Hebridean connections: *in Ibdone insula*, *Ibdaig*, *Eboudai*, Uist

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This article was prompted initially by a story in the Latin *Vita Sancti Cainnechi* 'The Life of St Cainnech', putatively dated to the 8th century (Márkus 2018; Sharpe 1991, esp. 279–339; Herbert 2000; though note Ó Riain 2011, 138–39, who would date it to the 12th century).[1] In this anecdote, Cainnech is visiting *in Ibdone insula*. In Gilbert Márkus's recent translation

> One Sunday Saint Cainnech was a guest [*in*] *Ibdone insula*. Now the mice of that place shredded his shoes, tore them up. When the holy man saw this offence, he cursed the mice and drove them out of the island for ever. Thus when all the mice had been gathered together, at the word of the saint they threw themselves into the depth of the sea, and in that island no mice have lived until today. (Márkus 2018, §29; cf. Heist 1965, 189, §29)

The place-name here has usually been aligned with one found elsewhere in Irish hagiography, for instance in the Life of St Ailbe of Emly, where he spends a night *iuxta insulam Ybdan* (Ó Riain 2017, 80, §40; Heist 1965, 127 §40). Appearing also as *inis Sibthond* with further variants (see Hogan 1910, 453 (*ibdan*) 466 (*inis ibdan*), 469 (*inis sibthond*); Plummer 1910, Vol. I, 59 n., vol. II, 330; Mac Néill 1911, 102, n. 1), this has been identified as King's Island on the Shannon, the island on which the Viking settlement of Limerick was built. This site and its name have been the subject of a thorough discussion by Gearóid Mac Eoin (2001); the *Vita S. Cainnechi* mention of *in Ibdone insula* features in this discussion.

Superficially, this would appear a sound identification, but there are some good reasons to question it. First, in *Vita S. Cainnechi* the mice throw themselves 'into the depth of the sea' (*in maris profundum*), something impossible to do from the likely site of *insula Ybdan*, King's Island, formed in a loop of the Shannon before it widens, some 70km from the sea (see MacEoin 2001, 165). It is, I suspect, not the sort of island which could ever have been thought free of mice. Equally, in *Vita S. Cainnechi*, the anecdote is situated immediately after a sequence of stories set either loosely in Britain or more specifically in parts of Scotland, particularly in Iona. Gilbert Márkus has observed (pers. comm.) that the sequence is as follows: §19: Britain; §20: Columba and Cainnech 'in

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one place' (probably Iona); §21: Mountain in Britain; §22–23: unidentified; §24: Drumalban; §25–28: Iona: §29: *in Ibdone insula*. §30 is set on an unidentified 'Island of the Birds', which may of course also be in the Hebrides.[2] Although stories set in Ireland are prominent in Cainnech's Life, there are only a few in the south-west, and these are generally sign-posted in more detail than is the case in this anecdote, which does not indicate where the island is, even whether in Britain or Ireland. Furthermore, as discussed below, the form of the name in the phrase *in Ibdone insula* may mean we should not readily identify it with *insula Ybtan* and the like, despite surface similarities.

The following series of notes are based on exploring the possibility that *in Ibdone insula* refers instead to somewhere in western Scotland, more specifically in the Hebrides. I explore a series of equivalences and should like to underline from the outset that these are not interdependent, despite their interconnections. Each of them could be individually correct without the others having to be so. I am of the view, however, that taken together the case for each of them is strengthened. As will be seen in the conclusion, the identifications suggested here, if correct, have some important and game-changing consequences for a number of aspects of early medieval Scottish history.

In Ibdone insula, Ibdaig, Eboudai

The initial cluster *<ibd->* is sufficiently unusual in a Gaelic context that it immediately recalls the name *Ibdaig, Ibdig*, which occurs in the latter form in AU 672.2 *Deleti sunt Ibdig* 'The Ibdaig were destroyed'.[3] Scholars have long associated this name with the presumed Gaelic form of the island cluster named by Ptolemy and others as Ἔβουδαι (*Eboudai*); in Pliny, *Hebudes*, which became in later and modern English usage, via scribal error, the Hebrides (see Rivet and Smith 1979, 354–55; Isaac 2005, 192; Broderick 2013, 4–5). This association was explored in most detail by T. F. O'Rahilly (1946, 537–38), who noted the existence in the genealogies of an Irish kindred under the name of the Uí Ibdaig, descendants of one Oengus *Ibdach*, a name which could be translated 'Oengus the Hebridean' (see Dobbs 1922, 336). A further genealogical note tells us he was so called because 'his mother was from the Ibdaig' *máthair eius d'Íbtachaib fuit* (CGH LL 330b60).[4] The descendants of Oengus Ibdach were

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2. I am grateful to Gilbert Márkus for this and other helpful observations on the Life.

3. *Ibdig* here is often taken as a population-name, hence Charles-Edwards (2006, Vol. 1, 159) translates 'The Ibdaig were slaughtered'. However, *deletus* is a curious participle to use for people, and the only other instance in AU in this period refers to islands (AU 682.4 *Orcades delete sunt la Bruide*; on this see Evans 2018, 28); see below for discussion of other possibilities.

4. It is worth noting that this is the sole source which gives the first vowel as a long <i>.

located in Ulster, indeed, were a side-lined branch of the Dál Fiatach kings of Ulster: note in AU 557.1 *Mors Fergna ... nepotis Ibdaig regis Uloth*.[5] It looks as if the epithet Ibdach has taken over from the name Oengus in this and other genealogical texts. This connection was first noticed by Eoin Mac Néill (1911, 102), who asserted, in connection with one genealogical text, 'Tuatha Iboth are doubtless the old traditional inhabitants of the Hebrides, Ebudae Insulae. Ibdaig = *Ebudaci.' It should be noted in this context that there was a Munster family, the Uí Ibdan (with variants), one of the families making up the Araid Cliach, a kindred occupying the area around Limerick. Mac Eoin notes that they were seen as related to the Ibdaig: 'A connection between the Scottish Tuath Iboth and the Irish Araid is established in the genealogies when the mother of Forc and Iboth is said to be Fainnche Trechíchech of the Araid Cliach' (Mac Eoin 2001, 173–74). Mac Eoin's argument that this Munster family lies behind the similar place-name, *inis Ibdan*, for King's island, seems a sound one.

The term *ibdach* is also met as a common noun, referring to a form of grain, more specifically barley.[6] Kelly (1997, 223–24), following Sexton, suggests two-row barley (*Hordeum Vulgare* subspecies *distichum*), since *eórna*, the main name for barley, is listed elsewhere in the text, and this seems more likely to be associated with the more common six-row barley (*Hordeum Vulgare* s. *hexastichum*). In a gloss explaining *ibdach* in the legal text in which it appears, it is explained as the 'soft barley of the Isles', which term usually represents the Hebrides in Irish texts:

> *grainne ibdaig* (*.i. eorna na nen* (*?*), *ebar deog dia sugh .i. máotheorna na ninnsi*, 'a grain of [*ibdach*], i.e. the barley of birds [?],[7] a drink is drunk of

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5. The genealogies perhaps suggest the circumstances leading to this line's decline, when they describe the battle of Druim Cleithi *i torchratar secht meic [Fergnai] huí Ibdiag ríg Ulad* 'in which fell the seven sons of Fernae ua Ibdaig, king of Ulster' (CGH LL330c35). CGH edits the Book of Leinster here as the main text, which calls him Fergal, but two MSS (The Book of Lecan and the Book of Ballymote) have Fergnae, the name attested by the annals.

6. I am very grateful to Dr Katherine Forsyth for directing me towards the material on *ibdach* as a type of barley.

7. Kelly (1997, 223 n. 28) notes that this could be read as *eorna na n-én* with *én* being taken as a gen. pl. of *ian* 'vessel', in other words, barley that is good for brewing (or perhaps for making barley water). This seems to me the more plausible reading in any case, and perhaps should be adopted. If *ibdach* be taken as two-row barley, note the following from The Homebrewers Association (Payne 2013): 'You can make more beer from two-row than from six-row malt; its lower enzyme content, lower protein, greater starch content, and thinner husk make it better suited to higher extract.', and align this with the OG gloss on this as *máeth-eórna* 'soft barley', and reference to it making *sug* 'juice'.

its juice, i.e. the soft barley of the Hebrides.' (*DIL*, s.n.; Binchy 1966, 22–23; Kelly 1997, 219, 223–24)

Kelly (1997, 223) further notes in respect of assigning this term to the Hebrides: 'the coastal plains or *machairs* can be brought to a fair level of fertility; indeed, the island of Tiree in the Inner Hebrides was famed for its cereal production in the nineteenth century, being known as *Eilean ìosal an eòrna* "low island of barley"'. Excavations at a range of sites in the Hebrides confirm the prevalence of barley in the Iron Age and early middle ages, though six-row barley is most common (Parker Pearson et al. 2018, 528). At any rate, what this makes clear is that in Ireland the term *Ibdach* could be used to represent individuals or products from the Hebrides.

Following on from this, it should be noted that *Ibdach* is an adjectival form, derived from a proper noun we might reconstruct as nom. sg. **Ibud* or **Ibod*, nom. pl. **Ibuid*, with an attested genitive plural in *Ibod*; the latter form is found in further genealogical collections as *Tuath Iboth* and *Fir Iboth* (O'Rahilly 1946, 538), interestingly alongside references to *Tuath Forc*, which seems to be a derivative, with prosthetic <f>, of *Orc*, the Orkneys (see Mac Neill 1911, 100–01; Dobbs 1923, 52). Some of the references further specify the location of these *Fir Iboth* as Scotland, e.g., *do fearaib hIboth de Albain* (Dobbs 1923, 52). Scholars have been content to see these references to **Ibuid*, *Ibdach* and *Ibdaig* as referring loosely to whatever was meant by 'the Hebrides' in this period. O'Rahillly (1946, 538) notes the absence of any reference to an expected **Insi Ibod* corresponding to attested *Insi Orc*; it may however be that the term used for the islands was adjectival, thus *Insi Ibdaig*, and thence simply *Ibdaig*. It is thus quite probable that the AU 672.2 reference to *Ibdig* is to the destruction of the Hebridean islands, rather than the people of them. This may be supported by the annal-entry at AU 682.4: *Orcades delete sunt la Bruide*.[8] At any rate, linguistically there is no objection to relating these forms to *Eboudai*, the island group mentioned in Ptolemy, and this has long-standing support from linguists and toponymists.

On this basis, and given the Iona location of the anecdotes immediately preceding it in the *Vita S Cainnechi*, it seems worth considering if the phrase *in Ibdone insula* should be related to these names. It is not clear to me what we should take the nominative form of the island name here to be.[9] Previous scholarship has related it to *Ibdan*, as we have seen, but in fact the form of the name here does not readily lend itself to this. In *Ibdan*, the final ending looks like

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8. Although note gender of *delete* in 682 is feminine, presumably in agreement with an implied *insulae*, while 672 has *deleti* which presumes a masculine plural. I am grateful to Simon Taylor for this point.

9. I am very grateful to Gilbert Márkus for discussion of the points in this paragraph.

a diminutive; *Ibdone* does not.[10] Mac Eoin analyses *Ibdan* as being from a genitive form of **ebudonos*, though he does not tackle the problem of the case endings (or lack thereof) in the name-forms in Latin language texts (Mac Eoin 2001, 171), and treats the *Vita S. Cainnechi* form as a straightforward representation of an **Inis Ibdon*.[11] It would be hard to account for the form we have if that were so.

It is possible that *Ibdone* is in the genitive, and that we should take it as gen. sg. of a fem. name *Ibdona*, i.e. 'in the island of Ibdona'. More likely, however, is that we are dealing with a noun in the ablative in agreement with *in … insula*. This would follow the sort of practice we can see in Adomnán's treatment of names, for instance, *ad Iouam … insulam*, *in Maleam … insulam* (both VC i.22). In this case, we could probably reconstruct a fem. name **Ibdo*, *Ibdonis*, with an ablative in *Ibdone*. **Ibdo* would be a plausible if perhaps unusual latinisation of the singular form **Ibud/Ibod* which, judging from Ptloemy's *Ebouda* should be feminine. As a final alternative, it may be fashioned with some sort of latinate adjectival ending 'the Ibud island', cf. some of Adomnán's collocations: *ad Hinbinam insulam* (VC i.21, for the island elsewhere named *Hinba*), *Ethica insula* (for Tiree, the form here based on an original *Éth*).[12]

On balance, I would favour positing the form *Ibdone* as the ablative of **Ibdo*, a latinisation of an original **Ibud*; but in any event, there is a strong argument for aligning this name with *Ibdaig*, and for relating it to the names in Ptolemy,

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10. It could, however, be the genitive singular of an *-n* stem noun. I owe this point to the anonymous reviewer of this article.

11. The analysis here does not contradict Mac Eoin's argument that the name of King's Island, Limerick, *Inis Ibdan*, should be aligned with the local kindred the *Uí Ibdan*; or further that the *Uí Ibdan* owe their name to a form like **ebudonos*, ultimately to be related in some way to *Ibdaig* (< **ebudaci*). Both would be developments of names based on *Eboudai*, with different suffixes (see esp. Mac Eoin 2001, 171). This would explain the very close similarity of the names.

12. The various authorities who have previously made the equivalence between *Ibdaig* and the Hebrides (e.g. Mac Neill 1911, 102; and cf. O'Rahilly, Watson, Isaac) have mostly also noticed the name of an otherworld king of the dwarfs in the later version of the story of the Death of Fergus mac Léti, *Iubdán* (see O'Grady 1892, Vol. I, 238–52; Vol. II, 269–85; cf. Gillies 2007), and related it to these forms. This name has the same rough form as our island name; the tale may partake of the personalisation of Hebridean island names that can be seen in other Middle Gaelic tales, cf. the discussion by Patrick Wadden of the 12th-century tale *Cath Ruis na Rígh* (Wadden 2014, 7–8). There, among warriors drawn from the Hebrides are characters with names such as 'Íle' and 'Muile'. This is not unique: we find similar in a passage from *Acallam na Senórach*, where warriors of the Fianna drawn from the Hebrides include 'Cernabrocc' (cf. Cairn na Burgh in the Treshnish Isles) one of the sons of the king of Insi Gall; and 'Diure' (cf Jura, G *Diùra*), 'Barrae' (cf. Barra) and 'Idae', three sons of a king of Lochlann. See references and discussion in Clancy 2008, 35; and for overall context, see Herbert 1999, esp. 96–97.

Eboudai, or more precisely here, *Ebouda*, the name he says was held by two individual islands which formed one of the five *Eboudai*. The episode *in Ibdone insula* is thus likely to be set on one of the Hebridean islands.

UIST, *IBDAIG, EBOUDAI*

Recognising **Ibuid*, and *Ibdaig* as key forms relating to the Hebrides may also help to unlock the origins of the name of the island chain of the Uists. The current form, in Gaelic (*Uibhist*) as in English, as is well recognised, derives from the Old Norse name *Ívist*. On the face of it this seems to mean 'inner abode' (Coates 1988 citing Field 1980). This, as has been explored by others, seems most likely to be an Old Norse adaptation of an earlier, unattested, name. It has a clear parallel in the Norse name for Tiree, *Týr-vist*, again employing ON *vist* ' dwelling' (on Tiree, see in most detail now Holliday 2016, 439–43). In this case, however, we have a variety of earlier forms for Tiree and we can see the ON calque more clearly as riffing on the first element of an original *Tír-iath* (in Latin *Ethica terra*, also *terra Heth*, cf. Watson 1926, 85–86; Holliday 2016, 439).

If *Ívist, Uist*, was a Norse calque on an earlier name, what was it calquing? There is attraction in seeing it as based on a name beginning with [iβ-] or [iv-],[13] and that is precisely what we find, with Hebridean connections, in the range of forms in **Ibuid* and *Ibdaig*. *Ívist* is thus plausibly an ON calque on either **Ibuid* or *Ibdaig*, with the former perhaps more likely.[14]

Such an argument, however, would imply that we should associate Ptolemy's *Eboudai* with the Outer Hebrides, and not the Inner Hebrides as has so often

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13. Note that an origin like this has previously been explored by Richard Coates in his consideration of the equation 'Uist = Ibiza' (Coates 1988; also Coates 2012, 63). This considers a possible origin for both names in a form [iβis-]. I am uncertain what the consequences of the current argument would be for Coates's proposal, though presumably it would mean that in fact we are chasing only the etymology of *Eboudai/ Ebouda*, if this is what underlies the various developments resulting in Uist. I should note that my proposal does not explore the 'deep etymology' for either Uist or the Hebrides, the ultimate roots of which remain obscure, despite a variety of proposals (see further Coates 2012).

14. At a late stage in the publication of this article, I became aware that a similar argument had previously been made (though briefly and without detail): by Andrew Jennings and Arne Kruse (2009, 81). There they propose: '*Ívist* may be a resemanticised form of the ancient name for the archipelago itself (*Ibdaig* in Old Irish and *Hebudes* in Pliny NH IV, 103).' They include this label against the Outer Hebrides on their map on p. 80. Like me, and in contrast to most scholars, they align *Ibdaig* and *Hebudes* with the Outer Hebrides, though in their case this is based on the absence of the name from the text they discuss as *Senchus Fer nAlban* (see their p. 78), and their reasoning that thus it must be outside of Dál Riata. I am grateful to Dr Alan Macniven for drawing my attention to this discussion.

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been argued (e.g. Broderick 2013, 4; Rivet and Smith 1979, 355). In this context, it is worth revisiting the description of the *Eboudai* in Ptolemy, to see if the identification can be firmed up. Discussion of these islands has been curiously stranded in scholarship between discussions of his Scottish and Irish sections. The discussion in Ptolemy actually occurs in his account of Ireland. In Rivet and Smith's translation:

> Above *Ivernia* lie islands which are called *Aebudae* (var. *Ebudae*), five in number, of which the most westerly is called *Aebuda*, the next towards the east is likewise *Aebuda*, then *Ricina*, then *Maleus*, then *Epidium*. (Rivet and Smith 1979, 131)

There is much uncertainty here. For some reason (perhaps because this account in Ptolemy is assigned to Ireland), much of the work to date has been content to identify *Ricina* with Rathlin (OG *Rechru*), but this scarcely fits well with the certainly identified *Malaios/Maleus* which must be Mull (*Malea insula* in VC i.22). The possibility that the *Ricina* mentioned here is in the Hebrides has been noted (Mac an Bhaird 1991, 16). Discussions to date have not worked outward from the two most secure identifications in this list: *Malaios*, and also the island of *Epidium*, which should be located close to the tribal and peninsular equivalent name, located on Kintyre: hence, *Epidium* most naturally should be identified as a name for Islay.[15]

If one takes a scan of the islands to the north of Ireland and proceeds west from Islay and Mull and considers these descriptions as being of large islands or clusters of islands (rather than every available island), we could plausibly make the identifications: *Epidium* = Islay (and Jura?);[16] *Maleus* = Mull; *Ricina* = Tiree (and Coll)?; and then the two named *Ebouda* might be some configuration of the islands in the chain from Barra to North Uist, perhaps the first *Ebouda* being South Uist (with Barra), and the second *Ebouda* being North Uist (with Benbecula); or the first *Ebouda* being Barra, and the second being the island chain of South Uist, Benbecula and North Uist. I note George Broderick's

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15. Not the only name, since *Íle* is clearly an ancient name (cf. Watson 1926, 86–87; Broderick 2013, 15). This need not worry us, as *Epidion/Epidium* is evidently a name taken from the population group controlling the island and is not itself an island name. Note, I have not directly discussed Patrizia de Bernardo-Stempel's suggestion (2007, 155; noted in Broderick 2013, 4) that *Epidion* is somehow to be equated with *Eboudai*, as I think it fundamentally implausible (on which see Coates, 2012, 71; James 2009, 149, n. 42).

16. Most commentators seem to take this as Kintyre on the basis of alignment with the peninsula called the same in the British section. However, this is manifestly intended to be an island, and so the main island closest to Kintyre would seem a sensible identification.

translation of Ptolemy here as reading 'the most westerly island is called *Ebuda*, that east of it and adjoining to it is also called *Ebuda*' (Broderick 2013, 4, n. 9, emphasis mine), which may lean us towards the first explanation.

This is, of course, imperfect, but we should not expect perfect alignment for the descriptions in Ptolemy, and notoriously the *Eboudai* are at a place where there are problems with the coordinates. At any rate, it does seem plausible that the description of the *Eboudai* as a whole starts with Barra/Uist and moves in an arc to the east and south.[17]

It might well be objected that *Ricina* cannot be the same as Tiree, since we know Adomnán called it *terra Ethica*; early Gaelic vernacular sources name it as *Tír Iath*, with variants. Most scholarship has found the underlying name represented here, argued by Watson to be *Éth*, and later, with breaking, *Iath*, to be inexplicable and pre- or non-Celtic: 'The second element -*ēt(h)* does not seem to represent any known Gaelic or Celtic root' (Broderick 2013, 12). My sense is that this analysis derives from two assumptions: first, that we need to square the totality of forms of Tiree (many of which, including the later forms, are affected in various ways by the Norse calque *Týr-vist*); second, that Adomnán's form is an ancient one.

However, there seems to me nothing formally preventing this name from being a Gaelic one of comparatively recent vintage in Adomnán's day, with the second element being OG *íath* 'land, country; territory, estate' (*DIL*, 1 *íath*; this word was already connected with the name by Watson 1926, 85). The island name in Adomnán's time is likely to have been *Éth*, later, with breaking, *Íath*, and *tír* was added at a later date (though one can already see it in the Latin forms such as *Ethica terra, regio Heth*). If *Tír-Íath* seems a tautologous name, it is worth considering the many formulations in poetry employing *íath* with other words meaning 'land' or the like: *íath-bla, íath-mag, íath-sliab*, in all of which, as in *Tír-Íath* with different construction, *íath* acts as the specific. The island would thus have a Gaelic name meaning 'the land, the estate', and later 'the land of the estate', perhaps an emblem of its singular importance to Gaels, and especially churchmen, remembering the presence of multiple church foundations there attested in the early sources. by this analysis, its earlier (pre-Gaelic?) name in Ptolemy's time may have been what he represents as *Ricina*.

An implication of all this would be that the name Uist, G *Uibhist*, in its current form deriving from ON *Ívist*, reflects the name that is, in turn, found in Ptolemy's *Eboudai* and the Gaelic forms **Ibuid* and *Ibdaig*; in other words, to put it perhaps too strongly, Uist is the original Hebridean island.

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17. It is worth looking at early modern maps in which the Hebrides, including the Western Isles, are shown in closer proximity to Ireland. The map by J. N. Bellin, 'Carte reduite des Isle Britanniques', published in 1757, is a good example, illustrating nicely the perspective I am advocating here: see <https://maps.nls.uk/joins/2780.html>.

Uist, *in Ibdone insula*

It may perhaps strengthen this identification to consider whether the island described in the *Vita S. Cainnechi* could plausibly be Uist. It is worth noting that Uist is host to two Gaelic hagiotoponyms commemorating the saint, one in the north of South Uist (a lost *Cill Chainnich*, now found only as Ard Choinnich NF759461; see discussion by Evemalm at Eòlas, s.n.), and one in the south of that island, above Lochboisdale (again the church name *Cill Chainnich* is lost but was present on Blaeu's map; it is now found as Beinn Ruigh Choinnich NF806196; see discussion by Evemalm at Eòlas, s.n.). Of course, it is not the only Hebridean island where commemorations of Cainnech may be found – these are present on Tiree, Coll, Iona itself and Mull (DoSH, Cainnech; Mackinlay 1914, 61–63; Watson 1926, 188, 276). However, taking the collective possibilities outlined here, of *in Ibdone insula* as related to the names **Ibuid*, *Ibdaig*; and of Uist as also derived from some form of these names, there is every possibility that the island referred to in *Vita S Cainnechi* is Uist; given the associations with Cainnech, this would be more precisely South Uist. Alas, we cannot prove this definitively by pointing to a lack of mice.

4. Conclusions and further considerations

This article has argued, then, that an island named in the Life of St Cainnech should be identified with the Gaelic forms of the names of the *Eboudai* in Ptolemy; it has argued that the island name of Uist also derives from the Gaelic form of the *Eboudai*, and further, that the island in the Life of St Cainnech can be identified with Uist, and more specifically South Uist. If these alignments are correct, they have a number of important implications for our approach to early medieval Scottish history. Here, it is worth bearing in mind that our evidence for early medieval Scotland, whether textual or material, is such that one new identification or re-identification can radically alter our interpretation of that past.

Uist in the annals

First, and perhaps most importantly, if we can now take the annal entry AU 672.2 *Deleti sunt Ibdig* 'The *Ibdaig* were destroyed' as referring to the Uists, we are able for the first time to build them into our understanding of the early medieval history of the western seaboard of Scotland. Indeed, doing so results in some strengthening of the probability that the Uists are being referred to. AU 672.2 would take its place in a series of annal entries referring to activities in the Hebrides and the Scottish mainland north of Ardnamurchan in the late 660s and 670s.

AU 668.3 ... *nauigatio filiorum Gartnaidh ad Hiberniam cum plebe Sceth* ('... the voyage of the sons of Gartnait to Ireland with the people of Skye')

AU 670.4 *Uenit genus Gartnaith de Hibernia* ('The kindred of Gartnait come from Ireland')

AU 671.5 *Mail Rubai in Britanniam nauigat* ('Mael Rubai voyages to Britain')

AU 672.2 *Deleti sunt Ibdig* ('The *Ibdaig* are destroyed')

AU 673.5 *Mail Rubai fundauit eclesiam Apor Croosan.* ('Mael Rubai founds the church of Applecross')

AU 677.6 *Beccan Ruimm quieuit* ('Beccán of Rum dies')

Seen in this context, the reference to the Uists occurs at a precise moment during which we have a brief ray of light on activities north of Ardnamurchan: the flight of Cenél Gartnait from Skye and their return some years later; the arrival of Mael Rubai of Bangor and his founding of a new monastery at Applecross (the most northerly we know about from this period on the western mainland). It may be no accident that we also hear during this period about the death of a cleric on Rum (on Beccán, cf. Clancy and Márkus 1995, 129–34). So the annal entry can readily be explained as belonging to a strand of reporting, presumably from the 'Iona Chronicle', which takes in this area (on the general issues raised by the annals of this period and area, see Evans 2018).

Equally, however, these annals provide a potential context for understanding the destruction of the Uists in 672 – as part of a series of secular convulsions in northern Argyll and the Hebrides which saw one powerful family flee and then return – almost certainly a continuation of the *cocad* 'war' between Gartnait and the descendants of Aedán mac Gabráin recorded in AU649.4; that return being perhaps marked by expressions of power: an invitation to the abbot of Bangor to establish a new foundation in Applecross; and, potentially, the destruction of islands in the Outer Hebrides (note that the other place where *delete sunt* is used, AU682.4 it is clearly political warfare). Into this mix we might also, perhaps, place the burning of Mag Luinge on Tiree in AU 673.1. This is only one potential, speculative, piecing together of these events; nonetheless, it is an illustration of the importance that this new reading of AU 672.2 can have. (For some detailed readings of these events, see Fraser 2004; 2007, 251–53.)

Cainnech as Hebridean saint
A further line of enquiry is prompted by the potential identification of the island in the *Vita S. Cainnechi* as Uist. Cainnech has long been recognised as a saint with a Hebridean cult, though this has not been much studied, and has been much less remarked on than other Hebridean cults (see MacKinlay 1914, 61–63; Watson 1926, 188, 276; Holliday 2016, 60; Eòlas, s.n.). The mention of

an Outer Hebridean island in what may well be an 8th-century Life, however, deepens the connections which we were already aware of from Adomnán's *Vita S. Columbae*, in which he is depicted as one of several important monastic founder saints more or less co-equal with Columba (VC i.4, ii.13–14, iii.17), and in his own Life, where he spends time in 'Britain', Pictland and also Tiree, as well as with Columba (Márkus 2018, §20, §21, §24, §26, §53; cf. Heist 1965). The centre of gravity of Cainnech's Life is Ireland and in particular his main foundation there of Aghaboe; equally, the Life is in certain respects consciously modelled on *Vita S. Columbae*, as Máire Herbert has shown (Herbert 2001). This has, perhaps, meant that scholars have been more ready to treat Cainnech as an Irish saint with a Scottish cult (comparable to, for instance, Patrick or Brigit), rather than perhaps seeing that cult reflecting early activity, similar to Columba's (see for instance Ó Riain 2011, 138–40, where reference to Scottish dedications is virtually an afterthought). But Cainnech in fact could be read as a historical figure with a very similar profile to Columba, who also seems to have founded monasteries in Ireland (Durrow, most notably), and who clearly maintained a cross-channel monastic management career. It would be hard to push this much beyond a simple scholarly openness to Cainnech as a historical Hebridean monastic figure: undoubtedly both his probable 8th-century Life and the churches commemorating him in the Hebrides (and beyond, as at Laggan in Inverness-shire, cf. Clancy 2016, 60–61) reflect the deepening and expansion of his cult after his lifetime, and that cult may partly have been spread by Iona, to judge from, for instance, Adomnán's depiction of him and the presence of a Cill Chainnich on the doorstep of the monastic precinct in Iona. Certainly, just as the presence of two churches called Cill Chainnich on South Uist helps to strengthen the case for it as the location of the episode *in Ibdone insula*, so conversely accepting the location suggested here changes how we think about those dedications, their dating and what they might reflect.

Rethinking Eboudai *and* Ibdaig
Finally, this article has proposed a rethinking of the *Eboudai* of Ptolemy, taking his description as one which locates these in an arc north of Ireland, proceeding from west to east; and as relating to the Hebrides more widely and not just the Inner Hebrides. This proceeds from the securest identifications (Mull, Islay), but also hinges on the proposed origin of the name *Uist*. If this is accepted, it does mean we should reconsider how the *Eboudai* are thought of. We should pay more attention to the fact that they are surveyed by Ptolemy as part of Ireland. This is frequently obscured by scholars discussing certain items from among them in the context of Britain, Mull for instance, while not discussing others, *Ricina* mainly, since it is assumed to refer to Rathlin. More attention should be paid

also to the Ulster genealogies and to the presence of a line in the sixth century descended from a man with the epithet *Ibdach* 'Hebridean', or perhaps we should translate more specifically, as a result of this investigation, 'Uibhisteach'. This is a dimension to secular interaction between the north of Ireland and the Isles which is distinct from the well-known narrative of Dál Riata and may provide new perspectives from which to view the Gaelic background and development of this region.

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