Note on 'Pennyland and Davoch in South-Western Scotland'

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This preliminary study is especially interesting because it opens up an important area not hitherto considered in this context. Lying as it does between key regions of Gaelic speech that were strongly affected by Scandinavian settlement—Argyll and the Isles on the one hand, and Man on the other—Galloway (with adjoining territories of the South-West) now provides good evidence for the pennyland-davoch pattern in an area once Gaelic-speaking that was free from Norse control.

After Captain Thomas's pioneer study of almost a century ago, everyone accepted that the Hebridean and West Highland ounceland (*tirunga*/davoch) of 20 pennylands was attributable to the Scandinavians, familiar as they were through trading with the English monetary system. Now Dr Bannerman's careful study of the *Senchus fer nAlban* appears to overturn this apparently logical view, or at least to render it untenable in simple form. We now have to reckon with a regular naval levy for Dalriada that provided for the supply of oarsmen from 'every [group of] 20 houses'—and that as far back as the seventh century. In these pre-Norse house-groups Bannerman sees the origin of the medieval *tirunga* (equated with the davoch) which, with its 20 pennylands, was responsible for furnishing the war-galleys of the West Highland chiefs (Bannerman 1974:49; 140 ff.).

[Further confirmation of the carefully-argued equation appears in a land-grant of *c.* 1295 which stipulates that each of two named pennylands will provide one man to the 'congregations' [or hosting] of Argyll, as is customary there (Lamont 1914:7–8). This neatly supplements an order by the MacRuari lord of Garmoran 'and his friends', mentioned in a letter of 1304 (Bain 1881–8:II. no. 1633), to the effect that 'each *dawach* of land shall furnish a galley of 20 oars'. Hitherto this has been assumed to refer to the inland lordship of Aboyne in Aberdeenshire (also mentioned in the passage, but evidently in connection with a Comyn ally): it more probably relates to the Garmoran lordship, which included the Uists, Barra, the small isles, and the western coast of mainland Inverness-shire].

Neither Captain Thomas nor his recent followers (*e.g.* Hugh Marwick, and Andrew McKerral) have argued that the ounceland and pennyland holdings—the actual land units—had been contrived by the Scandinavian incomers, but that they had imposed a money tax on the native settlements they encountered. Following Dr Bannerman, but independently, I have argued the case for a substantial measure of continuity with pre-Norse society in Man and the Isles (*Scottish Studies* 1976). If in fact the ounceland and pennyland were due solely to English-influenced Scandinavian settlers

of the Viking period, it is strange that there was at that time no Anglo-Saxon ounce other than the *ora* of 16 silver pennies (Harvey 1967:228). There was, however, an Irish *unga mór* of 20 silver pennies, though how early is not clear. *Cormac's Glossary* certainly implies that ounces and pennyweights were already familiar in coinless, ninth-century Ireland—as they remained until the Elizabethan conquest. Indeed Binchy (1963:22) and Bruce Dickins (1932:20) have both been prepared to accept the suggestion that the Irish word *pinginn, penginn,* for the Anglo-Saxon penny derives with metathesis from the seventh-century Old Eng. *pending*, named from the Mercian king Penda. The medieval Welsh Laws also indicate that 'a score pence' of silver was a common unit of account, and this may have some bearing on the ounceland of twenty pennylands. So far as it goes, the effect of all this is to suggest that the Scandinavians may not have introduced the system to the Isles but found it there. The alternative would be that the system represented by 20 pennylands = 1 ounceland was post-eleventh-century; but Bannerman's conclusions strongly favour the former view.

Whatever may be said of the Pictish associations of the davoch unit, as represented in the distribution of much of the surviving place-name evidence, the word itself must first have reached the east with the Scots, and I would incline to see the south-western davochs in the same light; presumably pennylands came with them. Whether from Argyll, the Isles, or conceivably from Ulster—and when—are for me most interesting questions.

Lacking detailed knowledge of the Galloway material, my hunch would be that there they may represent a movement from the West Highlands or Isles during the Viking period. Yet my impression is that Norse settlement-names from that region, such as might be associated with the introduction of pennyland and davoch at that time, are scarce in Galloway—certainly by comparison with Man. I take it that the names in 'Kirk-' and '-bie', like those in '-fell', are mainly either post-Viking loan-words, or part-substitutions (*i.e.* eleventh-century or after); or outliers from the northern Danelaw, comparable with others found south of Forth and Clyde. Perhaps the most substantial hint of a western, Viking Age strain in Gaelic Galloway is the name of the province itself—actually that of its ruling dynasty. But now there seems a possibility that davoch and pennyland were there before that dynasty.

To avoid possible misunderstandings it may be added that, of the terms discussed, only *kerroo*/quarter[-land] occurs in Manx place-names. In fact, the quarterland remains the customary farm-unit: some archaeological evidence suggests this may already have been the case in the Viking period. Formerly *treen* was employed in the sense of 'townland'—though not found in place-names, where Manx *balla-* (Gael. *baile*) occurs as a prefix in both *treen* and quarterland names. Neither davoch (as land unit) nor pennyland are found in Man. (Where *ping*, 'penny' does occur in Manx place-names this indicates a late enclosure from the common lands, *i.e.* moor or

marsh, often rented at a penny or so by Governor's licence, mainly in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries). Responsibilities such as were associated with the Scots pennyland seem to have devolved upon the Manx quarterland.

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