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The *papar* and Some Problems: a Brief Review

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The Norse Evidence

The *Historia Norwegiae* (Storm 1880, 69-124 at 87-90: see Wainwright 1962, 99 n. 3; translated in Anderson 1922, I, 330-2; see further Turville-Petre 1953, 174-5), a Norwegian chronicle apparently written originally in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century and preserved in a mid-fifteenth century MS probably from Orkney, says of the Orkney Islands:

> These islands were at first inhabited by the Picts (*Peti*) and Papae. Of these, the one race, the Picts, little exceeded pigmies in stature; they did marvels, in the morning and in the evening, in building [walled] towns, but at mid-day they entirely lost all their strength, and lurked, through fear, in little underground houses. But at that time [the islands] were not called Orchades, but Pictland (*terra Petorum*) . . . And the Papae have been named from their white robes, which they wore like priests; whence priests are all called *papae* in the Teutonic tongue (*Papae vero propter albas, quibus ut clerici induebantur, vocati sunt, unde in Theutonica lingua omnes clerici papae dicuntur*). An island is still called, after them, *Papey (Adhuc quaedam insula Papey ab illis denominatur)*. But, as is observed from their habit and the writings of their books abandoned there, they were Africans, adhering to Judaism (*Sed ut per habitum et apices librorum eorum ibidem derelictorum notatur, Africani fuerunt, judaismo adhaerentes*). In the days of Harold Fairhair, King of Norway, certain pirates, of the family of the most vigorous prince Ronald, set out with a great fleet, and crossed the Solundic sea; and stripped these races of their ancient settlements, destroyed them wholly, and subdued the islands to themselves.

Ari Thorgilsson (1067-1148) wrote his *Íslendingabók*, 'Book of the Icelanders', probably between 1122 and 1133 (Turville-Petre 1953, 51, 90, 93). In it he says (Ch. 1): 'Iceland was first settled from Norway in the days of Harold Fairhair . . . At that time Iceland was wooded between the mountains and the coast. At that time, Christian men were here, whom the Norwegians call *papar*; but they departed afterwards, because they would not be here with heathen men; and they left behind them Irish books, and bells, and croziers. Therefore one could perceive that they

were Irish men' (Anderson 1922, I, 337-40; and cf. 338 n. 4. Icelandic text in Benediktsson 1968, 3-28, at 4-5).

Landnámabók, 'The Book of Settlements' (of Iceland), survives in five versions, dating variously from the thirteenth (*Sturlubók*) to the seventeenth centuries. These five versions are all derived from a lost version, *Styrmisbók*, written, probably 1220-30, by Prior Styrmir the Wise, who died in 1245. It seems likely, however, on the evidence available, that Ari was a principal source, probably c. 1097 to c. 1125, of the original *Landnámabók* on which *Styrmisbók* was ultimately based (Turville-Petre 1953, 103-8; Pálsson and Edwards 1972, 3-6). *Landnámabók*, following *Íslendingabók*, says (Ch.1): 'But before Iceland was settled from Norway there were other people there, called *Papar* by the Norwegians. They were Christians and were thought to have come overseas from the west, because people found Irish books, bells, croziers, and lots of other things, so it was clear they must have been Irish' (Pálsson and Edwards 1972, 15. Their translation is based on the standard edition of the *Sturlubók* text of *Landnámabók* by Benediktsson, 1968, 31-397, at 31-2). The *Sturlubók* version was compiled by Sturla Thordarson (1214-84) and probably completed by him c. 1275-80 (Pálsson and Edwards 1972, 3, 7-8, 12). The early fourteenth-century *Hauksbók* version and the seventeenth-century *Skardsárbók* add, 'This was the case in Papey in the east, and in Papyli' (Anderson 1922, I, 340-2; Benediktsson 1968, 32 n. 2. Cf. Pálsson and Edwards 1972, 3-4).

Such is, substantially, the surviving medieval written tradition concerning the *papar*; and it is situated in Orkney and Iceland only. Toponymic evidence, however, indicates (at present) that the Norse remembered *papar* also in the Faeroes, Shetland, the northern Scottish mainland, the Hebrides, the Isle of Man, Cumberland and, possibly, Kirkcudbright (see Appendix, below). Excluding the Faeroes, for which I cannot speak, there are a possible nine *papar* place-names in Shetland; seven in Orkney; two in Caithness; eight in the Long Island; one in Skye; one in Rum; and one each in Man, Cumberland and Kirkcudbright. The root word in these place-names is that occurring also in the Icelandic texts just reviewed: ON *papi* (nom.sg.), *papar* (nom.pl.), *papa* (gen.pl.) (Pálsson and Edwards 1972, 15 n. 3; Wainwright 1962, 100), latinized as (or rendered by Latin) *papae* (nom.pl.: nom.sg. *papa*) by the *Historia Norwegiae*. The discussion below will focus mainly on those regions having the chief concentrations of these names – Shetland, Orkney (and Caithness) and the Long Island.

The Insular Celtic Background

The Norse traditions about the *papar*, including the toponymic evidence, have been regarded, rightly or wrongly, as providing a direct reflection of the activities of seventh and eighth century insular Celtic ecclesiastics (especially) in areas peripheral to the main centres of ecclesiastical and secular power and so presumably largely beyond the knowledge or interest of those ecclesiastical centres which produced the surviving written record. The existence, however, of traditions of the

papar and *papar* place-names in Iceland and the Faeroes – neither populated in the conventional sense in pre-Norse times – on the one hand; and, on the other, Adomnán's accounts for the (sixth? and) seventh century and Dicuil's for the eighth of voyages in quest of religious solitude (and out of human curiosity?) in the wilderness of the North Atlantic – however precisely these accounts are to be interpreted – have perhaps led myself and others in the past to overemphasise the essentially anchoritic, or at least monastic character of the *papar* and their settlements.[1] The Irish voyage tales, too, have probably had some influence here, at a conscious or unconscious level.[2]

It may be accepted, certainly, that any who attempted to live permanently or temporarily for religious reasons in Iceland or the Faeroes *were* of an ascetic-contemplative disposition; but the islands and mainland coasts of northern and western Britain had been inhabited generally since prehistoric times. So, while there probably was in these latter regions an anchoritic and more broadly monastic presence, such ecclesiastical institutions and organisation as had developed among (and presumably to a significant extent for) the local populations during the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries are likely to have been functionally more diversified. It seems as well, therefore, to approach all those the Norse may have called *papar* with an open mind, particularly in view of the apparent difficulties arising from the material outlined above, some of which I shall now attempt to discuss. (For a balanced view of the background to the *papar* phenomenon in Scotland, in the present state of knowledge, see Crawford 1987, 164-9).

The Irish Evidence

ON *papi* is usually taken to be borrowed from Irish *pápa*, itself a borrowing of Latin *papa*. (E.g., Wainwright 1962, 100; Pálsson and Edwards 1972, 15 n. 3; cf. Pálsson 1955, 120-2. Anderson, 1922, I, 341 n. 2, took it to be Latin *papa* 'in its Irish sense of "bishop" '). It should be noted, however, that the Icelandic accounts say that it was the Norse who used the term, rather than that it was what the *papar* called themselves; and the *Historia Norwegiae* could be interpreted (below) as pointing in a different direction. Irish *pápa*, *pupu* are used of an individual taken to be an anchorite, Nem mac hui(moccu) Birn, in the notes to the Martyrology of Oengus under June 14: *Nem .i. pupu fil a n-Araind 7 comar[b]a Enna Airne he, 7 do Dail mBirrnna hOsraigi dó, 7 brathair do Chiaran Saighir hé* – 'Nem, i.e. a pope who is in Aran, and he is a successor of Énda of Aran, and of the Dál Birn of Ossory he is, and a brother of Ciarán of Saiger' (MS. Laud 610, mid-fifteenth century); *Nem macc hui Birn do Dail Birn i n-Osraige 7 comarba Enna Arné ocus is hé sin in papa atberar do bith i n-Arainn* – 'Nem moccu Birn of the Dál Birn in Ossory and successor of Enda of Aran; and he is that *papa* who is said to be in Aran' (MS. Rawlinson B505, possibly of the first half of the fourteenth century); *Nem tribus nominibus uocabatur .i. Nem 7 Púpu 7 Cailbe. Nem primum nomen eius a parentibus. Pupu apud Scottos, id est papa, eo quod cathedram Petri petiuit, 7*

Cailbe . . . Nem mac hui Birn . . . dian comainm Pupu Airne – 'Nem was called by three names, i.e. Nem and Púpu and Cailbe. Nem his first name from his parents. Pupu among the Irish, that is "pope", because he sought (or claimed) the chair of Peter, and Cailbe . . . Nem moccu Birn . . . whose (additional) name is Pupu of Aran' (Book of Leinster, twelfth century – marginal note); in the main text at June 14 he is simply *Nem maccu Birn brígach* – 'Nem the vigorous descendant of Bern' (Stokes 1905, 140, 150-1). *Faelchu, qui nominatur Pupu Airni, mac Faelchair, mic Fadalaig; 7 bá ri Osraigi Faelchar mac Fadalaig . . . Ocus is ime atberar dó Pupu .i. Papa, o rogab abdaine Roma tareis Grigoir Roma; 7 foragaibsium a abdaine, 7 dochuaid a n-diaigh taisi a maigistrech co hAraind iarthair Eorpa. Conad hi an tres relig angel Airne, reileig teglaig Pupu mic Faelchair mic Fadalaig* – 'Faelchu, who is called Pupu of Aran, son of Faelchar, son of Fadalach; and Faelchar was King of Ossory . . . And this is why he is called Pupu, that is Papa, because he took the abbacy of Rome in succession to Gregory of Rome. And he resigned his abbacy, and followed the relics of his master to Aran of the West of Europe (i.e. Ireland). So that one of the three angel cemeteries of Aran is the cemetery of the household (i.e. monastery) of Pupu, son of Faelchar, son of Fadalach' (Plummer 1910, I, lxiii n.3, from Laud 610: Plummer draws attention to ON *papi* in this context). There is also *popa* (*pobba, bobba*, from Latin *papa*), 'father, hence "master", "sir", always used with a proper name following and most frequently in the vocative as a respectful form of address to an elder or superior, but occasionally familiarly to an inferior' – it seems usually to be used in secular (heroic) contexts; *popa no pupa .i. maighistir* – '*popa* or *pupa*, i.e. master' (O'Clery's Glossary). (DIL, s.v. *pápa* (where it is thought that Nem and Faelchu are probably the same individual), *pupu, popa*).

This is assuredly meagre fare: we seem to be dealing in the main not simply with one place, but with one individual. It seems, too, that Nem-Faelchu is not so much an anchorite as member and later head of a cenobitic community: the monastery of St Enda of Aran (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 28). It may be noticed, however, that *pápa, pupu* is either a title or a secondary name; and that, since the commentators probably only knew *pápa* as 'pope' (of Rome), they felt obliged to rationalise its occurrence in the present context (as, indeed, Plummer suggested in relation to the notice of Faelchu). Taken with *popa*, the use of which is not exclusively secular, we *might* have a hint here of a more widespread colloquial use of *pápa, pupu, popa* as an honorific form of address and reference to ecclesiastics, perhaps primarily those of a monastic or anchoritic calling, but without denoting a particular clerical grade or grades (in other words, the terms could be used of those who were technically laymen) – which the Norse encountered eventually among the islands and coastlands of the North Sea and the North Atlantic. It may be worth noting in passing here that Chapter 3 of the late eighth-century *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, the 'Voyage of St Brendan', has Brendan visit Enda of Aran prior to his voyage, though Aran is not his port of departure (O'Meara 1978, 7-8; Selmer 1989, 10, 84 (notes); see also Sharpe 1991, 17-8, 390-1). The Martyrologies of Tallaght (originally late eighth century, but here in the seventeenth-century Brussels abstract

only), furthermore, and of Gorman (twelfth century) have a saint Pápán at July 31, in *Sentreibh* (Mart. Tall.) – Santry, Dublin (Best and Lawlor 1931, 59; Stokes 1895, 146-7). The *Historia Norwegiae*, on the other hand, in stating that all priests are called *papae* 'in the Teutonic tongue' (see above), may reflect a tradition that *papa* in this context had a Germanic ancestry. The matter clearly requires further investigation.

The Norse Literary Evidence: Discussion

The overall content of the tradition contained in the *Historia Norwegiae* and the Icelandic sources needs to be studied in more detail. Here I can only make some preliminary comments and offer some tentative suggestions. In the *Historia, Papae* and *Peti* are closely associated. The *Peti* of Orkney, however, have already been transformed almost completely into otherworld beings. Barbara Crawford has observed, furthermore, that 'the place-names in Shetland in which the element "petta" (= Picts) occurs suggest that the previous inhabitants very soon came to be regarded more or less as trolls who inhabited certain lonely places' (Crawford 1987, 211; for some examples of *petta*-names in Shetland and Orkney, see Wainwright 1962, 100). The possibility has to be borne in mind, therefore, that the *Papae* have, to some extent at least, been subjected to the same or similar processes; and, indeed, there are hints that they had. They are said to have worn white robes *ut clerici* (more neutrally translated 'as clerics'? 'like priests' is perhaps too specific). It is possible, of course, given the apparent lack of uniformity in custom and discipline among the insular Celtic churches, monastic and otherwise, that some federations of houses or individual communities wore white habits, while others used other colours. (St Benedict, for example, had accepted that clothes would vary locally according to climate and in colour and texture – *Rule*, Ch. 55: Holzherr *et al.* 1994, 253-6). Columba's monks were clothed in white (*albati*) on solemn feast-days (Life of Columba, iii 12 – Anderson 1991, 198-9); and the tunic in which Columba died, in Adomnán's day revered virtually as a relic, was white (*candida tunica*, ibid. ii 44 – Anderson 1991, 172-3). For Adomnán, otherwise, white is the colour of dress appropriate to angels and the blessed in heaven (ibid. iii 16, 23 – Anderson 1991, 204-5, 232-3; cf., e.g., John 20:12, Revelation 3:4, 7:9, 13-15 (Vulgate). For some general discussion of early Irish monastic dress, see Ryan 1931, 383-6). The *Papae* might, therefore, actually have worn white. On the other hand, the Norse also had a tradition of a 'Land of White Men', *Hvítramannaland*, or 'Greater Ireland', said by *Landnámabók* (Ch. 122) to lie six days' sail west of Ireland, 'near Vinland the Good'; but which *Eirik's Saga* (Ch. 12) identifies with a country across from that of the 'Skraelings of Markland' 'where the people went about in white clothing . . .' and which the *Hauksbók* text here calls also 'Greater Ireland'. It is quite likely that there is a connection between the Norse *Hvítramannaland* and the *Tír na bhFear bhFionn*, 'Land of the White Men', of Irish tradition. *Landnámabók* has the interesting detail that one Ari was detained and baptized in *Hvítramannaland* –

suggesting that the White Men were believed to be Christians, perhaps priests – citing as its source for Ari's fate there Hrafn Limerick-Farer, 'who spent a long time at Limerick in Ireland' (Magnusson and Pálsson 1965, 102-3; Pálsson and Edwards 1972, 61. For Hrafn in Limerick in the later tenth century and *Hvítramannaland* also, see Turville-Petre 1953, 48, 96-7). But such or similar Irish traditions (and no doubt British Celtic ones too), if that is what they are originally, could have reached the Norse from many directions and at different times. It may also be noted that the land of the Skraelings of *Eirik's Saga* (Ch. 12) contained no houses and 'people lived in caves or holes in the ground' – partly reminiscent of the *Historia's Peti*. The African origin and Jewish faith of the *Papae*, deduced from their habit and their abandoned books (respectively?), looks like learned speculation on a tradition eventually written as well as oral. Barbara Crawford has suggested (1987, 211) that these attributes were 'possibly deduced from the Middle Eastern and North African derivation of Irish monasticism'. This is certainly possible. If, however, it is the habit which is specifically African, another possibility suggests itself. Magnusson and Pálsson quote an Icelandic geographical treatise preserved in a MS. of c. 1300, 'but evidently based on a twelfth century original', in which it is said that some people think that Vinland extends from Africa; and explain that this is why a Uniped ('Single-foot') appears in Chapter 12 of *Eirik's Saga*, for these creatures were thought to live in Africa (1965, 15, 39, 101-2). So the (white) habit and African origin of the *Papae* together might lead one back to the neighbourhood of Vinland and thence to the legendary or semi-legendary realms where lies *Hvítramannaland*. If, then, their Jewish faith is a separate issue, I suggest that it might have its origins in some misunderstanding of details of the seventh-century controversies within the insular churches, especially as regards the dispute over the true reckoning of the date of Easter, in which accusations of adherence to the judaising Quartodeciman heresy were sometimes levelled at the 'Celtic' party (see, e.g., Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, ii 19, iii 25: Colgrave and Mynors 1991, 198-203, at 200-1 and n. 3, 294-309).

Papey

One other peculiarity of the *Historia*'s account needs to be noticed. 'An island (*quaedam insula*) is still called after them, *Papey*'. But which *Papey*, if one concretely is in question? Consideration of the broad historical background of interaction between Norse and *papar* would tend to support the *a priori* view that the *papar* place-names arose earlier rather than later – certainly before the *Historia* is likely to have been written and long before the date of its surviving (and probably Orcadian) MS. It seems reasonable, therefore, to assume that all or most of the existing place-names – and perhaps others that have not survived – formed already a noticeable element in the toponymy of Orkney, as also of Shetland and the northern Hebrides, before the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Between all these regions, there are now some eleven islands called *Papey*: three (possibly) in Orkney, three also in Shetland and five between Skye and the Long Island. So, unless we are

dealing with some otherworldly *Papey*, symbolising all actual *Papeys*, a quintessential 'Island of Papar' such as St Brendan might have frequented, we may wonder which particular *Papey* the author of the *Historia* or his source had in mind. If one in particular is in fact in question, there must, I think, be a strong suspicion that it is actually the *Papey* of *Landnámabók* – in Iceland. (Cf. Pálsson 1955, 116-7).[3]

It certainly looks as if the *Historia Norwegiae* and the Icelandic sources which mention the *papar* share at least elements of a common tradition – historical or literary or both – which the place-names (see below) possibly reflect also. *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* present brief statements for Iceland that appear more soberly factual than that of the *Historia* for Orkney. The kind of detail that surrounds the Orkney *Papae* is kept to a minimum. A significant difference between *Íslendingabók* and the *Historia* is that, according to the former, the *papar* left Iceland of their own volition, whether in orderly withdrawal or precipitate flight. The *Historia* feels the need, presumably, to account for the fact that neither *Peti* nor *Papae* were a recognisable element in the contemporary Orcadian population; and does so by having both overwhelmed and destroyed by the first Norse settlers. Ari's account, on the other hand, accords better with Dicuil's description of the Irish evacuation of the Faeroes (?), both perhaps implying that potential danger and insecurity – and probably increasing difficulties of access and supply consequent upon disrupted communication lines – rather than actual violence, was the more usual factor prompting anchoritic and other clerical retreat from these regions (Tierney 1967, 76-7 (VII. 15). Dicuil's *clerici* visited 'Thule', however, only from 1 February to 1 August (VII. 11): he nowhere mentions (VII. 7-13) permanent settlement there – ibid. 74-5). Even here, though, there seems to be a suggestion of learned elaboration. The *papar* abandoning Iceland are said to have left behind them Irish books and bells and croziers, from which Ari and his contemporaries and predecessors could deduce that they were Irishmen (see Sveinbjarnardóttir, Chapter 7 below). If the *papar* did not leave in headlong flight, they seem to have been culpably careless with ecclesiastical property and apparently on a considerable scale. The Icelandic accounts are quite explicit that these objects were recognisably Irish; and it is surely not coincidence in this regard that they choose to name what were among the commonest and most important symbols of ecclesiastical authority, enshrined or not, in the early Irish church.[4] We may, therefore, have, in these details, evidence of a learned (and so partly literary?) knowledge of the Irish church of (probably) the later tenth, eleventh and early twelfth centuries (however precisely that knowledge reached Iceland), rather than an essentially uninformed and purely oral tradition stemming from the ninth or early tenth centuries. Some elements may indeed be more broadly traditional in the sense that I have outlined when discussing the *Historia*, but elaborated eventually in a learned milieu. All accounts name books, for instance, which may thus have been part of a wider common tradition, even if the *Historia* deduced from them that the *Papae* were Jewish.

The Toponymic Evidence

The place-names in the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland and in Caithness, the regions which have most of the known *papar* names, show a limited range of forms. Papa, Pab(b)ay – **Papa-ey*, 'island of papar'; Papdale, Papadil – **Papa-dalr*, 'valley of papar'; Papa Geo and Papigoe (probably) – **Papa-gjá*, - *gjó*, 'ravine of papar'; Pabanish – **Papa-nes*, 'promontory of papar' (cf. Wainwright 1962, 100, 123-4). Papi(e)l, Paple(a)y, Paible (Bayble) seems more problematical. It is taken to be the same as the Icelandic *Papýli*, which has been derived from an original **Papa-býli, or* **Papa-bœli*, '? settlement of papar' (e.g., Marwick 1923, 262-3; Jakobsen 1936, 172-3; Wainwright 1962, 100). *Býli* seems more likely as an original second element than the by-form *bœli*. Hermann Pálsson has, however, objected, with Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, that **Papabýli* is unlikely to give *Papýli*; and that *Papýli* is in fact the original form (1955, 118). Benediktsson's *Papbýli* (1968, 32 n. 2) may have been intended to try to resolve this problem (*-pb-* > *-pp-* > *-p-*). I am told, however, that such assimilation does not occur regularly where both elements are still etymologically recognised; but that such recognition would be necessary for *-pp-* to become *-p-*. There is the further complication that a form such as **Papbýli*, without the medial vowel (*-a-*) would itself present difficulties.[5] Whatever the connotation(s) generally of this place-name, however, it seems that it could be a district name embracing other named places: the *Hauksbók* version of *Landnámabók* mentions Breidabólstadur and Hof in *Papýli* in Iceland (Pálsson 1955, 115).

These *papar*-names, besides displaying a fairly limited range of forms, offer little or no specific information beyond the apparent fact of ownership or occupation of a locality by *papar* – or their reputed presence there – in the past or in the present (relative to the coining of a given name) or both. Four out of the nine names in Shetland, moreover, four out of seven (possibly) in Orkney, one out of the two in Caithness and seven out of the ten in the Western Isles actually denote natural rather than man-made features. The word *papi, papar* seems to tell us nothing about the type(s) of individual or community so designated; even *papýli* seems to say nothing specific about the kind(s) of settlement involved; and there is no indication of the presence of churches in the place-names themselves. These names are, in sum, tantalisingly vague (so far as one can tell) as to details. Yet church sites exist or are recorded at or near most *papar*-names, some of which have produced evidence (usually in the form of sculptured or incised stones: see Ian Fisher in this volume) of probably pre-Norse ecclesiastical occupation or activity. Of the nine Shetland names, six are or could be associated with church sites; in Orkney, possibly six out of seven; in Caithness, one certainly, possibly both; in the Western Isles, possibly eight out of the ten. [See Appendix for fuller details - ed]. Where there is now no site known, moreover, a church or churches may nevertheless have existed in the past. As a broad generalisation, therefore, it may be said that *papar*-names seem

usually to be associated with real church sites – whatever precisely the association means in historical terms.

One other point needs to be emphasised here. These place-names are linguistically Old Norse and so coined by speakers of Old Norse. This point, self-evident though it is, has sometimes been overlooked in the past by those, including myself, who have written about the *papar* (e.g., MacDonald 1977, 109). The names reflect directly the interests and, possibly, activities of Norsemen; and only indirectly the activities of insular Celtic ecclesiastics. To put it more concretely, the distribution of *papar*-names reflects Norse settlement or at least movement primarily, that of Irish anchorites and others secondarily. Any conclusions, therefore, about their overall distribution that tend to ignore or obscure their Norse origin are likely to be misleading.

Summary and Provisional Conclusions

Any general conclusions, indeed, about the *papar* and their place-names can be just now provisional at best, at worst premature. I would argue, nevertheless, that the *papar* phenomenon as a whole presents several aspects. The first is the actual historical experience of encounters between Norsemen and insular ecclesiastics in the North Atlantic (especially), during the early phases of Norse expansion, of which Dicuil is probably the first witness. The second aspect is the memory of that experience and creative reflection upon it. In other words, a tradition develops, originally oral, eventually written, which possibly both influences and is influenced by similar traditions, native and foreign: those fashioned by the Norse themselves out of the stuff of their explorations of the North Atlantic and its coasts and islands; and those received by them from others during their interaction, more or less prolonged, with its various peoples and cultures. The third aspect, then, is the place-names themselves. The more obvious attributes of the main groups of names – the restricted range of forms common to all areas, the unspecific nature of the names as place-names, and also their numbers and distribution – make me think that they belong, not so much to the earliest phase of direct contact, as to the tradition that later more or less encapsulates that historical core: that is to say, they were coined and applied retrospectively.[6] Whatever the precise circumstances of their origin, however, the place-names, once established, seem subsequently to have contributed to a fourth aspect of the *papar* phenomenon: an essentially learned rationalisation of the tradition, especially in Iceland.

Pursuing this line of argument further, the concrete historical experience and a consequent enveloping tradition together would almost certainly ensure that *papar*-names would be given, at any rate at the outset, to actual church sites – but church sites that had then been abandoned some time in the more remote or more recent past. The possibility of the development, however, of a body of place-names mediately from tradition rather than immediately from contemporary circumstances (where, that is to say, imagination needed to concede little or nothing to external reality), suggests that their progressive application to given sites could have been

largely capricious: by no means all church sites in these regions that have produced evidence of early medieval occupation have a *papar*-name (though not all such pre-Norse churches need have been abandoned in the face of the Viking threat). And if the traditional *papar* came to be seen as to an extent otherworldly beings, it becomes possible that their (former) presence might eventually be invoked in what came to be regarded as a suitable locality for them, regardless of whether or not there had formerly been a church there: hence a *papar*-name might conceivably arise – at least in theory – in a purely secular context. However this may be, as *papar*-names came to be established over time as those of estates and farms, invested as they may well have been with an aura of numinous prestige, more mundane reasons for promoting them might have appeared increasingly important to their owners, especially such as were individually Christian. Of Ketil the Foolish, for example, who went from the Hebrides to Iceland and was a Christian, *Landnámabók* says (Ch. 320): 'Ketil made his home at Kirkby, where the Papar had been living before and where no heathen was allowed to stay'. Sure enough (Ch. 323): 'Hildir wanted to move house to Kirkby after Ketil died, not seeing why a heathen shouldn't farm there, but as he was coming up to the fence of the home meadow, he dropped down dead' (Pálsson and Edwards, 1972, 123-4). These events happened in Iceland: they could probably just as easily have taken place at one time or another in early Norse Orkney, Shetland, or the Outer Hebrides.

The soil in which the *papar* traditions and associated place-names best flourished, I conclude provisionally, was fertilized by early and intensive Norse settlement and so by a significant number of deserted church sites. The place-names, I would argue, were probably not attributed to surviving churches during the early phases of raiding and land-taking, but, after an interval, to sites abandoned during that period or somewhat later. And a certain lapse of time and relatively more settled conditions (from the Norse point of view) would surely have been necessary for the cultivation of the retrospective tradition from which I believe the place-names emerged. It seems unlikely to me, from this perspective, that the *papar*-names arose, mainly or indeed at all, after the general conversion of the Norse in Scotland to Christianity was well under way. At least, I know of nothing to indicate that the *papar* or their place-names might have been integral to Norse Christianity at any stage; or even relevant to it – except insofar as church sites associated with *papar*-names may have been (re)occupied at this time or later. (For discussion of the Norse conversion to Christianity and problems, especially archaeological, associated therewith, see Crawford 1987, 159-90). The likeliest period, I suggest, for the elaboration of the tradition and the creation of all or most of these names is, broadly, the second half of the ninth century and the tenth, but with the overall chronological limits probably varying locally. If most of the churches associated with the *papar* were given up or destroyed at the onset of the Norse invasions and settlement, any that failed, for whatever reason, during the next century or so, could theoretically, in this scheme of things, still have been consigned to them by the Norse.

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Abbreviations

DIL: *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 1913-76.

ONB(s): Original Name Books (Ordnance Survey).

OPS: *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, C. Innes and G.B. Brichan (eds.), 3 vols. Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1850-5.

Notes:

1. MacDonald, 1977. Adomnán's accounts of voyages in search of the 'desert in the ocean' are in his life of St Columba, especially i 6, 20 and ii 42: see Anderson 1991; Sharpe 1995. The Irish scholar Dicuil wrote his geographical treatise, *De Mensura Orbis Terrae*, on the continent c. 825: his *Thile, Tyle*, 'Thule' (VII. 7-13) is generally taken to be Iceland; while his small islands to the north of Britain (VII. 14-15), then recently abandoned by Irish *heremitae* or *anchoritae* to numerous sheep and sea-birds in the face of Viking activity, are usually identified with the Faeroes. Dicuil had personal knowledge of some of the islands to the north-west and north of Britain (VII.6), probably in the Hebrides and Orkneys. See Tierney 1967, 17, 72-7, 114-6.

2. Some account of the Irish *immrama* or 'voyage tales' can be found conveniently in Dillon 1994, 124-31.

3. Could the *Historia's Papey*, in turn, be the origin of Fordun-Bower's unidentified *Papay tercia*, 'third Papay', which appears last in a list of the Orkney islands, *Scotichronicon*, bk.II, ch.11? It is, in any case, not North Ronaldsay, Papa Westray, or Papa Stronsay, which appear at the beginning of the list: *Insula Renaldisay, Papeay major, Papeay minor*. See MacQueen 1993, 192-5, 351-2 (notes).

4. Bells and croziers especially: Ó Floinn 1994, 33-7. Books might have had a particular significance in this regard among St Columba's churches: cf. Adomnán's Life of the saint, ii 8, 9, 44, 45 ('first occasion') (Anderson 1991, 104-5, 106-7, 172-3, 174-5); AU 1007.11 (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983, 438-9); Herbert 1988, 190-1, 231, 256-7.

5. In a letter to me of 22 March 2001, Paul Bibire (to whom I am indebted for help and advice with this and other linguistic obstacles that I have encountered in writing this paper) has suggested the following possible solution. The first two syllables of **Papabýli* are very similar; and there are rare but certain examples of simplification of such words: for example, Modern Icelandic *kóngur* beside the etymologically correct *konungr*, 'king' (compare late Old English *cyng* from earlier *cyning*, 'king'). So **Papabýli* might conceivably have been simplified to *Papýli* similarly, by a kind of

haplology (the process whereby, for instance, 'idololatry' becomes 'idolatry'). The form may have lost its original meaning by this stage, or may have been losing it: *býli* in fact now no longer occurs independently, but only as second element in compounds; while its by-form *bœli* now means 'animal's den'.

6. If, on the contrary, the place-names do in fact enshrine a contemporary relationship of some sort between incoming Norse and sitting *papar*, then it seems to me that one must postulate the survival, often on good land (cf. Crawford 1987, 166; Lowe 1998, 1,7) of enough Christian communities to engender a noticeable body of place-names, through a probably appreciable period of apparently intensive and presumably often disruptive settlement by pagans, from the genuinely needy to the merely greedy, who were elsewhere quite prepared to try to take what they wanted by force and usually displayed few or no inhibitions about attacking churches. This alternative basic position, though it was admittedly the one I adopted at the conference, now seems to me to create potentially far more problems than it is likely to solve – especially when it is remembered that, where desirable land was in question, we know of no early churches by name in these marginal regions that might have been able to withstand the kind of sustained assaults on them that may very well have occurred.

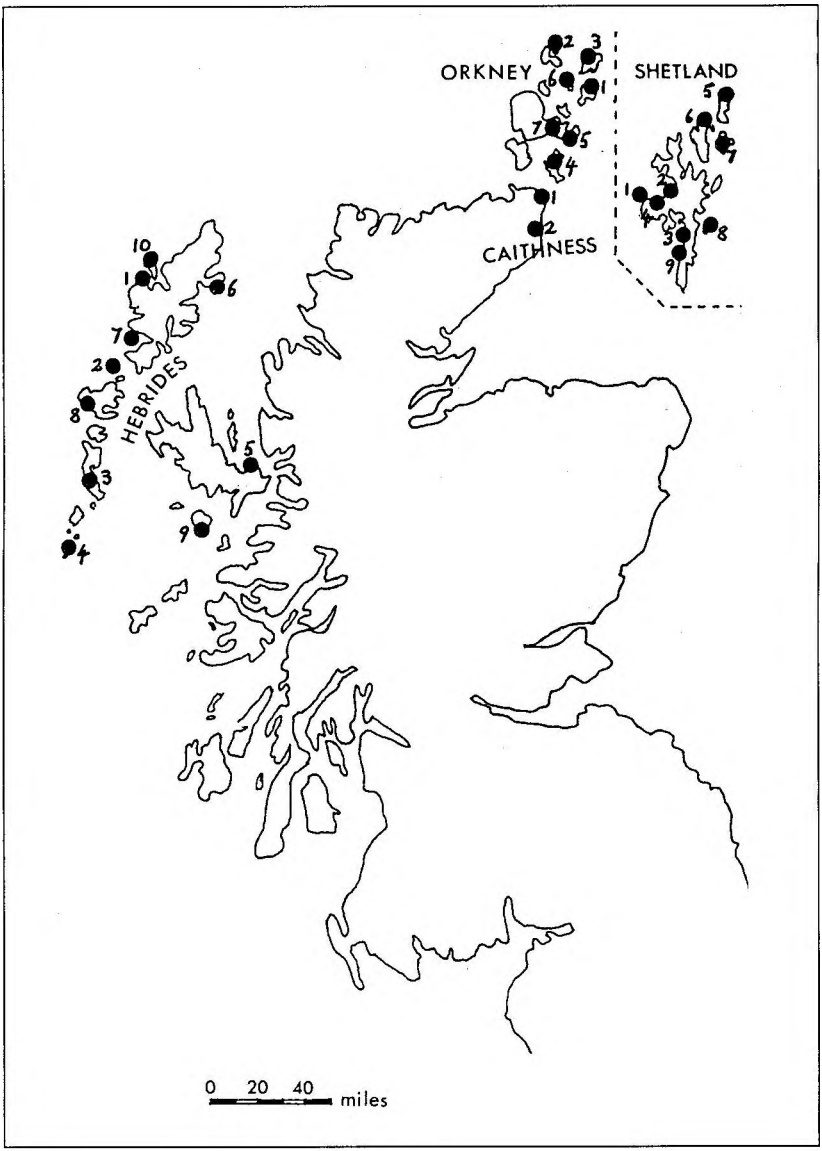


Fig 1.1
Map of *papar* names in north and west Scotland, numbered according to the list in Appendix to Chapter 1 (Aidan MacDonald)

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER I

This appendix is not intended to present a complete list of all surviving insular *papar*-names (if that is possible), since it is not based on systematic, let alone exhaustive, search and collection. It represents those names known to me at the time of writing. The ONBs were searched systematically (some years ago) for Shetland, Orkney and Caithness; most of the names in the Hebrides were gathered initially at much the same time from the card-index of the Place-Names Survey, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, which contains all names appearing on the old OS lin. maps (Popular Edition). The remaining names came to my attention at different times and under various circumstances.

Shetland:

1. *Papa Stour* (Sandness). Centred at HU 169607. Chapel (site of), Sneeans, HU 177597; Kirk Sand, HU 179598. Cf. Cant 1975, 18, 49.
2. *Papa Little* (Aithsting). Centred at HU 337609. No recorded site.
3. *Papa* (Burra). Centred at HU 364376. No recorded site.
4. *Papa Geo* (Aithsting). Centred at HU 276593. A coastal creek (ONB, Parish of Aithsting, 1878, 2, p.24). No recorded site: refer to Papa Stour, Little? But Jakobsen (1936, 171) records 'Prestalí' (i.e. *presta-hlíd*, 'priests' slope', 'hillside'?) near 'Pāpegjo' in 'de Níen'.
5. *Papil* (Unst). Papil, HP 645128: a croft house (ONB, Parish of Unst, 1878, 23, p.27); also Papal, HP 639124. Chapel (remains of), HP 635126.
6. *Papil* (North Yell). Papil, HP 543041: a house (ONB, Parish of North Yell, 1878, 19, p.51). Chapel (site of), HP 542040.
7. *Papil* (Fetlar). Papil Water, HU 6090: a large freshwater loch (ONB, Parish of Fetlar, 1878, 12, p.34), also called Loch of Velzie (ONB), or 'Loch o'Tresta' (Jakobsen 1936, 172-3). Chapel (site of) HU 604901.
8. *Papil* (Bressay – Isle of Noss). Papil Geo, HU 536412: a small creek (ONB, Parish of Bressay, 1878, 14, p.35). Chapel (rems. of), HU 530409.
9. *Papil* (Burra). Papil, West Burra, HU 370314: several dwelling houses (ONB, Parish of Burra, 1878, 7, p.49). Ch[urch] on site of Monastery, HU 368314.

Orkney:

1. *Papa Stronsay* (Stronsay). Centred at HY 664295. St Nicholas's Chapel (remains of), HY 669291; St Bride's Chapel (site of), HY 666291. ONB (Stronsay Parish, 1877-8, 24, p.23) mentions a third chapel site, which 'cannot now be pointed out'.

2. *Papa Westray* (Westray). St Boniface's Church (remains of), HY 488527; St Tredwall's Chapel (remains of), HY 496508; Kirk of Howe, HY 493530; Chapel (site), Via, HY 4953; Church, Binnas Kirk, HY 487528.

3. '*Steeven o'Papy*' (? North Ronaldsay – Cross and Burness). 'The same name [*Papa*] is probably to be found in the Steeven o'Papy, a rock off the shore of N. Ronaldsay. The first two [Papa Stronsay and Papa Westray] are still called Papey (pāpi) locally, but for the sake of reference people outside of Stronsay and Westray generally speak of them by the map names, and then the word is pronounced Papa (pāpa)' (Marwick 1923, 262-3).

   Examination of several maps and sea charts of different periods, including the 1st. ed. 0S 6 in. sheets and official charts, has failed to locate this feature: it appears on no map or chart consulted.

   If 'Papy' refers to N. Ronaldsay, it seems a reasonable inference that it was a former or alternative name at one time of the island. Clouston (1918, 104, 239) gives for N. Ronaldsay the parish church of St Ola and two chapels, one dedicated to St Bride. There is also evidence for early medieval ecclesiastical occupation in or around the Broch of Burrian (see, e.g., Wainwright 1962, 93, 96, 113, 114-5; Radford 1962, 170, 174).

4. *Papley* (South Ronaldsay). Papley, ND 470915: a small district comprising several small farms (ONB of S. Ronaldsay Parish, 1877-8, 20, p.177). St Peter's Church, ND 470908. The name Papley has been removed from the OS 1:10,000 sheet.

5. *Paplay* (Holm). Ward of Paplay, HY 525012: a mound on the summit of a hill (ONB of Holm Parish, 1877-8, 9, p.86). St Nicholas's Church (disused), Cem[eter]y, HY 510006.

6. *Papley* (Eday). Papleyhouse, HY 555384: a small farmhouse in the district of Cousbay (ONB of Eday Parish, 1877-8, 4, p.30). No recorded site.

7. *Papdale* (Kirkwall and St. Ola). Papdale, HY 456109: a mansion house and farmhouse (ONB of Kirkwall and St Ola Parish, 1877-8, 12, p.64); Papdale Burn, HY 452109. St Olaf's Wynd, HY 450111: St Ola's Church (remains) at 24 Bridge Street. St Magnus Cathedral, HY 449108.

Caithness:

1. *Papel* (Canisbay). Papel, ND 342730: a small rock, visible at low water, off the Kirkstyle (ONB, Parish of Canisbay, 1871-3, 2, p.65). Canisbay Church, ND 343728, at Kirkstyle.

2. *Papigoe* (Wick). Papi Geo, ND 386516: a narrow channel of considerable length, in the district of Papigoe (ONB, Parish of Wick, 1871-3, 13, p.180 – Papi Goe); Papigoe, ND 383516: a small district with a number of dwellings (ONB, p.181).

The Pap, Broch (remains of), ND 376514, is probably not related. St Ninian's Chapel, ? North Head, ND 383508.

Hebrides:

1. *Pabay* (Uig, Lewis). Pabay Mór, centred at NB 103381. St Peter's Church (rems. of), NB 104377, beside Loch an Teampuill and at NW foot of Cnoc na Cille. Sgeir na Cille, NB 105377. Pabay Beag, centred at NB 099388: no recorded site.

2. *Pabbay* (Harris). Centred at NF 890878. Teampull Mhóire (remains of), NF 889869; Teampull Beag (remains of), NF 889870 – apparently dedicated to St Moluag (OPS, 2.1, 377); Bailenacille, NF 887867.

3. *Pabbay* (S. Uist). Centred at NF 777196. Two adjacent small islands, both named Pabbay on 1st ed. OS 6 in. sheet 57 (Inverness, Hebrides). Nothing on either island; apparently nothing in vicinity.

4. *Pabbay* (Barra). Centred at NL 604877. Chapel (site of), Symbol Stone and Cross-slabs, NL 607875.

5. *Pabay* (Strath, Skye). Centred at NG 674270. Teampull (remains of), NG 673265.

6. *Bayble* (Stornoway, Lewis). Upper Bayble (Pabail Uarach), NB 528321; Lower Bayble (Pabail Iarach), NB 515307. No site recorded within Bayble itself, but note Teampull (remains of), NB 507292, with Ath, Rubha an Teampuill on foreshore, near Chicken Head, to SW of Lower Bayble.

7. *Paible* (Taransay). Paible, NG 031992. St Taran's Chapel (rems. of), St Keith's Chapel (rems. of), NG 030991.

8. *Paible* (N. Uist). Paible, NF 738679; Paiblesgarry, NF 727683. ? Note Chapel (poss.), Loch na Cille, near Balranald House: L. na Cille, NF 717698.

9. *Papadil* (Small Isles, Rhum). Papadil Lodge, NM 365922; Loch Papadil, NM 364921; Papadil Burn enters Loch Papadil from E. Inbhir Ghil, NM 358925, is at mouth of Allt na Gile, to NW of Papadil: Cameron Gillies, *Place-Names of Argyll*, 98, mentions 'Inbher cille' in connection with Papadil; but more likely ON *gil* 'ravine'? No recorded site.

10. *Pabanish* (Uig, Lewis). Buaile P(h)aban(a)ish, NB 150406: a small rocky hill enclosed by a fence (ONB, 1848-52); Gob Buaile P(h)aban(a)ish (the point of the ness), NB 151405. Chapel (remains of) and graveyard (disused), NB 150407: 'Teampull Bhearnaraidh Bheag' – possibly both Martin's church sites are visible, St Donnan's and St Michael's, one within, one outwith the graveyard (OS records). Also Traigh, Beinn an Teampuill (ONB) – the latter at NB 149407. On Little Bernera.

Miscellaneous:

1. *Papy Ha'* (Minigaff, Kirkcudbright). 'Perhaps the Norse papa . . .' (Maxwell 1930, 221).
2. *Glenfaba* (Isle of Man). The second element 'obviously *Papa*' (Pálsson 1955, 117). Kneen (1925-8 (1979), 319-20) was inclined to take *-faba* and the neighbouring river-name Neb together as a 'non-Aryan' pre-Celtic river-name of unknown meaning.
3. *Papcastle* (Cumberland). 'The first element can hardly be other than ON *papi* 'hermit'' – Papcastle is the Roman fort of *Derventio* (from the R. Derwent, on which it stands): Armstrong *et al.* 1950, 308-9.