

THE HEBRIDES

The completion of the historical and archaeological survey of those places in the Hebrides named after the *papar*¹ follows on from the previous sections on Orkney, Shetland and Caithness (completed in 2005). It has been compiled by Dr. Janet Hooper, based on a preliminary survey by Lorna Johnston.² The Evaluations at the end of each entry are by Barbara E. Crawford (BEC).

INTRODUCTION

Barbara E. Crawford and Ian Simpson

The *papar* names in the Western Isles are restricted to the north Hebrides.³ The reasons for this distinction between north and south Hebrides have already been speculated on above (**3.2. Situation in the Hebrides**; also in Crawford, 2005, 94). Is it a reflection of the different toponymic (place-name) pattern in the two areas? Or has it something to do with the pre-Norse political /ecclesiastical situation? Maybe the absence of *papar* places in the south Hebrides is a reflection of the nature of Scandinavian presence there which was different from Viking activity in the north Hebrides. It certainly does not reflect an absence of Christian monastic communities! The reasons are not obvious and the following discussion is a preliminary exploration of different aspects associated with the location of the *papar* places.

Geographical Distribution

Starting with the all-important matter of geography, we can note that there are somewhat fewer *papar* places overall in the Hebrides (10) than have survived in the Northern Isles (7 in Orkney, 9 in Shetland plus 2 uncertain examples in Caithness). The majority are in

the Outer Hebrides, with only two in the Inner Hebrides: Pabay near Skye (H5) and Papadil on Rum (H9). Those in the Outer Hebrides are primarily located on the Atlantic west side: Pabay on the west coast of Lewis (H1), with the nearby Pabanish on Little Bernera (H10), Paible on Taransay (H7), Pabbay in the Sound of Harris (H2), Paible in

¹ For a discussion of this term and what it is understood to mean see above **Section 2.3 ‘Linguistic Evidence’**

² The place-names of H2, H3, H4, H5 collected by Kristian Ahronson and of H1, H6, H7, H8 collected by Anke Beata Stahl will be added to the web-site at a future date.

³ Kilphubile in Mull (*Kilphobull* in 1588, RMS, v, no.1491) is identified by Gammeltoft (2001, 301) as a possible *papa-býli* name but Maclean 1997, 29 derives the second element from Gaelic *púbull* (m) ‘tent, booth’. There is also a Gaelic word *pobull* (m) ‘people, tribe, nation’ (information kindly provided by Simon Taylor)

North Uist (H8) and Pabbay in the Barra Isles (H4). On the eastern side Bayble on the Eye peninsula (H6) faces on to the Minch, and Pabbay in South Uist (H3) lies in the inner part of Loch Boisdale, which opens out into the Minch.⁴ They are thus distributed fairly evenly throughout the Outer Hebrides, and altogether there are 5 island names (Pabbay and Pabay; *papa-ey* = 'island of priests'), (H1-H5), 3 habitative Paible/Bayble names (*papa-býli* = 'settlement/abode of priests') (H6-H8), and 2 topographical names, Papadil (*papa-dalr* = 'valley of priests') and Pabanish (*papa-nes* = 'headland of priests') (H9-H10). These terms all correspond to the *papar* names in the Northern Isles, except for Pabanish, for which there is no Orkney or Shetland 'Papness' counterpart. The name Paible on Taransay is anomalous, in that this is an island which could have been called Pabbay, although as is noted below, the preference for a *papa-býli* name might have been to avoid confusion with the nearby Pabbay in the Sound of Harris.

The consideration of 'remoteness' is frequently linked to the *papar* locations (see quotation from MacKenzie, 1903 (H1), that Pabbay islands were 'chosen by Christian anchorites as fit places for meditation and prayer'). However, as is noted in the editorial comments at the end of some of the entries below, this consideration may be somewhat misplaced. Most of these islands, and the Paible places, were actually very accessible from the seaways, a consideration mentioned briefly in a discussion of the residences of the MacLeods of Harris and Lewis on Pabbay, Harris and Pabay, Uig (H1 and H2) by R.W. Monro who noted that these islands are 'to modern eyes and maps on the extreme outer limits of their territories' (Monro, 1981, 18). Were they 'second homes' for these chiefs, places to 'get away from it all'; or were they suitable centres 'for ruling or administering a scattered domain' when 'the sea was man's highway' (*ibid.* 19)? Similarly we should ask if these places were chosen by communities of priests because of their 'remoteness'? They may have been chosen for other reasons, and accessibility from the seaways is one, while the quality of the land is probably another factor.

Land Assessment

This factor has already been made evident from the first phase of this study, the Northern Isles, where the fertility of Orkney (in particular) is, of course, renowned, and Papa Stronsay (O1) and Papa Westray (O2) are outstanding arable-growing islands (Soil Survey rating 4/2). It is therefore striking that a definite fertility is also notable in many of the north

⁴ The numbering of the *papar* locations, as in the Northern Isles, follows Aidan MacDonald's list in his Appendix to Chapter 1 of the Conference publication *The papar in the North Atlantic*, edited Barbara E. Crawford, 2002 (pp.25-29)

Hebridean *papar* places, in an archipelago where fertile arable land is in much shorter supply. A significant common feature for most of the Hebridean sites is the evidence that the island (or Paible location) is, or has been, rated more highly for its productivity relative to the surrounding landscape. This may not always be reflected in the present day Land Capability for Agriculture class because of deterioration of the fertility due to erosion or sand-blown (Figure Intro.1; Table 1; Soil Survey of Scotland, 1982). Pabay / Pabaigh (H1) on the Atlantic coast of Lewis, for example, today has an area at the south end rated only 6/1, but in the 16th century it was said to be ‘ane fruitfull and fertile mayne ile, full of corne and scheipe’ (Monro, quoted below under H1). Pabbay, Harris (see H2 entry below) only has the area around Baile na Cille now classed as 5/2 (the remainder being class 6) but was renowned for its fertility in past times, in part at least due to the heavily amended cultural soils which are now found buried beneath wind-blown sand. Even Pabbay south of Barra (H4), in an extremely exposed location, has some fertility indicated by palatable herbage (6/1), where the ecclesiastical site was situated. Moving to the one *papar* island which is not in the Outer Hebrides, Pabay off south-east Skye, (H5) we also find that it was productive, and mostly classed 5/1 today, although the location of the ecclesiastical site is on poorer quality 6/3 land. The one exception to this pattern is Pabay in South Uist (H3), with little evidence of any agricultural value, and classed 6/3, although as pointed out below, it was very centrally located and with easy access to the fertile machair lands around Cille Pheadair.

At the *papa-býli* locations, we have further evidence of relatively high agricultural value. Bayble in north Lewis (H6), situated on the Eye peninsula, has a remarkably high rating of 4/1 today, which is in strong contrast to the barren nature of most of Lewis. Paible in Taransay (H7), which is rated only 6/1, has however seen much movement of wind-blown sand and it is not possible to assess former circumstances. Monro again stressed its fertility in the 16th century, while Martin Martin (1703) said it was ‘very fruitful in Corn and Grass’. Paible in North Uist (H8) lies on the fertile western machair and the present-day settlement is classed as 4/2, with other areas around Loch Paible classed as 5/1 and 5/2. Land capability classes of 4/1 and 4/2 are the highest assessments in the Outer Hebrides.

The last two – topographical - *papar* names may indicate rather different circumstances relating to the *papar*. Papadil in Rum (H9) is in a secluded situation and the name might not suggest that there was a *papar* settlement there of any permanence or significance

(only indicating that the valley was associated with them in some way).⁵ It is classed as 6/1, although, along with a few other locations on Rum, was clearly capable of being farmed, while most of the island is rated 6/2, 6/3 and 7. Pabanish on Little Bernera (H10) is also classed as 6/1, but again the name may not indicate a definite *papar* settlement of the size or significance of the Paible and Pabbay places.

The quality of the land in most of the *papar* locations in the Hebrides certainly points to the choice of these islands and Paible places for purposes other than eremitical retreat and reflection. However, some of the sites do have adjoining islands or islets which could have served as hermitages for a resident community on the larger island – such as Pabay Beag close to Pabay Mòr (H1) for instance. Paible on Taransay (H7) has a western headland, Aird Mhanais, with plenty of exposed coastline for the contemplative. The Monach islands lying opposite Paible in North Uist (H8) would have been a most suitable off-shore refuge for members of a monastic community in that location. The community founded by Becan of Rum would certainly have had a hermitage somewhere on Rum, but there were plenty of options, and whether it could have been at Papadil or not is only a guess.

Nature of ecclesiastical establishments

This brings us to one of the central questions of the *papar* project (**The Papar project I. Purposes of the project** discussed above). What was the nature of the ecclesiastical establishments which these names imply? Do the Hebridean *papar* sites in any way help us to get a clearer impression of the religious component? If they were not isolated eremitical retreats what were they? It has to be said that the early religious significance of these places is not greatly in evidence. The stamp of the medieval church certainly is in evidence, as is only to be expected of island and settlement places where the land fertility would have supported sizeable communities. A general impression, however, is that the church's stamp is no more marked in these places than in many other settlement locations in the islands. Furthermore, regarding evidence from the survival of early sculpture (which is the best indicator of church structures and ecclesiastical communities from the early Christian period) our *papar* sites are rather poorly furnished.

A study of the map of early Christian sculptured stones (Fig. Intro.2 from Fisher, 2002) shows very clearly there is a total absence of early carved stones from almost all the *papar*

⁵ Norse names ending in *dalr* in west Scotland have been the subject of much discussion as to the sort of settlement which they might indicate. See Crawford, 2004, 115-6 and refs there cited

sites.⁶ The notable exception is Pabbay in the Barra Isles (H4), where, however, the remarkable carved stone of early date is a Pictish symbol stone which suggests a secular rather than an ecclesiastical context. Of course the chance survival of such stones means that hard and fast conclusions cannot be drawn from absence of such evidence. But it is worth noting that in the local context of Pabay off south Skye (H5) early carvings have turned up on Raasay, Scalpay, and at Cill Ashaig, but none on Pabay, despite it being a fertile island with a chapel site. Even more striking is the presence of notable sculpture in the Small Isles on Canna, Eigg and Muck, and at two places on Rum, but none from Papadil. However, as already noted, this topographical name is no sure indicator of a permanent residential *papar* community, suggesting perhaps a connection at one remove with such a community, of which there were certainly some in the Small Isles (none of which have, however, given the *papar* name to their particular island or settlement).

This absence of early sculpture from the majority of *papar* places in the Hebrides, has to be looked at in the context of many places where sculpture has been found but where the *papar* name was not given (or if it was, it did not stick). There is in fact something of a mismatch of evidence which is also warning us that the *papar* names may have been given originally for reasons other than purely the ecclesiastical connection with priests or monks. That connection may still have been a valid one, but other factors have to be brought into the equation.

Scandinavian connection

Turning to the other main issue laid down at the beginning of this *papar* project (**Purposes of the Project.** above), we will consider next the nature of the Norse impact in the Hebrides. It is, of course, recognised that this is a Norse place-name driven project, for the main body of evidence is the names which were given to the *papar* places by the incoming Vikings. We have to try and understand more fully why these names were given by the northern arrivals on the Hebridean scene c.800 A.D. Was it simply marking their recognition of Christian communities, or was it driven rather by the needs and requirements of the Vikings themselves? For what reason did they mark out *these* places with such names and not other Christian establishments?

⁶ There is ‘one crude elongated cross of doubtful age’ (Fisher, 2002, 44) in the ruined church on Pabbay, Harris (H2)

It has been postulated for some time that the Scandinavian raiders gave these names because they left the *papar* alone on these islands and at the Papil/Paible locations, and it has also been suggested that they may therefore be evidence of an ‘unexpected tolerance’ for the priests of the Christian religion (Crawford, 1987, 166). More recently, a strong argument has been voiced by a linguist and place-name specialist that these names tell us that the Vikings lived alongside the priests ‘long enough for the papa place-names to be formed’, and that there is no reason to assume that they are not of Viking-Age coinage, but that they probably date back to the early period of colonisation and settlement (Gammeltoft, 2004, 44,46). This is a response and corrective to the ideas previously aired that there is a possible element of ‘retrospective naming’ involved, and that the names may actually date from a period subsequent to the early phase of raiding and settlement (MacDonald, 2002, 21-2; Lowe, 2002,94-5 and see my summary of these arguments in Crawford, 2005, 92-3).

The implanting of the *papar* names must surely mean that the priests remained alive and in situ long enough to draw the close attention of the incoming Scandinavian settlers to them and their practices ‘whether religious, cultural or agrarian’(Waugh, 2007, 551-2). These *papar* names may thus have some significance for Viking priorities, although it is doubtful whether religious practices were of such significance in the early period of raiding and looting, when monastic communities were often on the receiving end of the Vikings’ violent treatment. Gammeltoft does suggest that the continued presence of the *papar* might signify ‘early attempts at converting the heathen Scandinavians’ (2004, 45), although expressing some reservations about this attractive (if unlikely) scenario.⁷ More to the point he goes on to surmise that the *papar* could not have been regarded as a threat, and perhaps ‘were seen as useful partners in one way or another’. Here is a line of enquiry which may help to explain the evidence of the names, and the question will be asked: how on earth could the *papar* be ‘useful partners’ to the pagan marauders, who were the antithesis of their own creed and way of life?

Requirement for supplies

Perhaps the last of the practices already mentioned as having been suggested (‘agrarian’) is the clue to this seemingly inexplicable situation. What could have made the *papar*

⁷ As also postulated by MacKenzie who thought it ‘not unlikely’ that ‘in conversion of the rough Northmen to Christianity, these lonely hermits, who were held in high esteem, may have played a part of some importance’ (1903, 518)

places valuable to the Vikings, and the priests ‘useful partners’ is the agrarian wealth which this present study highlights, the evidence for which has been summarised above. The fertility of most of the Pabbays and Paible/Bayble places is notable,⁸ and these pre-Norse and early Christian settlements must have been exceedingly productive in grain, as well as in animal husbandry. The soil-sampling research conducted in several *papar* places as part of the present project has shown that more intensive farming practices developed in such locations in the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland in the late Iron Age. The hypothesis has been put forward (Barber, 1981; Simpson and Guttman, 2002, 65-7; Simpson, Crawford and Ballin Smith above) that this was due to the innovative agricultural techniques pioneered by the Christian communities of priests who are presumed to have lived on the *papar* islands, or perhaps to have had some ownership rights and influence over the management of the land. Fieldwork around Baileanacille in Pabbay, Harris, (see H2 and Appendix, below) produced ‘evidence of extensive anthropogenic deposits’ ranging from 45 to over 80cm in depth to the north of the chapel sites. Whether or not this development was due to the innovative techniques of the *papar* the fertile deep soils in this and other locations tell us of successful agricultural systems practised in these places before, during, and after the Viking Age. They would have been centres of production of grain, as well as animal products. This factor must have made them very attractive, perhaps vital, supply bases to the passing Viking raiders who were in need of food supplies on the sea routes south from Norway to Ireland, and back again.

This cannot be denied. Therefore the question of supply of produce by the farmers of these fertile soils, and of the cows, sheep, pigs and goats reared on these lands, raises the hypothesis that they may have been sources of food for the Vikings in an era before they settled on the islands themselves and took over the farming of the land. There does not appear to have been any full consideration of the issue of the Vikings’ food supplies, although the practice of *strandhögg* is known (see entry in Vigfusson and Cleasby, *Icelandic-English Dictionary*) when the Vikings are supposed to have landed on beaches and rounded up the cattle for provisioning their boat crews. In Ireland it appears that monasteries were used as sources of food. Already in 798 the church on St. Patrick’s Island was burned, followed by ‘cattle tribute’ being taken from nearby territories, although this is apparently a ‘unique record’ (Etchingham, 1996, 38). It has been suggested that

⁸ See ‘Papar Place-Names in the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland: A preliminary assessment of their association with agricultural land potential’ by I. Simpson, B.E. Crawford and B. Ballin Smith’ above, where it is said that ‘it is clear that the majority of *papar* names in the N. and W. Isles are associated with areas of very good to medium quality agricultural land, which, with the agricultural land management of the period, would allow good yields’.

another method was practised in Ireland, when raiding bands plundered monasteries for supplies of food and slaves on Christian feast days, but left the community to build up resources again for the next time supplies were required (Crawford, 1987, 45-6 citing Smyth, 1977, 167; Etchingham, 1996, 44; Woolf, 2007, 56). The few sources which refer to the Hebrides in the early Viking period do not mention such methods, although we know about the raids on Iona, from the Irish Annals; and the recurrence of such raids (in 795, 802, 806, and 825) suggests strongly that the community survived them. It certainly must have done, for Columba's relics were still there in 825, before being removed a few years later (Crawford, 1987, 46). The monasteries were productive power-houses and therefore unlikely to be entirely destroyed, for this would deprive the Vikings of vital sources of supply. There is no evidence that such exploitative activities were also pursued in the north Hebrides, but it can be said that most monastic communities, including those we assume lived on the islands and other places named after the *papar* would have been valuable suppliers of agricultural products. Is it possible therefore that the *papar* name was given to the Pabbays and Paibles because of their known value as places with surplus products, with an organised community which farmed the land and which could be prevailed upon to provide the raiders with necessities of food and other commodities?

Strategic considerations

As already noted, accessibility from the seaways is a feature of the *papar* places. This leads on to another consideration which has emerged as of some possible significance in the present study of the Hebridean *papar* sites, and that is the strategic locations of the Pabbay islands, and the Paible/Bayble places (see below for comments in editorial 'preliminary evaluations' after each entry). Our knowledge of such strategic considerations is rather inadequate, and is best understood by yachtsmen who cruise among the Hebrides.⁹ We have no historical information about how the raiders explored these sea routes, and which ones were most practical and became the most-used, although the Hebrides are often referred to as 'stepping stones' for the raiders along the west side of Britain en route to Ireland (Crawford, 1987, 19; Owen, 1999, 12). But exactly which islands would have been most useful along this maritime sea route? The evidence available for understanding Viking access to this archipelago relates more to the processes of settlement than moving through the zone in the earlier phase of raiding. That is, the place-names and the archaeology, especially the Norse pagan grave material which is found

⁹ Much useful and practical information about anchorages throughout the Scottish islands is to be found in Haswell-Smith, 2004.

scattered throughout the Hebrides, are more likely to have been left by settlers than by raiders.

It does appear likely that raids on Ireland in the early 9th century may have been conducted from bases in the Hebrides (Woolf, 2007, 58-9). We do not know where these bases were: for practical purposes it may however be fruitful to look at the *papar* places in relation to movements through the seaways. Approaching the Outer Hebrides from the north it is possible to sail either down the west side, exposed to the Atlantic, or down the more sheltered east side, through the Minch. It seems very likely that both routes would have been used, depending on weather conditions,¹⁰ political conditions, and final destination.¹¹ If the former route was used Pabay, Uig (H1), Paible on Taransay (H7) and Pabbay, Harris (H2) were all strategically located. The first is an ideal refuelling stop for mariners moving south along the inhospitable north-west coast of Lewis, at the access point to the sheltered waters of Loch Roag; Taransay dominates sailing access to Tarbert and the isthmus which is the narrowest crossing point to the eastern sea route along the Minch; Pabbay, Harris is exceedingly prominent and important in the historical record and situated at the centre of the Outer Hebridean chain of islands it controls access through the Sound of Harris to the eastern side. The next *papar* place on the route south is Paible, situated in the centre of the fertile machair of North Uist, although topographical change makes it difficult to know how accessible this site may have been from the sea in the Viking Age.

On the eastern side of Lewis the fertile Eye peninsula juts out into the northern approaches to the Minch, and Bayble (H6) is situated on the coastal side of the peninsula and highly accessible from the sea. There are then no more *papar* places along the highly indented and rugged eastern coastline of Lewis, Harris and North Uist until the Papay islets in Loch Boisdale/Baghasdail, which as discussed below (H3) are not at all comparable with the other *papar* islands. Nonetheless this Papay situation had some useful strategic qualities, being in a very sheltered natural harbour and with easy access to fertile machair lands to the west. Finally there is Pabbay in the Barra Isles (H4), at the southernmost limit of the island chain and accessible from both western and eastern sailing routes-a strategic outpost for any seafarers, whether Christian priests or pagan

¹⁰ for instance the presence of coastal fog, which all navigators seek to avoid. The frequency of fog appears to be far greater in the southern Hebrides than in the north Hebrides (see map in Crawford, 1987, fig.15), although it is prevalent to some degree in the Minch (less than 100 hours per annum). However the west side of the Outer Hebrides is fog free, except for a patch (100-199 hours per annum) along the coast of the Uists. This may have meant that the western sailing route was sometimes the preferred sailing route.

¹¹ If sailing to the west coast of Ireland then the western route is certainly more direct.

raiders. The last Pabay (H5) to be drawn into this maritime geographical survey, is the only one in the Inner Hebrides, and closest to the Scottish mainland. What is so particularly significant about this small island located in the outer reaches of Broadford Bay and only a couple of miles off the coast of south-east Skye? Its position close to Kyleakin makes it a highly strategic island, at the very northern access to the important sailing route through the narrows to Loch Alsh and the Sound of Sleat. Then there is the enigmatic Papadil on Rum, (H9) an outpost of all the *papar* places, and which also has something of a strategic position, facing south as it does towards the southern Hebrides.

So what conclusions can be drawn from this geographical analysis of the position of the Pabay and Paibles and their fertility? Any conclusions must only be tentative, and suggestions as to their role are entirely hypothetical. First of all is the restriction of the nomenclature to the northern Hebrides, which may have some explanation in the circumstances of the early Viking period.¹² The absence of *papar* names in the part of the Hebrides where the most renowned of the monastic communities were located-Iona, Tiree, Canna- may suggest that the Vikings had a different relationship with the Christian communities here. Perhaps this was a result of the political situation in the southern Hebrides, and the position of the kingdom of Dál Riata. Perhaps it was a result of the Vikings' own needs and requirements regarding supply bases along the sea routes.

Focussing on why the *papar* names are only in the north Hebrides, and bearing in mind the discussion above about the productivity of these places and their strategic importance along the sea routes, it may be suggested that these islands were significant in the early Viking control of the north Hebrides. Perhaps they played a role in the raiders' establishment in the islands in the initial phase of impact and consolidation of authority? We assume that the Vikings must have established bases from which they raided the Irish monasteries, and these would be on the islands and headlands convenient to the sea routes. They would need supply bases also, which the *papar* establishments may perhaps have been which leads back to the idea that the *papar* were 'useful partners'. By leaving the *papar* in place the Vikings could have benefited from the continuing supply of produce from these fertile establishments. This would not have necessitated any accommodation with the Christian religion, merely a working relationship that benefited the *papar* as much as the Vikings. If this was so, then the restriction of the *papar* names to the northern Hebrides may reflect a situation which stemmed from the earliest phase of raiding when

¹² Or, as Simon Taylor has pointed out (pers. comm.) in later political/linguistic history

the Viking ships' crews had control of the north Hebrides, from where they launched their attacks on the Christian monasteries to the south, including of course Iona.

Pagan graves and Norse place-names

These two aspects will be commented on only briefly and insofar as the evidence brought together in the following survey provides some preliminary information. There are as yet no pagan graves known to have been found on any Pabbay island or at a Paible location which replicates the situation in the Northern Isles where likewise no grave has been recorded at a *papar* place. This absence of burials in *papar* places has been pointed out before (Crawford, 1987, 166), and the detailed studies of the archaeological evidence done in the present project does confirm the lack of known pagan graves. To some extent this absence of evidence fits in with the theory expounded above that the *papar* may have been left in place in order that they could supply the raiders with food. Certainly if they were left in place then these islands are unlikely to have been the focus for early settlement /colonisation by the raiders. This may be slightly unexpected as they are fertile places which would have been attractive to the Vikings in their colonising phase. However, the pattern of colonisation is poorly understood, and the burial evidence needs to be studied in greater detail before any conclusions can be drawn based on the absence of such evidence. It can be noted that there is evidence for pagan burials nearby some of the *papar* places, like those excavated at Bhaltos/Valtos and Cnip/Kneep (designated a cemetery) on the west coast of Lewis opposite Pabbay, Uig (H1)(Graham-Campbell and Batey, 1998,74-5). An early recorded (and lost) burial from one of the islands in the Sound of Harris was not far from Pabbay, Harris (H2)(ibid.76). Pagan grave material has also been recorded from some of the Barra isles, although not from Pabbay itself (H4) (ibid.82-3). Perhaps this picture of Viking graves nearby, but not actually at the *papar* places, is not a mere coincidence but a feature of some significance.

Where place-names are concerned the toponymic evidence needs further analysis. It was long ago postulated that the absence of early Norse names in Papa Westray in Orkney (see above O2) pointed to a situation in which that island was left alone in the early phase of settlement (Marwick, 1924-5, 36). *by* and *bister* names do appear to be absent from the Orkney Papa islands although the latter name probably once existed in Papa Stour, Shetland (see above S1). It also survives in the toponymic record for one of the Pabbay islands discussed below (H1). This does not however prove that Norse speakers settled in Pabbay, Uig, in the first phase of raiding. *Bólstaðr* names have been put later in the

chronology of settlement names than Marwick designated (Nicolaisen, 1969, 15; Gammeltoft, 2001, 162-3) and in general we are nowadays much less certain about what sort of habitative names can be treated as early or late.

Understanding of geographical factors and the need to look at these places from the sea rather than from a territorial viewpoint is absolutely essential. The importance of the Lewis and Harris Pabbays (H1 and H2) as residences for the early Christian *papar* and the later MacLeod chiefs may relate in both cases to their accessibility to the seaways, rather than to their remote location ‘on the outermost fringe’. This aspect was also likely to make these places extremely important to the mobile Viking sea-farers, and as discussed above, may be the reason why they gave them names highlighting their occupation by groups of Christian clerics. What needs also to be explored further is whether these Christian groups might have also chosen these places for their strategic situation. If so, it may relate to their links with other *papar* communities across the sea in the Faeroes and in Iceland.¹³

Concluding Comments

This gathering together of many different sources of information, both historical and archaeological, provides very useful reference material for a better understanding of the location of the *papar* communities in the archipelagos to the north and west of Scotland. It has not provided evidence to show exactly what sort of communities they were which inhabited these places, and as far as the Hebrides are concerned it does not give any particular indication to suggest that the early Christian church was of any especial significance in these locations compared with other sites in the islands.¹⁴ However, the agricultural value of the *papar* places in the Hebrides has been highlighted, as well as their strategic location, and this has led to some rather unexpected thinking about their value to the Vikings.

The role of the Vikings was always known to be significant because they gave the *papar* place-names, but that role has come into sharper focus through the ideas about why they gave these names (which are explored above). The totality of the evidence relating to the *papar* places which is now gathered together enables us to view the whole maritime picture from north to south and to gain a more comprehensive understanding of why these *papar* names may have been given to the Pabbay islands and Paible places. It should be

¹³ An assessment of these *papar* locations in the north Atlantic is being prepared by Marteinn Sigurdsson.

¹⁴ However, in the Northern Isles, the ecclesiastical evidence for some of the *papar* sites (such as Papil in Shetland S and Papa Westray in Orkney O) gives a very different impression.

stressed that the suggestions made above about the significance of the Vikings' role, and their collaborative relationship with the *papar*, are only preliminary suggestions. It is hoped that consolidatory work will follow on from the basis which this project has established and further our understanding of both the early Christian and Viking periods in the insular world, whether in support of these suggestions or contrary to them.

Acknowledgements

As the original award holders of the Carnegie Grant which has enabled the *papar* project to be carried through, we wish to give full credit to Dr Janet Hooper for her commitment and professional expertise as desk-based researcher for both phases of this project, and also for her participation in the field work in Pabbay, Harris (H2).

The Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland is to be thanked by all participants in this project for two funding awards and also for additional financial help with the illustrations. Their support enabled this inter-disciplinary project to be pursued, and brought to completion. It now provides an easily-accessible source of reference for historians, archaeologists, place-name researchers and all those who wish to learn more about the enigmatic places in the ocean associated with the priests of the early Christian church in the insular Celtic world.

The pictorial and cartographic evidence for these remote places is absolutely essential for our understanding of their geographical location. The aerial photographic collection of the RCAHMS has proved particularly valuable and several images enhance a number of the Hebridean sites discussed below. The collection of early maps in the Map Library of the NLS is also an extremely valuable resource as the earliest cartographic record of the places and their names, and we are grateful to the NLS for allowing these images to be used free of any reproduction fee; similarly also St. Andrews University Library. We are particularly indebted to Hamish Haswell-Smith, who generously gave us permission to use the exceptionally clear and useful maps from his wonderful book *The Scottish Islands* (2nd edition 2004). The Russell Trust have continued to be supportive, and are thanked once again for the ready response to requests for financial support in both phases of this project, particularly with regard to the funding of web-site preparation costs. The Hunter

Trust and the Catherine Mackichan Trust provided additional financial help with research expenses.

Acknowledgements for advice and information on the Hebridean sites are due to Mary Macleod, Carol Knott, Rachael Barrowman, Jill Harden, Pat Foster; for permission to use photos: John Raven, Pat Foster and Cathy Dagg; for assistance in making information available: Highland Libraries, Highland Archives, Highland Council Archaeology Unit, Seirbhis Arc-eolas nan Eilean Siar/Western Isles Archaeology Service and Leabharlann nan Eilean Siar/Western Isles Libraries.

Various colleagues have given help and of their time in the process of bringing this material to web publication. Alan Muirden, Education and Outreach Operational Manager, and Cole Henley and Philip Graham, RCAHMS, are to be thanked for their professional role in adding the Hebridean material to the web-site. Dr. Simon Taylor, Dr. Cathy Swift, Donald McWhannell, and the members of the *papar* research group, all provided useful suggestions and corrections. Bill Jamieson from the University of Stirling assisted with cartography. The *papar* group's regular meetings at the Dept. of Biological and Environmental Sciences at the University of Stirling were always positive and constructive, and Beverley Ballin Smith (GUARD), Dr. Janet Hooper, Dr. Jo Thomas (McKenzie), Dr. Doreen Waugh, along with the two authors of this Introduction have worked amicably and effectively together in bringing to completion this inter-disciplinary project. We have successfully combined our expertise in widely-different fields and the results show how valuable and how necessary it is for practitioners of different disciplines to learn how to work in partnership when studying a topic of this diverse nature. The *papar* are an elusive concept, but we hope that they and their maritime world have become more accessible through the gathering of different sources of evidence and from being viewed through a wide geographical spectrum.

March 2008