

# On the Trail of the Real Macbeth: Uncovering the Origins of Shakespeare's Tragic Hero

William Shakespeare's Macbeth is one of the most iconic and enduring characters in all of literature. The play, which tells the story of a Scottish nobleman who murders his king in order to become king himself, has been performed countless times around the world. But what is the historical basis for Macbeth? Did the real Macbeth actually exist?

The answer is yes. Macbeth was a real person who ruled Scotland from 1040 to 1057. However, the historical record of his life is scarce, and much of what we know about him comes from Shakespeare's play.



## On The Trail of the Real Macbeth: King of Alba

by Cameron Taylor

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According to the play, Macbeth was a brave and ambitious warrior who was driven to commit murder by his wife, Lady Macbeth. However, the historical evidence suggests that Macbeth was a more complex and nuanced figure. He was a successful military leader who expanded the Scottish kingdom.

He was also a devout Christian who founded several churches and monasteries.

So how did the real Macbeth become the villainous character in Shakespeare's play? It is likely that Shakespeare drew inspiration from a number of sources, including the historical record, Scottish folklore, and his own imagination.

In the historical record, Macbeth is described as a ruthless and ambitious ruler who murdered his rivals. However, there is no evidence that he was as evil as Shakespeare portrays him to be. In fact, some historians believe that Macbeth was a victim of political propaganda.

Scottish folklore is another source of inspiration for Shakespeare's play. In Scottish folklore, Macbeth is often depicted as a supernatural figure who is associated with witchcraft and evil.

Finally, it is likely that Shakespeare drew inspiration from his own imagination when creating the character of Macbeth. Shakespeare was a master of creating complex and nuanced characters, and Macbeth is no exception. The character is a fascinating and tragic figure who is both ambitious and flawed.

Whether you believe that Shakespeare's Macbeth is a fair representation of the real Macbeth is a matter of opinion. However, there is no doubt that the play is a powerful and enduring work of art that has fascinated audiences for centuries.

## **The Historical Macbeth**

The historical record of Macbeth is scarce. Most of what we know about him comes from the writings of Scottish chroniclers, who wrote decades or even centuries after his death. The most important of these sources is the Chronicle of the Scots by John of Fordun, which was written in the 14th century.

According to Fordun, Macbeth was born in Moray, Scotland, in 1005. He was the son of Findlaech, the Mormaer of Moray. Macbeth succeeded his father as Mormaer in 1029. He later married Gruoch, the daughter of the previous Mormaer of Moray, who had been killed by Macbeth's father.

In 1040, Macbeth became King of Scotland after killing King Duncan I in battle. Macbeth ruled Scotland for 17 years, during which time he expanded the Scottish kingdom and founded several churches and monasteries. However, his reign was also marked by violence and bloodshed.

In 1054, Macbeth was defeated in battle by Malcolm Canmore, the son of King Duncan I. Macbeth was killed in battle in 1057.

## **Shakespeare's Macbeth**

Shakespeare's play Macbeth was written in the early 17th century. The play is based on the historical record of Macbeth's life, but Shakespeare also drew inspiration from Scottish folklore and his own imagination.

In Shakespeare's play, Macbeth is a brave and ambitious warrior who is driven to commit murder by his wife, Lady Macbeth. Macbeth murders King Duncan I and becomes King of Scotland. However, his reign is plagued by

guilt and paranoia. He eventually becomes a tyrant who is overthrown and killed by Malcolm Canmore.

Shakespeare's Macbeth is a complex and nuanced character. He is both a hero and a villain. He is driven by ambition and greed, but he is also capable of great love and compassion.

The play Macbeth is a powerful and enduring work of art that has fascinated audiences for centuries. The play is a tragedy, but it is also a story of ambition, power, and redemption.

### **The Real Macbeth and Shakespeare's Play**

So how did the real Macbeth become the villainous character in Shakespeare's play? It is likely that Shakespeare drew inspiration from a number of sources, including the historical record, Scottish folklore, and his own imagination.

The historical record suggests that Macbeth was a more complex and nuanced figure than Shakespeare portrays him to be. He was a successful military leader who expanded the Scottish kingdom. He was also a devout Christian who founded several churches and monasteries.

However, it is important to remember that Shakespeare's play is not a historical document. It is a work of fiction that is based on the historical record. Shakespeare was free to create his own characters and events, and he did not have to adhere to the historical facts.

Whether you believe that Shakespeare's Macbeth is a fair representation of the real Macbeth is a matter of opinion. However, there is no doubt that the

play is a powerful and enduring work of art that has fascinated audiences for centuries.

## Further Reading

- Macbeth (Britannica)
- Macbeth (History.com)
- Macbeth (William Shakespeare Info)

## Related Articles

- The real Macbeth: Was he really a murderous tyrant?
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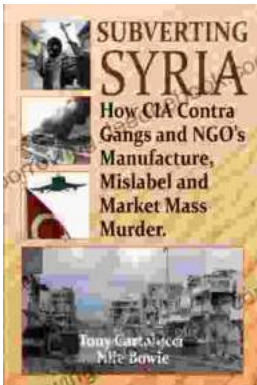
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