted a request that readers pray for him (fig 8). Because a strong case can be made for identifying this

3. VC Praef. 2: 'quorum primus profeticas reuelationes, secundus uero diuinas per ipsum uirtutes effectas, tertius angelicas apparationes contenebit et quasdam super hominem dei caelestis claritudinis manifestationis'.

4. 'Nunc mihi non indecenter uidetur beati uiri licet praepostero ordine profetationes effari quas de sanctis quibusdam et inlustribus uiris diuersis prolocutus est temporibus' (VC 1.1; Anderson, p lxvi and n 201 (quoting Picard) argued that this shows Adomnán's concern for chronology. Normally the phrase would mean 'inverted order,' which it does not seem to here, where the times and places are mixed together rather than in precisely inverted order. For this phrase, see Maura Walsh & Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed), *Cummian's Letter* De controuersia paschali, Studies and Texts 86 (Toronto 1988) 68 *ad l.* 85. Although Adomnán shows us no progression of sanctity in the course of Columba's life, the story of the saint's last days and death does form a magnificent coda to the work as the final chapter of book 3. For a perceptive discussion of this chapter see Jennifer O'Reilly, 'Reading the scriptures in the Life of Columba' in Cormac Bourke (ed), *Studies in the cult of St Columba* (Dublin 1997) 80–106.

5. J.-M. Picard, 'Structural patterns in early Hiberno-Latin hagiography', *Peritia* 4 (1985) 67–82; Gertrud Brüning, 'Adamnans Vita Columbae und ihre Ableitungen', *Z Celt Philol* 11 (1917) 213–304; Máire Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry: the history and hagiography of the monastic familia of Columba* (Oxford 1988); T. M. Charles-Edwards, op. cit.

6. The connection with Germanus seems a promising avenue of research. It is interesting to note, for example, that Muirchú says Patrick studied under Germanus: Ludwig Bieler (ed. & tr.), *The Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh*, SLH 10 (Dublin 1979) 70–72 (Muirchú, i 6–i 8).

7. The folios were paginated in the 19th century. For the manuscript's journey to the continent, see René Specht, 'Wie kam Dorbénes Abschrift von Adamnáns *Vita sancti Columbae* in die Stadtbibliothek Schaffhausen', *Schaffhauser Beiträge zur Geschichte* 65 (1998) 103–09.

Dorbbéne with the abbot of Iona in 713, we have an exceptionally important witness for the ways manuscripts were made and how Latin was composed and written on early eighth-century Iona.[8] Palaeographers and editors who have discussed the manuscript have acknowledged its importance and perhaps no one has explored it more thoroughly than Picard.[9] Several manuscripts were copied from A, including, apparently, Metz, Grand Seminaire 1, a ninth-century manuscript that has received far too little attention.[10] There are also three related manuscripts, known collectively as the B manuscripts, that are all now in the British Library. The manuscripts and their sigla are:

A	Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, Generalia 1, s. VIII^{in}, ff. 1–68
B1	London, British Library, Additional 35110, s. XII^{ex} (*ante* 1195), ff. 96–143
B2	London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius D III, s. XII^{ex}–XIII^{in}, ff. 192–217
B3	London, British Library, Royal 8 D IX, s. XV, ff. 1–70
α	Exemplar of A
β	Exemplar of B1, B2, B3

Although all four manuscripts have roughly similar texts, the B manuscripts share features with each other that they do not share with A, and each of the B manuscripts also has unique errors. As the Andersons, Ludwig Bieler, and Donald Bullough have

8. For the identification of Dorbbéne, VC p lxi. Charles-Edwards is correct in his review of Anderson & Anderson 1991 to call attention to the fact that the script of this passage seems different from that of the main scribe

9. Jean-Michel Picard, 'Une préfigurations du latin carolingien: la syntaxe de la *Vita Columbae* d'Adomnán, auteur irlandais du VII^{e} siècle', *Romanobarbarica* 6 (1981–82) 236–89; id. 'The purpose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*', *Peritia* 1 (1982) 160–77; id. 'The Schaffhausen Adomnán—a unique witness to Hiberno-Latin', ibid. 216–49; id. 'The metrical prose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*; an unusual system', in Próinséas Na Chatháin & Michael Richter (ed), *Ireland and Europe: the early church* (Stuttgart 1984) 258–71; id. 'Bede, Adomnán and the writing of history', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 50–70; id. 'Structural patterns in early Hiberno-Latin hagiography', ibid. 4 (1985) 57–82; id. 'The bible used by Adomnán', in Próinséas Ní Chatháin & Michael Richter (ed), *Ireland and christendom: the bible and the missions* (Stuttgart 1987) 246–57; id. 'Eloquentiae exuberantia: words and forms in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*', *Peritia* 6–7 (1987–88) 141–57; id. 'The strange death of Guaire mac Áedáin', in Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach & Kim McCone (ed), *Sages, saints and storytellers: Celtic Studies in honour of Professor James Carney* (Maynooth 1989) 367–75; id. 'Les celticismes des hagiographes irlandais du VII^{e} siècle', *Études Celtiques* 29 (1992) 355–73; id. 'Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* and the cult of Colum Cille in continental Europe', *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 98 (1998) 1–23.

10. Although the manuscript was first reported by Ussher, it went unnoticed by scholars until J. Leclercq published 'Un recueil d'hagiographie colombanienne', *Analecta Bollandiana* 73 (1955) 193–96. L. Bieler examined 'test passages' (review of Anderson (1961), 175–84). Anderson, VC has one sentence about the manuscript in the preface (p lv) and Picard briefly discusses it in 'Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* and the cult of Colum Cille in continental Europe', 1–23: 5.

shown, the three B manuscripts were all copied from a common exemplar that we shall call β.[11] It is highly unlikely that A is the exemplar of the B manuscripts.[12] A itself must be copied from another manuscript that, given Dorbbéne's dates, must be very close to, if not contemporary with, Adomnán, and which we shall call α. We shall return to clarify these points below.

ADOMNÁN'S SOURCES

Adomnán had not met Columba (who died a century before), so his text is the result of research. The sources as well as the way Adomnán used them depended on the fact that it was not simply the Latin language that came to Ireland and Britain; it came with a culture of writing that included scripts and technical knowledge. A story in the first book of Columba's *vita* is significant in this respect. Columba and Colcu were sitting together and Colcu was reading. Suddenly Columba had a vision of devils dragging a miserly leader into hell and Colcu wrote down the prophecy as well as the time *(tempus et horam)* on a wax tablet. Months later, Adomnán tells us, the prophecy proved to have been accurate.[13] Not only does this show us the practices of written culture in Columba's day, it also shows that even during his life the monks of Iona were keeping a written record of Columba's *uirtutes*, the word Adomnán uses to describe both the saint's divine power as well as the deeds done through that power.[14] This process of recording the saint's *uirtutes* continued after his death as well, as the inserted material from Cumméne the White shows.[15] Adomnán's work is an effort to bring together these disparate oral and written sources and represent the *uirtutes* of the saint in written form.[16]

11. VC liv–lx; Bieler, review of Anderson, 178–81; and D. A. Bullough, 'Columba, Adomnan and the achievement of Iona, I', *Scott Hist Rev* 43 (1964) 111–30:120 n 1.

12. The strongest evidence for this is that none of the B manuscripts has the Cumméne passage.

13. VC 1.35: 'Quadam itidem die sanctus in suo sedens tegoriolo Colcio eidem lectitanti iuxta se profetizans ait: "Nunc unum tenacem primarium de tuae praepossitis diociseos daemones ad inferna rapiunt". At uero hoc audiens Colcius tempus et horam in tabula discribens, post aliquot menses ad patriam reuersus Gallanum filium Fachtni eodem horae momento obiisse ab acculis eiusdem regionis percunctatus inuenit, quo uir beatus eidem a demonibus raptum enarrauit'.

14. *Virtus* is used in both these senses in the New Testament to describe Christ. For example, Jesus says (Lk 8.46) 'tetigit me aliquis nam ego noui uirtutem de me exisse' and Mk 6.2, where those who hear Jesus are amazed at 'uirtutes tales quae per manus eius efficiuntur.' In both instances, as elsewhere, it translates δύναμις.

15. Cumméne was abbot of Iona (657–69).

16. See, for example, Adomnán's description at VC Praef. 2: *Nemo itaque me de hoc tam praedicabili uiro aut mentitum estimet aut quasi quaedam dubia uel incerta scripturum; sed ea quae maiorum fideliumque uirorum tradita expertorum cognoui relatione narraturum et sine ulla ambiguitate craxaturum sciat, et uel ex his quae ante nos inserta paginis repperire potuimus, uel ex his quae auditu ab expertis quibusdam fidelibus antiquis sine ulla dubitatione narrantibus diligentius sciscitantes didicimus* 'And so let no one think that I will write either a lie or some dubious or uncertain things about so praiseworthy a man, rather, let him know that I will narrate both things that I know from the transmitted report of old and trustworthy men and will scribble

Adomnán tells us a great deal about his sources. He says he used both documents and stories he heard[17] and often vouches for the oral sources personally by constructing a chain of transmission from the historical incident to the person who told the story to him.[18] At times, Adomnán even gives personal testimony to the power of the saint, as in 2.46 where he witnesses the efficacy of prayer to Columba in warding off plague. Shorter authenticating phrases can also point out added material. At the end of 1.3, Columba's prophecy about Ernéne mac Craséni, Adomnán gives the chain of transmission from the time of Columba's prophecy to his day.[19] In almost all cases, such authenticating passages come at the end of a chapter, as one would expect, since their purpose is to explain why the information that comes before them is legitimate. In 1.3, however, the authenticating sentence is followed by another sentence about additional prophecies Columba made while at Clonmacnoise concerning the Easter controversy and the appearance of angels. Here, the authentication serves to make us suspect that the material that follows not only comes from a different source (it is clearly not part of the story that Adomnán heard) but also may have been added later.[20]

Adomnán is much less forthcoming about written sources. The only time he specifically mentions a written source for information about Columba (and even here it confirms an oral account) is in telling the story of an angelic vision at the monastery of Cluain Findchuill after Columba's death.[21] Adomnán incorporated material from

them down without any ambiguity, also let him know that diligently investigating we have learned both from those things that we could find inserted into the pages before us and from those things that we heard told without any hesitation by certain knowledgeable, trustworthy old men'.

17. VC praef 2: 'Nemo itaque me de hoc tam praedicabili uiro aut mentitum estimet aut quasi quaedam dubia uel incerta scripturum; sed ea quae maiorum fideliumque uirorum tradita expertorum cognoui relatione narraturum et sine ulla ambiguitate craxaturum sciat, et uel ex his quae ante nos inserta paginis repperire potuimus, uel ex his quae auditu ab expertis quibusdam fidelibus antiquis sine ulla dubitatione narrantibus diligentius sciscitantes didicimus'.

18. See VC 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.20, 1.33 (where Adomnán says a cairn is still visible), 1.38, 1.43, 1.45 (where Adomnán says crosses are still visible), 1.49, 2.4, 2.9, 2.10 (where Adomnán says the spring still exists), 2.40, 2.45, 2.46, 3.16, 3.19, 3.23.

19. VC 1.3: 'Hic erat Erneneus filius Craseni, postea per omnes Scotiae eclesias famosus et ualde notissimus; qui haec omnia supra scripta uerba Segeneo abbati de se profetata enarrauerat, meo decessore Failbeo intentius audiente, qui et ipse cum Segeneo praesens inerat. Cuius reuelatione et ego ipse cognoui haec eadem quae enarraui'.

20. The suspect passage is especially interesting because it is the only mention in the *vita* of the Easter controversy and thus may reflect later interests. VC 1.3: 'Sed et multa alia hisdem diebus quibus in Clonoensi cenubio sanctus hospitabatur reuelante profetauit sancto spiritu: hoc est de illa quae post dies multos ob diuersitatem paschalis festi orta est inter Scotiae eclesias discordia; et de quibusdam angelicis frequentationibus sibi manifestatis, quibus quaedam intra eiusdem cenubii septa ab angelis tunc temporis frequentabantur loca'.

21. VC 3.23: 'Hanc praedictam uisionem non solum paginis inscriptam repperimus, sed et [ab] aliquibus expertis senioribus quibus ipse Uirgnous retulerat sine ullo didicimus cunctamine'.

the bible and other texts, but the only direct citation he makes is from Germanus of Auxerre and his *vita*.[22]

UNIQUE ADDITIONS

In the chapters just discussed, Adomnán reinforced the truth of the stories by citing his sources. However, as we saw in the case of the story of Ernéne in 1.3, these authenticating sentences also show a seam where someone—perhaps Adomnán, perhaps Dorbbéne, perhaps someone else—has stitched on material. There are several instances in the *vita* where this occurs, but two instances are particularly important for what they can tell us about the text: the Cumméne insert mentioned above, which is unique to A, and the Vigenus insert, which is unique to β, the exemplar of the three B manuscripts.

Fig. 1 shows the famous page from the Schaffhausen manuscript, an excerpt from Cumméne's book on the *uirtutes* of Columba that appears only in A and manuscripts copied from it (the Metz manuscript[23] and the abbreviated lives). The same scribe wrote both columns, but he used a narrower pen and wrote between the ruled lines to squeeze the text into a blank space in the left column. (There are 175 words in 34 lines of the left column and 94 words in the 26 lines of the right column.) He has also had to squeeze in the last line above the red chapter heading. In many other places in the Schaffhausen manuscript, the red chapter headings are either very loose or squeezed in, so we know that they were written after the black text. On this page, then, we can reconstruct what the scribe did: he wrote 1½ lines in the first column, skipped to the top of the next column and began the next chapter, then wrote the red chapter heading at the bottom of the first column, then, with a different pen, he inserted the passage from Cumméne's book into the blank space. The inserted material also has not been re-worked by Adomnán; its authority comes from another writer, as the first sentence makes clear: 'Cumméne the White, in the book he wrote on the *uirtutes* of St Columba, spoke thus ...'.[24] It therefore represents not Adomnán's reworking of a source but the source itself. In addition, the authority for its inclusion comes not from Adomnán but, presumably, from the scribe, Dorbbéne, who signalled the differences in the inserted material both by leaving it as a direct quotation rather than re-working it in imitation of Adomnán's style and by writing it in smaller script rather than following the normal line-ruling. In other words, he has

22. VC 2.34: 'Sic enim aliquando daemoniorum legiones sancto Germano episcopo de sinu gallico causa humanae salutis ad Brittanniam nauiganti medio in equore occurrerant, et oponentes pericula procellas concitabant; caelum diemque tenebrarum caligine obducebant. Quae tamen omnia sancto orante Germano dicto citius sedata detersa cessarunt caligine'. One mention of Spain as triangular (3.23, 'trigonam usque Hispaniam') may be taken, directly or indirectly, from Orosius (*Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII*, 1.2 'Hispania uniuersa ... trigona est'), which appears to be the only source for this phrase.

23. Although we cannot be certain that the Metz manuscript was copied from A and not its exemplar, Bieler (in his review, 181) gives strong evidence for that conclusion.

24. VC 3.5: 'Cummeneus albus in libro quem de uirtutibus sancti Columbae scripsit sic dixit ...'.

signalled to the reader that the inserted material does not come from Adomnán. Dorbbéne recognised that the *vita* is a collection of texts from different sources relating to different aspects of Columba's life and thus could be added to; but he also recognised that his addition represented something outside the text because it was not authorised by Adomnán. One could argue that Adomnán intended to rework the story from Cumméne but did not finish, resulting in a blank space in the exemplar, which Dorbbéne copied and filled in. This is certainly possible, and we can see a parallel situation with the blank lines left for a list of chapter headings planned but never written at the beginning of book 2. Even in this case, however, it is Dorbbéne's authority that has inserted Cumméne in this space, and we see vividly three generations of Iona abbots writing and rewriting the story of the monastery's founding abbot and patron.

We can compare this passage with three others in which α or A include phrases giving extra details not found in β. In 1.1 α adds "which is a great miracle" to the summary of 2.31.[25] In 2.26, α adds the phrase 'which perhaps hunting dogs pursued' to describe the boar later killed by Columba.[26] At 106b, A (not α) adds the notice that 'This statement was made at Teltown'.[27] In all three of these cases, Dorbbéne has added the text in his usual script, thus implying that they came from Adomnán, though they could equally be Dorbbéne's own additions. The first two instances appear to be comments on the text and 'forte' (oddly missing from the translations by Sharpe and the Andersons) even indicates that the phrase suggests a possibility for the story.[28] The fact that the third addition is missing from the other manuscripts in the A tradition indicates that they were copied from α, not directly from A. It also may point to Dorbbéne (or his reading of a source) as the author of this phrase.

Exemplar β also has material not in the Schaffhausen manuscript. The most substantial addition is the list of Columba's sailing companions, which follows the injunction at the end of the B manuscripts. There is also a shorter insertion between chapters 20 and 21 of book 2, where β gives the story of Vigenus with no chapter heading. Although the list of chapter headings at the beginning of book 2 (in B2 and B3) has a heading for this chapter, these are a product of the twelfth-century, and were not in β.[29] We know that Adomnán did not originally plan for this passage to come at this place because the chapter following it has the phrase 'eque plebeo' in its

25. VC 1.1: 'quod est maioris miraculi'.

26. VC 2.26: 'quem forte uenatici canes persequebantur'.

27. VC 3.3: 'Hoc famen factum est hi teilte'. This sentence is missing from the manuscripts copied from A (though the Andersons did not compare Metz); see VC 3.3 n 209.

28. Adomnán uses *forte* elsewhere, but here the word is at odds with the vivid detail in the addition.

29. On the date of the chapter headings, see VC p lix. The strongest indications are the substitution in 2.28 of 'insula Ioue' for 'huius insulae terrula'; the mistake in 2.29 erroneously substituting *hasta* (spear—of wood and iron) for *pugio* (dagger—of iron); *alio* mistakenly used in 2.37; and the general simplification of vocabulary and syntax. Finally, as we shall see below, it is significant that all the information in these headings can be found in the text.

heading.[30] Adomnán uses 'plebeus' often, always with the meaning of 'a lay person',[31] so it seems unlikely that this can have been meant to follow the story of Vigenus, who is described as 'diues'. *Plebeus* would, however, fit Nesan in the following story quite well, since he had only five cows. Bieler, in a very important observation, noted that the Vigenus insert has verbal similarities with *De locis sanctis* 1.9.6,[32] which provides strong evidence that Adomnán re-worked this story for the *vita*. The fact that the text has no chapter heading and is not in A also makes a strong case for its being Adomnán's decision to leave it out. We shall see below that the text contains other examples of just such material (i.e. inserted stories re-worked by Adomnán without chapter headings). How shall we reconstruct the inclusion of the Vigenus episode? When β was being written, the scribe had access to material that Adomnán had reworked but chosen not to add to the *vita*. Because of its subscription, we know that A was written at Iona not long after Adomnán's death,[33] so presumably the Vigenus story would have been available to Dorbbéne as well; but, perhaps on Adomnán's authority, perhaps on his own, he decided to leave it out. Thus, aside from the exemplar, there seem to have been two sorts of works from which scribes could choose: other sources for Columba's life like Cumméne's book, and other stories re-worked by Adomnán but not added by him to the Life.

One more passage unique to β adds a phrase to the chapter heading of 2.44, 'the miracle that now, with God's favour, we shall begin to describe was done in our day and we saw it with our own eyes'.[34] Here, the first-person addition echoes the chapter text, which is likewise in the first-person and tells how the monks of Iona used the tunic worn by Columba and manuscripts written by him to break a drought. And nothing in the language would cause us to doubt that this is Adomnán's work (*deo propitio* is used five additional times in the *vita*, for example). As in the Vigenus episode, this must represent the scribe of β copying material that Dorbbéne or the scribe of α omitted.

CHAPTER HEADINGS

The evidence of chapter headings might seem like a slender thread on which to hang an argument: after all, they are only summaries, possibly not even written by Adomnán. In many works this is so; the headings of the *Vita Columbae*, however, are different. Often, information such as the proper name of a person mentioned in the text is given only in the chapter heading, and a formula like *supra memoratus* is used in the text to refer not to information previously given in the text, but to information

30. VC 2.21 capitulum: 'De Columbano eque plebeo uiro cuius pecora admodum pauca uir sanctus benedixit; sed post illius benedictionem usque ad centenarium creuerunt numerum'.

31. VC 1.1, 1.16, 1.20, 1.46, 1.47, 2.3, 2.17, 2.20, 2.21, 2.32, 2.37 (which describes a *plebeus pauperrimus*), 2.39, 2.41, 3.10

32. Bieler, review of Anderson, 180.

33. Adomnán died in 704 and Dorbbéne was bishop or abbot of Iona in 713.

34. VC 2.44: 'Miraculum quod nunc deo propitio describere incipimus nostris temporibus factum propriis inspeximus oculis'.

given in the heading of the chapter. This close integration of text and heading is found in all three books of the *vita* and means that these headings must have been written by Adomnán. One could argue that someone with access to Adomnán's sources could also have written the *capitula*, but the close integration of the two means that this editor would not only have had to have written the *capitula*, but also re-edited the text to remove information, and then inserted the *supra memoratus* references. The best way to explain the text is to say that Adomnán wrote the chapter headings.

Perhaps an example will clarify this best. The text of 1.12 begins this way: 'At another time he was journeying through the rough and rocky region called Artdamuirchol and, hearing his companions, namely Laisranus son of Feradachus and Dermitius his attendant, talking about the two above-mentioned kings along the way, spoke these words to them ...'.[35] This is the first sentence of the chapter, so where were the two kings mentioned above? By this point in the *vita* Adomnán has mentioned many kings, so the vague reference is confusing, until we look at the text heading, which says, 'The prophecy of the blessed man on two other rulers Baitanus the son of Mac Erce and Echodius the son of Domnal'.[36] Perhaps this single instance would not be sufficient to establish this—after all, perhaps Adomnán is just being vague. But twenty-seven of the work's 119 text headings, including chapters from each of the three books, have information not given in the text. The following is a list of these chapters. ('Text heading' refers to the chapter headings between chapters; 'list heading' refers to the list of chapter headings between books 1 and 2.)

1.5 Comán is identified as *mocu Sailni* in the list and text headings, not the text.
1.8 *Supra memorato bello* is given as *de bello Miathorum* in the text heading.
1.12 The text heading gives the names of the two kings, Báitán and Echoid, while they are referred to in the text as *supra memorati*.
1.13 Óingus is described as *filio Aido Commani* in the text heading, while the text begins *Hic* with Óingus as the subject.
1.14 Áid Sláne appears for the only time in the *vita* and is called *supradictus* in the text, referring to the text heading.
1.15 The text heading provides the subject of the text's first sentence *(De rege Roderco filio Tothail qui in petra Cloithe regnauit)*, which is not otherwise stated.
1.17 Colcu appears for the first time in the *vita* and is called *supra memoratus* in the text, referring to the text heading.
1.18 Laisrán is identified as a gardener in both headings, not the text.
1.29 Laisrán is identified as son of Feradach in both headings, not in text.

35. VC 1.12: 'Alio in tempore per asperam et saxosam regionem iter faciens quae dicitur Artdamuirchol, et suos audiens comites Laisranum utique filium Feradachi et Dermitium ministratorem de duobus supra memoratis regibus in uia sermocinari, haec ad eos uerba depromit ...'.

36. VC 1.12: 'De duobus aliis regnatoribus qui duo nepotes Muiredachi uocitabantur Baitanus filius maic Erce et Echodius filius Domnail beati profetatio uiri'.

1.35 Colcu is identified as Cellach's son in the text heading, not in the text or list heading.
1.36 Findchán is *supra memoratus* in the first sentence of text, which refers to the text heading. The name of the monastery and its location are in the text heading, not the text. (There is no list heading for this chapter.)
1.39 Nemán is identified as Gruthrech's son in both headings, not in the text.
1.41 Erc is identified as *mocu Druidi* only in the text heading, not in the text or list heading.
1.43 The two noblemen are referred to as *tigernís* in the text heading, not in the text or the list heading.
1.44 The bishop Crónán is named in the text heading, not in the text.
1.47 Góre is mentioned as Áidán's son in the text heading, not in the text.
1.49 The fortification of Cethern is *supra memorata* in the first sentence but mentioned only in the text heading.
2.15 The holy men are *superius memorati* in the first sentence but mentioned only in the text heading. Colmán is mentioned as son of Beogna only in the text heading.
2.17 The *maleficus* is identified as Silnán only in the text heading, not in the text or list heading.
2.18 Lugne is identified as mocu Min only in the text heading.
2.20 Nesán's epithet, *curuus*, the place he lived are in the text heading, not in the text, which begins *Hic Nesanus*
2.31 Fintén is identified as Áid's son in the text heading, not the text.
2.45 The phrase *talium miraculorum* in the first sentence of the text refers to *de uentorum flatibus contrariis* in the text heading.
3.9 Columb is *supra memoratus* in the first sentence of the text but first mentioned in the text heading.
3.11 Brénden is identified as the founder of Birra in the text heading, not in the text.
3.12 Colmán is identified as *mocu Loígse* only in the text heading.
3.15 The house is called round only in the text heading.
3.19 Virgno is *supra memoratus* in the first sentence of the text but first mentioned in the text heading.

The fact that chapters 44, 47, and 49 from book 1 are in this list is also significant. To understand why, we have to look more closely at the headings. In addition to the text headings, book 1 also has a separate list of chapter headings announced in the text and placed between the second preface and the first chapter. Oddly, it is the only book to have such a list: in A there is an eleven-line gap where the list headings for book 2 might have been intended to go, and no indication that book 3 ever had such a list. There are also discrepancies between the list headings and the text headings: the list groups chapters 7 and 8 as well as 9–15; it separates chapter 17 into two chapters; it omits chapters 36 and 37, as well as the last seven chapters, 44–50. Thus,

by knowing that Adomnán wrote the chapter headings for three of the omitted chapters, we have a strong case for saying that chapters 44 to 50 are his own work added later, as were chapters 36 and 37.[37] The case of chapter 17 also shows us that Adomnán changed his mind in the course of assembling the *vita*. The list heading seems to indicate that the short story at the end of chapter 17 (in which Columba tells Colcu that Colcu will meet his end when he sees a butler swinging a pitcher) was originally intended as a separate chapter. At some point, Adomnán must have decided not to expand it, but his change of heart was made after the composition of the list.

Book 2 is preceded by a separate chapter list in B2 and B3, though there is no mention of it in the text, as there was for the list headings of book 1.[38] When were the B2 list headings written? Because the text headings contain information not found in the text, we can argue that they were written by Adomnán. The list headings in B2 and B3, however, were written later.[39] One possible explanation for this is that the scribe of β interpreted the gap before Book 2 as space left for a list of capitula and duly supplied them. The Schaffhausen manuscript has no gap between books 2 and 3 and the B manuscripts have no list of capitula for book 3.

COMMON ADDITIONS

The structure of the *vita* made adding or subtracting material easy: it is a collection of usually short stories (half of them have fewer than 150 words) from different sources organised roughly by theme. Once anyone grasped this principle, where and how to add information is clear and because the stories are short and for the most part self-contained, even composing them would not be difficult. In this sense, the *vita* represents an open text: it invites addition because more stories are available, as the Cumméne insert and Adomnán himself tell us,[40] and because adding them 'authentically' is easier since the work is composed of short excerpts from various sources.

In addition to the insertions we discussed above that are unique to the two manuscript traditions, there are other additions common to both, like the revised version of 1.17. One page before the Vigenus insert, for example, A and β have another example of inserted material probably re-worked by Adomnán but without a chapter heading. The first instance shows an episode incorrectly inserted in 2.19 (p 67b, fig 2). The first inserted passage beginning *Alio quoque in tempore* (p 67b line 3) is written following a blank line for the chapter heading, and with a two-line initial letter as though it began a new chapter. *Alio in tempore* begins a new chapter in 75 of the 119 chapters (63%), and if we broaden this to include similar temporal phrases (*Quadam*

37. The list headings are written in red, so it is possible that Dorbbéne simply left too little space for all the headings and had to truncate the list. The omission of the earlier chapters (36 and 37) and the other irregularities make this unlikely, however.

38. P. 5a in the Schaffhausen manuscript: 'Nunc primi libri kapitulationes ordiuntur'.

39. See Anderson, VC, p lix.

40. VC pref. 1: 'et hoc lectorem ammonendum putauimus quod de beatae memoriae uiro plura studio breuitatis etiam memoria digna a nobis sint praetermisa'.

die and the like), then the number rises to 101 or 85%. Although this may seem like a standard phrase, it seems to be used especially often by Adomnán.[41] For clarity, we can call the first half of the chapter 2.19a and the second 2.19b. Originally, 2.19b ended with the phrase *pro quibus sanctus et socii deo grates eximias reddiderunt* (p 67b lines 21–23) but in the A and B manuscripts this is interrupted by a *partitio*[42] referring to both halves of the chapter: *in his duabus memoratis piscationibus miraculi* ... (p 67b lines 18–21). How are we to explain this? Returning to the chapter heading of 2.19a, we find *De piscibus beato uiro specialiter a deo praeparatis* (p 67a lines 16–17). Since there are many fish, but only one miraculous one in 2.19a, this chapter heading must refer either to the two miraculous fish in 2.19b alone or to both 2.19a and b. Although it is possible that 2.19b is the original chapter referred to in the heading and 2.19a the insertion, the misplaced *partitio* makes it more likely that 2.19b is the addition, and thus that the chapter heading for 2.19 is re-worked to take into account both stories. Presumably when Adomnán decided to add the 2.19b episode to 2.19a, he had already re-worked the text but had not written a chapter heading. He then composed a chapter heading and a *partitio* including both stories. The chapter heading went into the correct place and 2.19b went after 2.19a, but in the process of adding the *partitio* it was mistakenly inserted before the last sentence of 2.19b rather than after it. To understand how this might have taken place, we can take the example of inserted material from a ninth-century manuscript, Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, 404 (386), f 97^{v} and fragment, shown in fig 3. Here the *signe de renvoi* in the right margin of f 97^{v} corresponds to one on the left margin of the fragment with material to insert. A scribe copying this might insert the passage after *paschae* in line 7 rather than after *reperietur* in line 8. Although this accounts for the original mistake, it seems unlikely that the identical mistake could be made by the scribes of α and β independently several times (as we shall see below). Instead, it seems more likely that α and β had the same mistake, a suspicion we shall see confirmed with other examples. Page 60b (chapter 2.9) shown in fig 4 has another instance of a similarly misplaced *partitio*. Here, the *partitio* that introduces two water stories (2.10–11) and the chapter heading are out of order: the chapter heading should go after the *partitio*, not before it. We can see from the *partitiones* in 73b and 87a, 97b–98a that these are written with a larger initial, but no line break. In this case, we can see from A that the scribe confused this larger initial with a chapter break and left space for the chapter heading. Then, when he came to the beginning of the chapter, rather than erasing all his work, he began with a two-line initial. In β, the sentence is written as a continuation of the chapter heading in coloured ink, perhaps because here the scribe realised the correct chapter beginning and hit on the solution

41. A search of the electronic Migne for *alio* near *tempore* gives 58 hits for Adomnán, with the next highest number of hits from authors earlier than the eighth century being 11 in Rufinus' *Historia monachorum*.

42. For this term, see below 168–69.

of incorporating the misplaced text into the heading. As in the case above, in both α and β the *partitio* was inserted at the wrong spot.

We can also see signs of inserted stories without chapter headings in 1.37 where two additional stories that are irrelevant to the chapter heading have been inserted. They both begin with *Sed* with two-line initial. On p 39a (fig 5), the normal signs of a chapter end are there (punctuation, short line centred), though there is no blank line, a two-line S with red in-fill begins at the left margin. In 39b, there is no sign of a chapter end (punctuation, special handling of line-end), but there is a two-line S with red in-fill. The 'chapter' would have ended on the penultimate line, so there would be no room to have a two-line initial without doing it this way. In 39b the S in *similiter* has red in-fill and does seem to cause a bit of extra separation in the word below it. One way to explain this is that the last two sections represent even later additions. Chapter 1.37 as it stands has three episodes: in the first, the spirit of Columba refreshes a group of monks; in the second, Columba's voice is heard distinctly a mile away, while to those standing next to him it does not seem loud; in the third, the saint's voice becomes like thunder when magicians try to prevent it being heard by heathens. They all seem to have in common the saint acting at a distance and the last two have the voice in common. Again, α and β share these insertions.

One disputed insertion comes at the end of chapter 3.3 (106b; fig. 6), a sentence that sets the chapter in the time of Columba's departure from Ireland. The sentence is inserted in the wrong place according to Sharpe and the Andersons,[43] but Charles-Edwards objects. The question turns on the description of Columba as a *iuuenis*. Sharpe and the Andersons say that because Columba was forty-two when he left Ireland and because this chapter took place about that time, Columba could not be described as *iuuenis* and the sentence with that adjective must be displaced, even though the manuscripts offer no other reason to think so. Charles-Edwards quotes Isidore, who gives the upper limit for a *iuuenis* as fifty, making Columba in the prime of his young manhood at forty-two. The precise age ranges in the passage from Isidore are far from conclusive—Varro, for example, gives five ages and a passage quoted by Aulus Gellius gives forty-six as the oldest *iuuenis*.[44] Perhaps reading the text can help us, however. The chapters under discussion are at the beginning of book 3, whose prologue ends with the sentence: 'But now let us begin to write down

43. VC 186 n 211; Sharpe, *Life of Columba* (London 1995) 208 n 356. Sharpe's note and introduction (13–15) are especially helpful on the political implications.

44. Varro's ages are quoted by Servius on *Aeneid* 5.295 as 'infantiam, pueritiam, adulescentiam, iuventam, senectam'. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 10.28, 'Tubero in historiarum primo scripsit Servium Tullium regem, populi Romani cum illas quinque classes seniorum et iuniorum census faciendi gratia institueret, pueros esse existimasse, qui minores essent annis septem decem, atque inde ab anno septimo decimo, quo idoneos iam esse reipublicae arbitraretur, milites scripsisse, eosque ad annum quadragesimum sextum "iuniores" supraque eum annum "seniores" appellasse'. There is also epigraphic evidence of *iuuenes* in their thirties: see S.L. Mohler, 'The iuvenes and Roman education', *Trans Am Philol Assoc* 68 (1937) 442–79: 459–60.

these same angelic apparitions as from the first beginning of the birth of the blessed man'.[45] This seems to alert us to chronological order which indeed we find: 3.1 is a dream of his mother's before Columba's birth;[46] 3.2 is a story about Columba as *puer*;[47] next we would expect *adulescentia*, if Isidore's six *aetates* were being followed, but Adomnán does not use this word. The next story to mention an *aetas* is 3.4, in which Columba is a *iuuenis*;[48] 3.3, then, seems to interrupt this sequence, by beginning 'After a long period of time ...'.[49] The *iuuenis* phrase makes sense at the end of 3.4: Adomnán is consistent in calling Columba a *iuuenis* before he left for Ireland at the age of forty-two. But we should suspect 3.3 as a later addition: it is correctly inserted (coming before Columba's departure), but incorrectly breaks the sequence established by the opening sentences of 3.1, 3.2, 3.4.

Finally, there are two significant shared insertions in the first chapter of book 1, which is meant to give an overview of the stories to come. This chapter is a list of episodes in almost random order: the stories are not in the order they appear in the text, nor do they seem to be in order of importance, since Columba is shown performing the Christ-like miracles of raising the dead and turning water into wine in the middle of the list, rather than given any special prominence. The text is written using *ceann fo eitte* (head-under-wing), a technique that ties them graphically to the chapter headings in the text (fig. 7).[50] In addition, this technique allows us to see which chapters Adomnán grouped together, a feature that the Andersons, oddly, do not reproduce. Toward the end of these summaries, however, are two additional stories announced by the sentence 'This man [Columba], by the power of prayers, obtained from God that some kings were conquered and other rulers were made victors in the terrible clash of wars. This great privilege was honourably given by the God of all the saints as to a victorious and most powerful champion, not only while he remained in this present life, but also after his passing from the flesh'.[51] Here the saint is not a prophet, someone who knows the future, but someone able to bring about the result he desires through prayer. Compare this with 1.7, where Columba

45. VC 3 praef.: 'Sed nunc ut a primordiis beati natiuitatis uiri easdem discribere angelicas apparationes incipiamus'.

46. VC 3.1: 'Angelus domini in somniis genitrici uenerabilis uiri quadam nocte inter conceptum eius et partum apparuit ...'.

47. VC 3.2: '... globum quippe igneum super pueruli dormientis faciem stantem uidit [Cruithnechanus]'.

48. VC 3.4: 'Alio in tempore uir sanctus uenerandum episcopum Finnionem, suum uidelicet magistrum, iuuenis senem adiit'.

49. VC 3.3: 'Post namque multorum interualla temporum ...'.

50. For a discussion of this term, see P.–Y. Lambert, 'Le vocabulaire du scribe irlandais' in J.–M. Picard (ed), *Ireland and Northern France AD 600–850* (Dublin 1991) 157–67: 157–58.

51. VC 1.1: 'In bellorumque terrificis fragoribus hoc a deo uirtute orationum inpetrauit, ut alii reges uicti et alii regnatores efficerentur uictores. Hoc tale praeuilegium non tantum in hac praesenti uita conuersanti, sed etiam post eius de carne transitum, quasi cuidam uictoriali et fortissimo propugnatori a deo omnium sanctorum condonatum est honorificatore'.

tells the story of the battle and the victory, but does not cause the victory. Even more significant, both of the stories inserted in 1.1 show the action of God's gift after Columba's death, which means that the stories are not simply records of what happened in the past, but also show how Columba's *uirtus* continues to be available to rulers in the present. Both stories also have authenticating clauses: one says Adomnán's predecessor told him and the other has a long phrase reminiscent of one later in the *vita*.[52] At the end of the second story, the transitional phrase picks up the thread where it was interrupted, returning to the miracles Columba performed when alive.[53] Under what circumstances were these stories added? It is difficult to believe that Adomnán added them, because their inclusion alters the plan of the chapter, which was intended as a preview of the entire *vita*, and would require rewriting the reference to the chapter at the end of the preface, as well as the chapter itself. It is easier to explain the inclusion of these episodes by saying that they represent material written by Adomnán, stripped of its chapter headings and later moved to this prominent place by someone who wanted to emphasise Columba's posthumous power.

SIGNS OF COHERENCE

We might interpret these passages as evidence for carelessness on the part of Adomnán, or Dorbbéne, or both. There is considerable evidence to the contrary, however, aside from the complete, if somewhat disordered, overview of the entire *vita* in 1.1. For example, Adomnán sometimes groups chapters together, either by remarking on information previously given, or by short sentences that mark transitions. There is no single *terminus technicus* for these transitional sentences. Picard called them *diuisiones*, a term he adopted from an article by G. B. Townend describing a characteristic of Suetonius' style.[54] To use *diuisio* to describe a transitional phrase, and not the section of the work being introduced, is an odd usage. Quintilian, writing roughly a generation before Suetonius, gives us terms that seem to describe these transitions more accurately, the *partitio* or *interfatio*.

> The *partitio* relieves boredom: 'I shall say what was done before this matter, I shall say what happened in it, I shall say what afterward'; thus they seem more like three middling stories than one long one. Sometimes, it disentangles the exposition to mark it off with a brief interruption [*interfatio*]: 'you have heard what was done

52. VC 1.1: 'Hanc mihi Adomnano narrationem meus decessor noster abbas Failbeus indubitanter enarrauit. Qui se ab ore ipsius Ossualdi regis Segineo abbati eandem enuntiantis uisionem audisse protestatus est'.

53. VC 1.1: 'Haec ab expertis unius cuiusque regionis ubicumque res eadem simili contegit miraculo indubitanter didicimus'.

54. J.-M. Picard, 'Structural patterns in early Hiberno-Latin hagiography', 67–82; G. B. Townend, 'Suetonius and his influence' in T. A. Dorey (ed), *Latin biography: studies in Latin literature and its influence* (London 1967) 79–111.

> before: now hear the things that followed'. For the judge will be revived by the end of the former and in return will prepare himself as for a new beginning.[55]

In other words, in the *partitio* an orator lays out the parts of the argument and then during his speech uses shorter *interfationes* to pause and remind the hearer of the transition between sections. Townend attributed the use of this technique to the classifying habits of the *grammaticus* but, as Quintilian shows, these techniques were also used by *rhetorici*. In any case, their use shows Adomnán's concern for every level of structural detail, from the largest elements (the three books) to the smallest (the transitions between chapters). We find *partitiones* at the end of 2.9 and the beginning of 2.10, at the end of 2.19, 2.21, 2.25, 2.38, and 2.43, as well as between books 2 and 3. In book 3 there is a *partitio* at the end of chapter 16. In addition, there are groups not explicitly signalled by Adomnán. For example, chapters 7, 8, and 9 of book 1 all use the battle of Cúl Drebene as a temporal reference point. These three chapters are also the first of a group of stories about temporal rulers that runs to chapter 15. In book 1, chapters 23, 24, and 25 all have to do with writing. There are also specific internal references, such as Cormac's three attempts to become a pilgrim, the first one in 1.6, the last two in 2.42, the latter with a reference to the story in book 1.[56] At the beginning of the last chapter of the work, Adomnán refers back to the telling of the same story in 2.28.[57] Finally, Dorbbéne is a remarkably careful scribe, consistently differentiating between the suspension sign, the stroke marking final *m*, the apex, and the sign for Irish words.[58]

SUMMARY OF INFERENCES ABOUT THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION

Because the remarkable care with which Adomnán composed and Dorbbéne wrote the *Vita Columbae*, the inconsistencies we have noticed stand out. By exploring their implications, we can infer a great deal about how Adomnán composed the text and

55. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* (ed. Winterbottom), 4.2.50: 'Et partitio taedium leuat: "dicam quae acta sint ante ipsum rei contractum, dicam quae in re ipsa, dicam quae postea"; ita tres potius modicae narrationes uidebuntur quam una longa. Interim expediet expositionem breui interfatione distinguere: "audistis quae ante acta sunt: accipite nunc quae insecuntur". Reficietur enim iudex priorum fine et se uelut ad nouum rursus initium praeparabit'. Cicero (*Topica* 28 and 30) makes a distinction between *diuisio* and *partitio* summarised by Quintilian (5.10.62) as a *partitio* divides the whole into parts, while the *diuisio* divides the genus into forms ('Diuisione autem adiuuari finitionem docet [viz. Cicero], eamque differre a partitione quod haec sit totius in partis, illa generis in formas'.)

56. VC 2.42: 'Alio in tempore Cormacus, Christi miles, de quo in primo huius opusculi libello breuiter aliqua commemorauimus pauca [1.6], etiam secunda uice conatus est herimum in ociano quaerere'.

57. VC 3.23: 'quadam die mense maio, sicut in priore secundo scripsimus libro'.

58. Dorbbéne uses a distinctive sign for final m that was not copied by the ninth-century corrector of the manuscript. The only error I could find in the Andersons' text results from their confusing the ninth-century corrector's sign with Dorbbéne's in reading *Britanniam* for the manuscript's *Britannia* on p 21a.

how Dorbbéne wrote it. The evidence does not allow us to infer anything about some parts of the process—the point at which, for example, Adomnán decided to use three books. Still, identifying these decisions and placing them in plausible order can serve a purpose, namely to reconstruct a plausible picture of the way the *vita* was composed. Such a list is doubtless too schematic: for example, the collection of source material must have continued through the process of composition. Still, we can infer a great deal. Doing so is important because we are examining Insular written culture at a very early stage. Figure 9 represents these conclusions in graphic form. After deciding to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor Cumméne, Adomnán could have:

1. *Collected source material.* This process would have been ongoing, and the insertions we have discussed are perhaps the result of Adomnán's finding new material.
2. *Decided on short-episode form in three books.* There is no conclusive evidence for when Adomnán decided to do this. I have placed it early in the process.
3. *Divided the source material into chapter-length episodes and written them.* This represents applying the structural decisions to the material. The inserted material shows that new material was being reworked as the composition continued.
4. *Decided which episodes to use.* Although a substantial portion of the material was composed at one time, the inserted passages show that these decisions also continued during the composition.
5. *Assigned the chosen episodes to books and arranged the episodes within each book.* Again, the signs of coherence imply that the bulk of the chapters were composed at one time.
6. *Written the text headings.* The heading of the Vigenus insert and other internal references in the text headings show us that they were written with a knowledge of the chapter order (as do the references in Cormac's voyages in 1.16 and 2.42; Colgius in 1.17 and 3.20). In addition, the use of *supra memoratus* to refer to previous chapters in the text, not the chapter heading, is accurate.
7. *Written the list of headings for book 1.* This step must have been complete after the chapters were chosen and placed in order.
8. *Added chapters 36, 37, 44–50 to book 1 and revised chapter 17.* The book 1 list heading does not mention these chapters and divides chapter 17 into two parts.
9. *Written chapter 1 of book 1.* This contains material from three of the last seven chapters of book 1, so it must have been written after they were included. In addition, the phrasing of the summaries often echoes the text of the chapters they summarise.
10. *Marked for insertion passages common to α and β.* The insertions described above are in both A and B traditions and must thus represent Adomnán's work, which was miscopied in α and β.

So much can be attributed to Adomnán. At this point, however, he appears to have stopped work. Given A's early date, we may suspect that he died leaving the *vita* not

in a completed state but as a *brouillon*—a collection of notes with a rough draft at its core. This rough draft must have had the inserted passages common to α and β marked ambiguously. This must have been recopied by someone other than Adomnán who inserted the common passages carelessly. Dorbbéne and the scribe of β must have used this recopied rough draft as the basis of their manuscripts. In addition, Cumméne's book on Columba's *uirtutes* and Adomnán's notes were also available.

Dorbbéne could then have written A from the re-copied rough draft. He faithfully reproduced such features as the *Sed* with a capital *S* (p 39a), *Crastina* with a capital *C* (p 56a), and the clumsily inserted passages. He added the three phrases unique to the A tradition. He left blank space at the beginning of chapter 2 for list headings. He first left blank and then supplied the Cummene *albus* insert at p 108a. He added his own subscription.

The scribe of β also used the re-copied rough draft. He, too, faithfully reproduced such features as the *Sed* and *Crastina* capitals as well as the clumsily inserted passages. He added the Vigenus episode and the phrase at the end of the text heading at 2.44, perhaps taking both from the extra material that accompanied the work. He must also have added the list of Columba's companions at the end of the work.

An editor often chooses to reconstruct the final state of the text approved by the author. In the case of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*, the task ought to be somewhat different. The agreement of α and β allows us to reconstruct the rough draft copied from Adomnán's notes. Passages unique to each tradition, i.e. from the *brouillon* of which the rough draft was a part, must be judged individually, since it is clear that some of these were composed by Adomnán.

CONCLUSION

In order to tie these threads together we can return to the idea of written culture mentioned above and consider the two statements at the end of the manuscript: the injunction for future scribes and the subscription by the scribe of the Schaffhausen manuscript, Dorbbéne. Presumably, the injunction comes from Adomnán, as its inclusion in β shows. This paragraph follows very closely a passage from Jerome's entry on Irenaeus in *De uiris inlustribus*, which in turn comes from Eusebius *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.20.[59] Why did Adomnán borrow this injunction rather than compos-

59. VC: 'Obsecro eos quicumque uoluerint hos discribere libellos, immo potius adiuro per Christum iudicem saeculorum, ut postquam deligenter discripserint conferant et emendent cum omni diligentia ad exemplar unde craxerunt, et hanc quoque adiurationem hoc in loco subscribant'. Jerome, *De uiris inlustribus* (ed. Herdingius), 35: '... et [scripsit] de octava egregium syntagma, in cuius fine significans se apostolicorum temporum vicinum fuisse subscripsit: 'adiuro te, qui transcribis librum istum, per Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum et per gloriosum eius adventum quo iudicaturus est et vivos et mortuos, ut conferas, postquam scripseris, et emendes illum ad exemplar unde transcripsisti, diligentissime; hanc quoque obtestationem similiter transferas, ut invenisti in exemplari'. Adomnán, *De locis sanctis* (ed. Meehan): 'Obsecro itaque eos quicumque hos breues

ing it? The answer must be that Adomnán wanted what amounted to a legal formula to bind future scribes. He recognised that the *vita* was an open text and this injunction represented his final effort to close it by borrowing an authoritative formula from a writer said by Jerome to have lived close to the time of the Apostles. Yet how are we to reconcile the incomplete state of the text with such an injunction? Calling for faithful copies could be seen as a refutation of the picture sketched above: because of the injunction, we know that the text is exactly the way Adomnán wanted it. However, the contrast between the care with which the text is woven together and the carelessness with which some material is added makes this argument untenable. One explanation for this state of affairs is that Adomnán did not live to see his work finished (the lack of chapter headings at the beginning of books 2 and 3 supports this view). This injunction was written for the finished work because Adomnán was concerned about the possibility that wholesale alterations would substantially change his text (as he presumably changed Cumméne's).

It is also instructive to compare this injunction with the one at the end of Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* which is addressed to those who read the text, not to those who wish to copy it. This difference might seem surprising because the text of *De locis sanctis* is composed of short excerpts easily augmented and Adomnán would surely have wanted it copied accurately as well. Yet a book about the Holy Land was not as important to the Iona community. The *Vita Columbae*, however, was a selection from stories and documents many of which must still have existed, as the Cumméne insert shows, and could have been used to re-edit its stories. In addition, several of the post-Adomnán changes discussed above seem designed to position the saint (and by extension his community) in the political struggles of the late-seventh and early-eighth centuries. This injunction was meant to forestall additions and alterations to a text that Adomnán did not live to complete. The subscription by the scribe Dorbbéne is different. It is written in red and, like Adomnán's request at the end of *De locis sanctis*, it is addressed to the reader and asks for prayers. As the *vita* shows, it is not simply the text or the author that gives a manuscript authority: the scribe also contributes. By adding his name, Dorbbéne endowed the Schaffhausen manuscript with the authority of a current or future abbot of Iona and placed himself alongside his illustrious predecessors.

We can see similar concerns in other texts as well. The so-called Additamenta in the Book of Armagh show that stories were being added to Patrick's life even after it reached its final written form. The first sentence of the Additamenta makes clear: 'Here begin a few other things to be narrated in their own places [i.e. in the life of Patrick] found in later times through curiosity about heirs and affection for sanctity,

legerint libellos ut pro eodem sancto sacerdote Arculfo diuinam praecentur clementiam qui haec de sanctis experimenta locis eorum frequentator libentissime nobis dictauit; quae et ego quamlibet inter laboriosas et prope insustentabiles tota die undique conglobatas eclesiasticae sollicitudinis occupationes constitutus uili quamuis sermone discribens declaraui. Horum ergo lectorem ammoneo experimentorum ut pro me missello peccatore eorundem craxatore Christum iudicem saeculorum exorare non neglegat'.

which have been collected until the present day in honour and praise of the Lord and affectionate memory of Patrick'.[60] The Additamenta show that the urge to collect information relating to Patrick's heirs, thus completing the text, was irresistible. Here, however, the material is not added to the *uita*; rather it is left to a future editor (or to the reader) to insert the appropriate material in the appropriate place. Eugippius, the hagiographer and compiler of Augustine excerpts, also foresaw this quality in his own text, which was meant to make Augustine's works accessible. In the preface he explained that: 'If anyone copying this work should want perhaps to add to these things which have been collected, let him add them in the appropriate places so that the two above-mentioned *tituli* on charity are always found at the end of the excerpts'.[61] Although he knew that future copyists of the work would want to alter his selection of material, he wanted to avoid having his name associated with a muddled collection and so explained the most important principle according to which he had organised the work. Finally, the convoluted relationship among the *vitae* of the poet Virgil show us that the same forces existed, even when the life story was removed to a level of purely academic interest.[62]

Columba's *vita* was compiled by Adomnán at the request of his community on Iona and Adomnán describes Columba as *patronus noster* in the first sentence of the *vita* and ten times thereafter. Adomnán's compilation tells of the miracles performed through the divine power of his patron who is represented by his community on earth. Like many texts, Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* did not come fully formed into the world like Athena, but was built up over time like a pearl.

60. Bieler, *Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh*, 166: 'Incipiunt alia pauca serotinis temporibus inuenta, suisque locis narranda, curiossitate heredum dilegentiaque sanctitatis, quae in honorem at laudem Domini atque in amabilem Patricii memoriam usque in hodiernum diem congregantur'. Bieler's translation cannot be correct when it says that things were found 'by the sedulous care of (Patrick's) heirs and their love for his holiness.' Rather, both genitives should be objective. cf. Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei* 10.29, 'Sed quid faciam? Scio me frustra loqui mortuo: sed quantum ad te attinet; quantum autem ad eos, qui te magnipendunt, et te vel qualicumque amore sapientiae, vel curiositate artium, quas non debuisti discere, diligunt, quos potius in tua compellatione alloquor, fortasse non frustra.' Here the phrase should be translated 'by love for wisdom or curiosity for the arts'. It is information about the heirs that was desired, not information found by them.

61. Eugippius, *Excerpta ex operibus Augustini*, PL 62.562: 'Per quam adjuro lecturos, ut mihi indigno veniam dignanter tribuant, et orationum praesidia clementer impendant. Si quis sane trasferens hoc opus, his quae congesta sunt alia addere forte voluerit, congruis adjiciat locis, ut praedicti duo de charitate tituli finem semper teneant Excerptorum'.

62. For the relationships among these Virgil *vitae*, see J. and M. Götte & K. Bayer (ed.), *Publius Vergilius Maro: Landleben, Bucolica, Georgica, Catalepton, Viten* (Munich 1970).

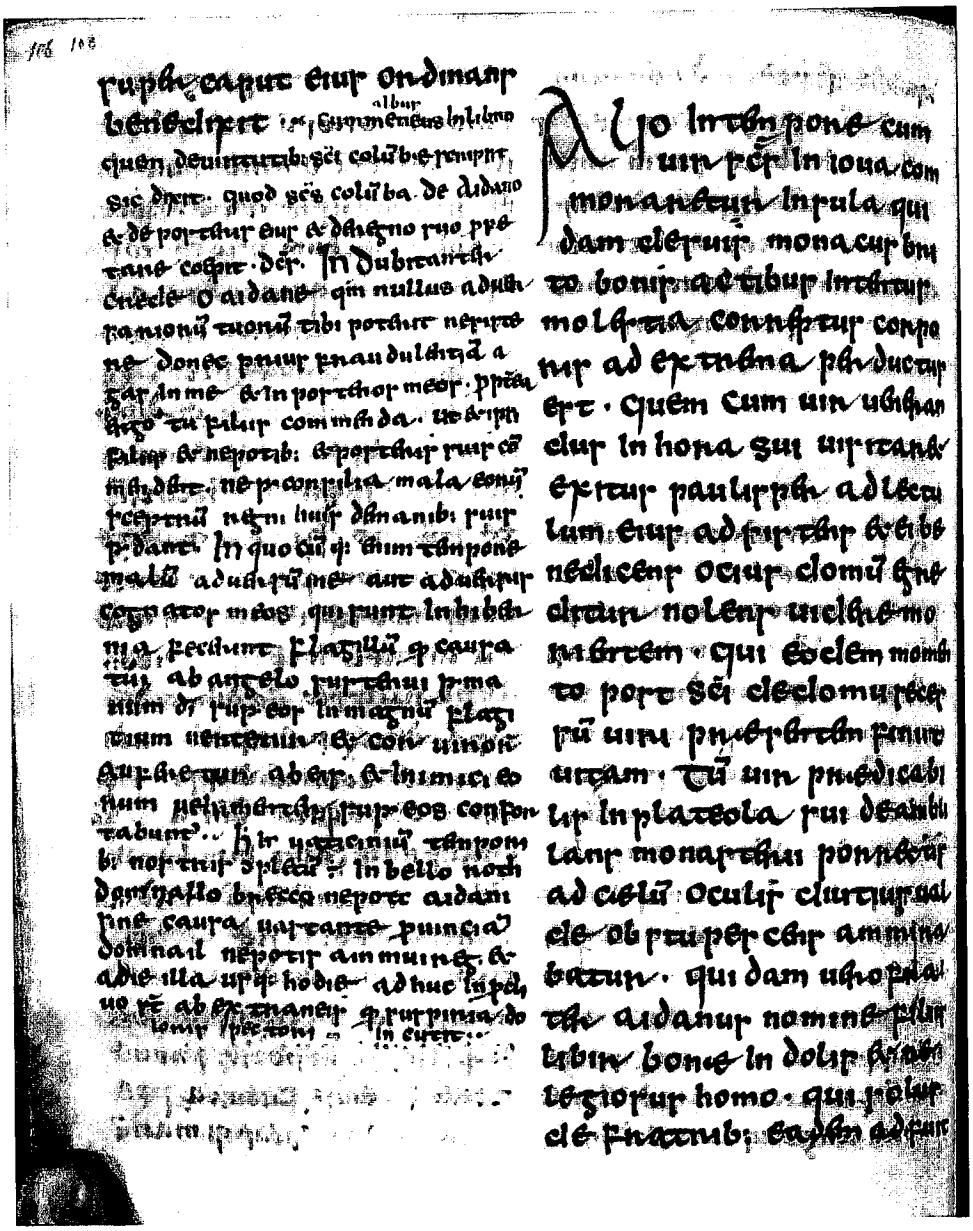

Fig. 1. Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, Gen. 1, p 108.

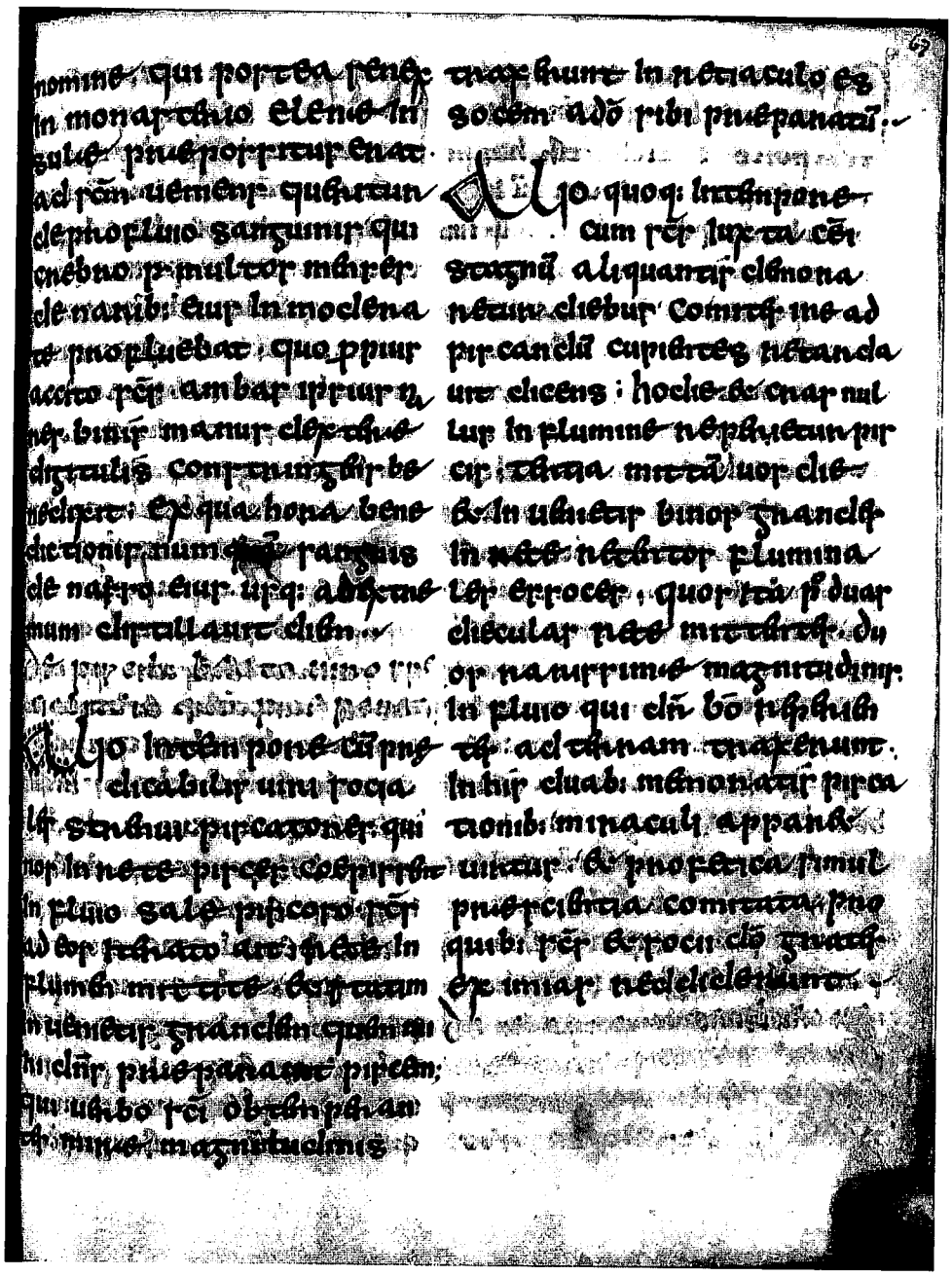

Fig. 2. Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, Gen. 1, p 67.

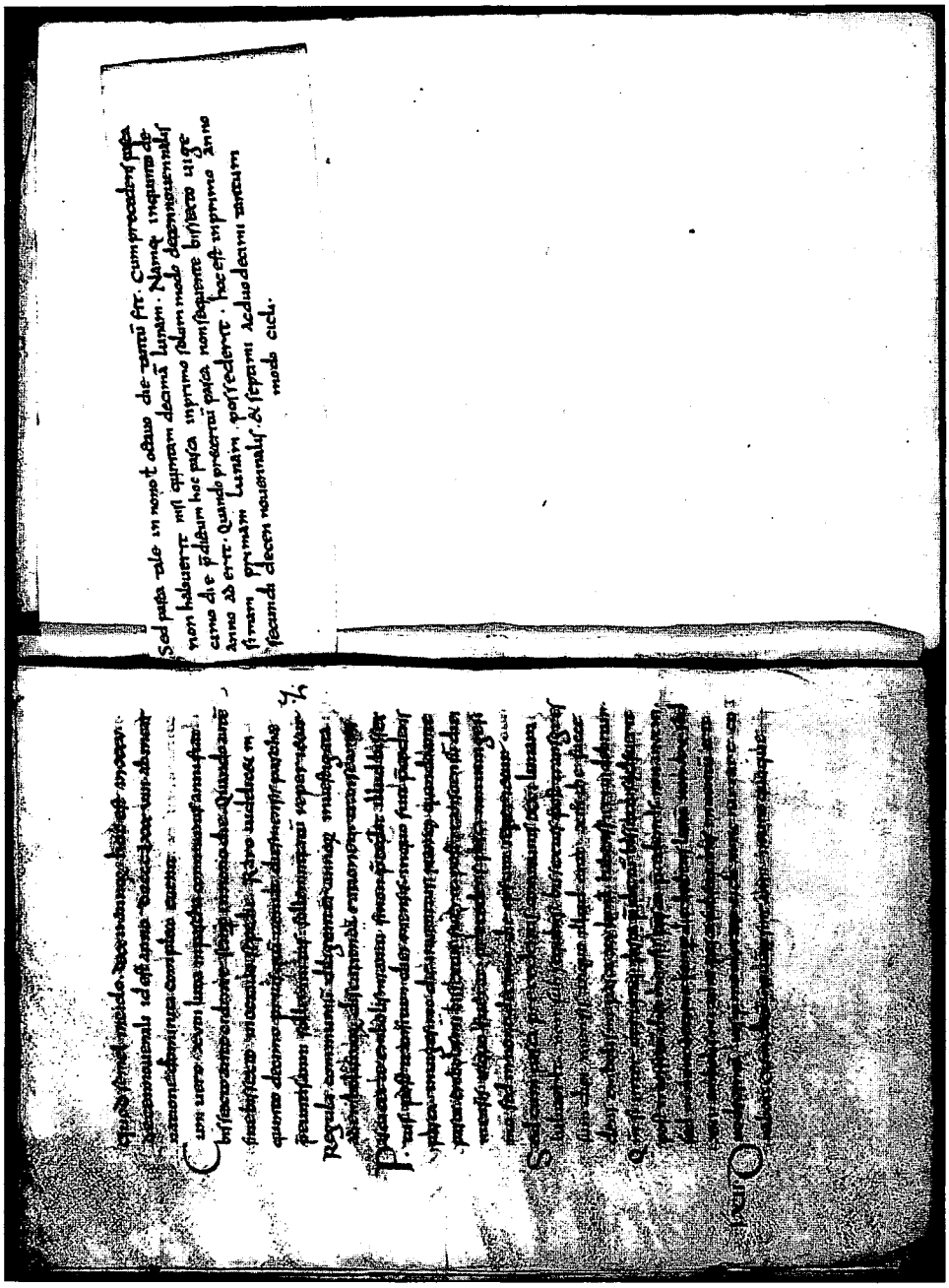

Fig. 3. Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, 404 (olim 386), f 97^{v} and fragment.
Collection of s. IX on rhetoric, computus etc.

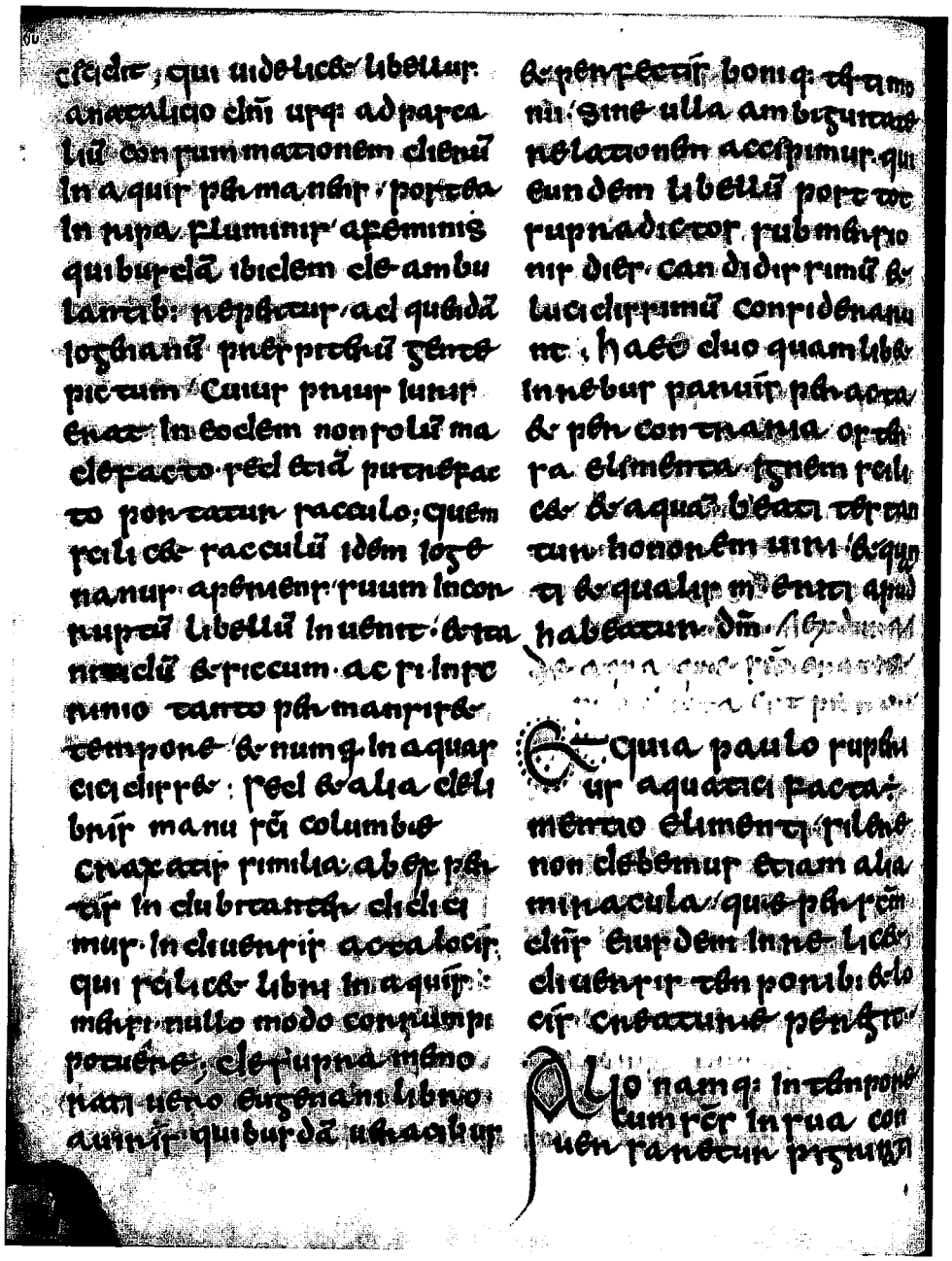

Fig. 4. Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, Gen. 1, p 60.

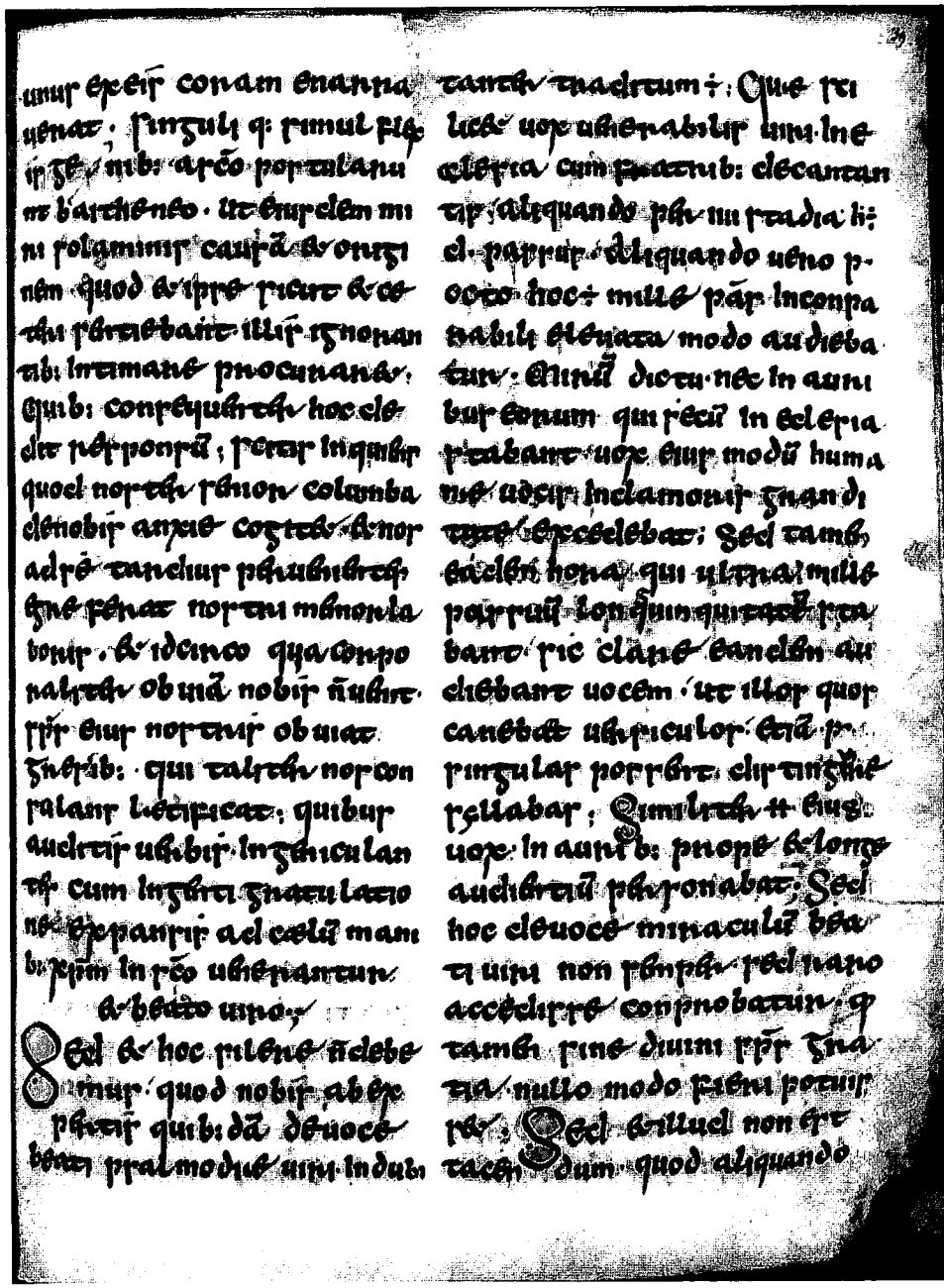

Fig. 5. Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, Gen. 1, p 39.

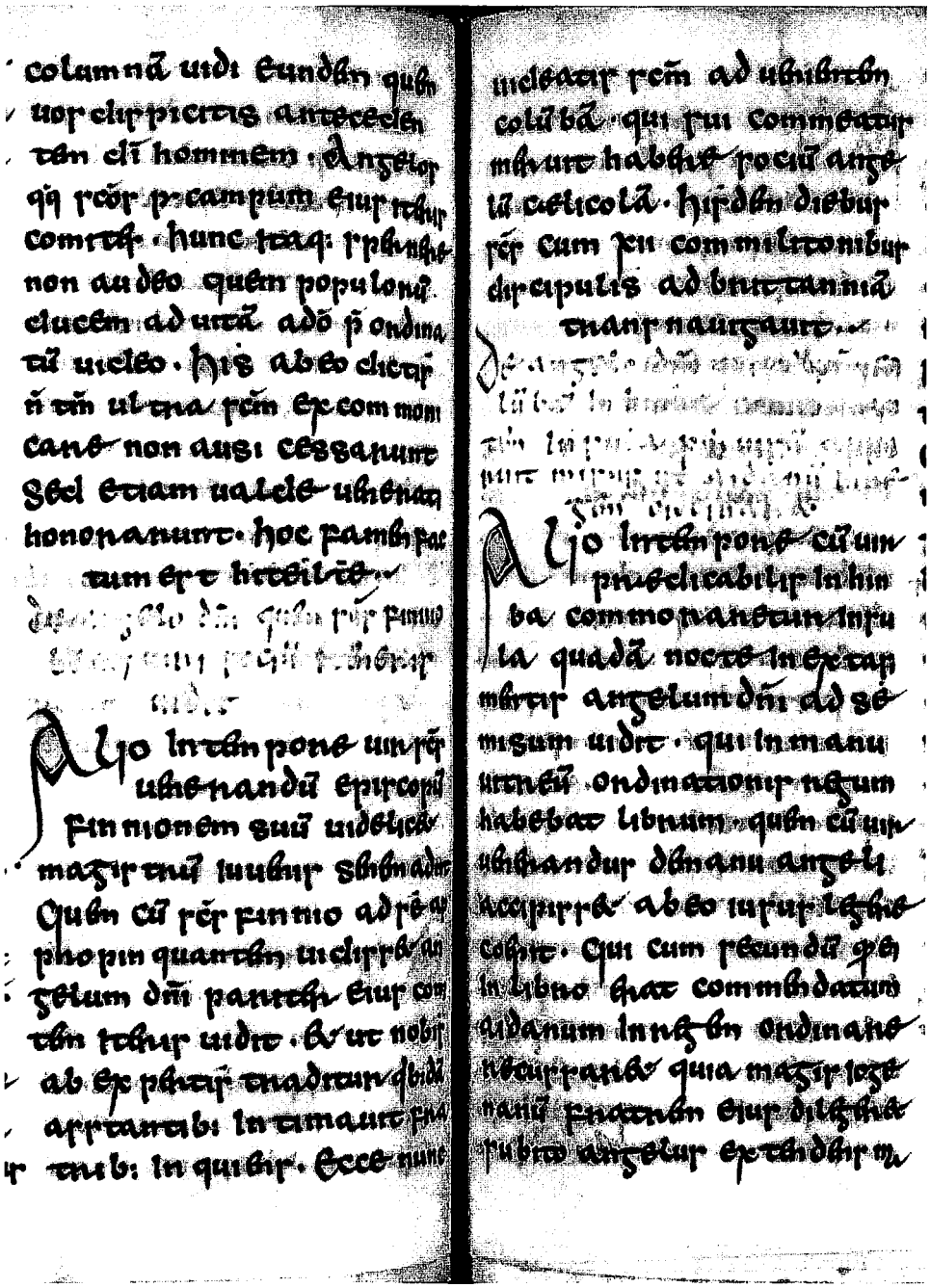

Fig. 6. Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, Gen. 1, p 106^{b}-107^{a} (detail).

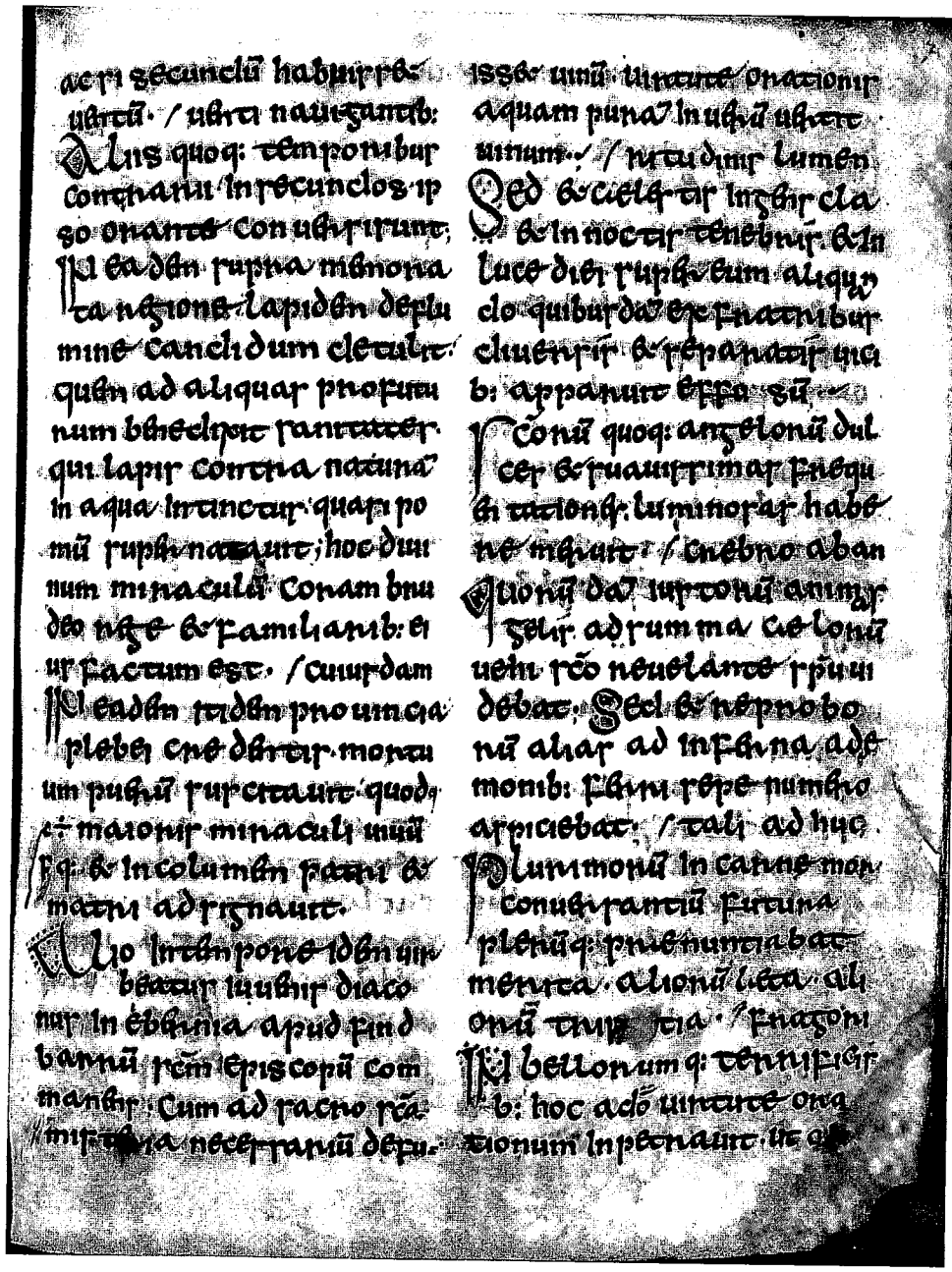

Fig. 7. Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, Gen. 1, p 7.

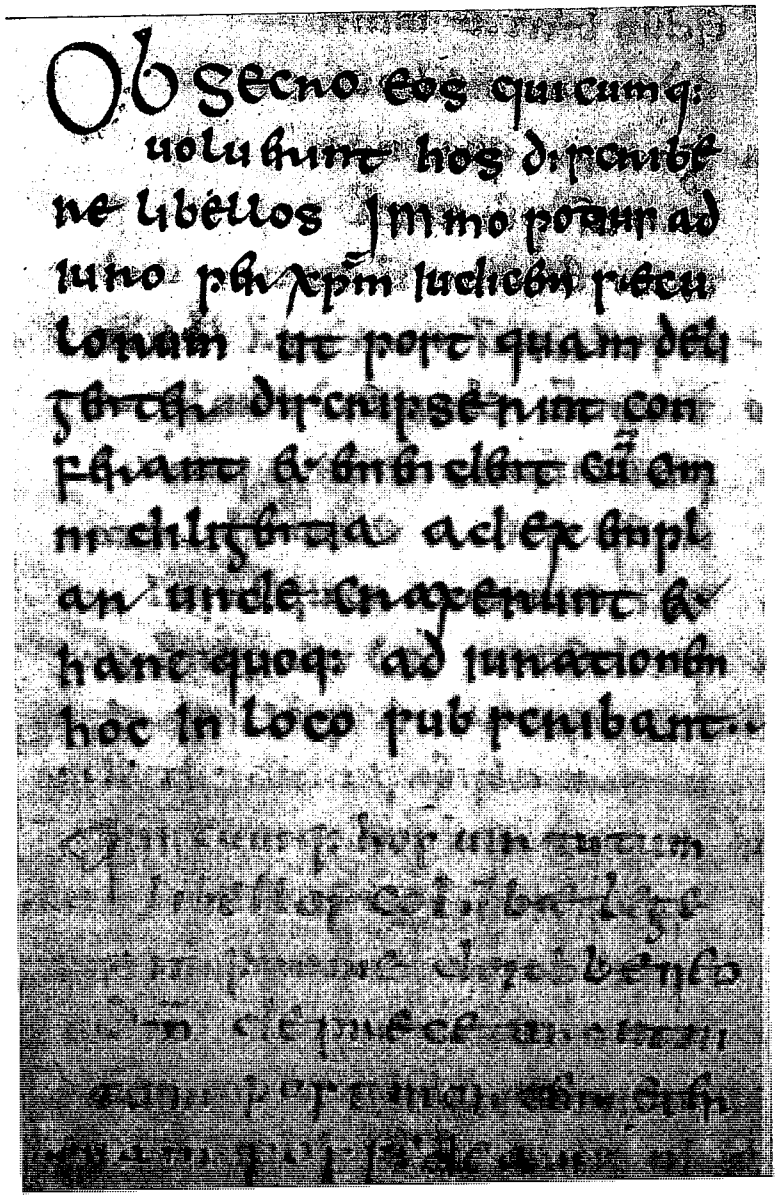

Fig. 8. Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, Gen. 1, p 136 (detail).

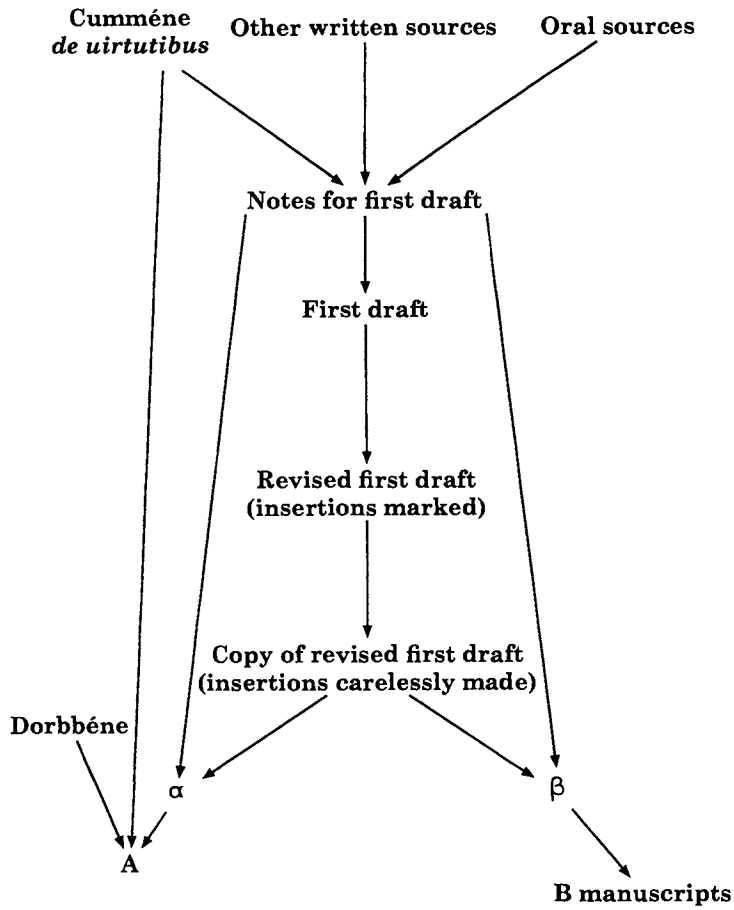

Fig. 9. The construction of *Vita Columbae.*