Danish place-names in Scotland and Scottish personal names in Denmark: a survey of recent research

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Even with the best chauvinistic will in the world, it has been impossible for me to find any certain traces of the Danes in the place-names of the Northern and Western Isles. Jakob Jakobsen thought he had identified two names that referred to Danes, Danwall [danwəl] near Brandister (Grid Reference HU 440369), whose generic is *hóll* 'rounded hill' and Dainaberg in Sound near Lerwick (HU 471385), whose generic is *berg* 'hill' (Jakobsen 1936, 174). It would, however, be odd to find the word for 'Dane' compounded in stem-form *Dan-* with a topographical generic, as in Danwall, and I am more inclined to accept John Stewart's interpretation of the specific of this name as the Norse word *daunn* 'stink, bad smell' (Stewart 1987, 145). This is not, I hasten to say, because I have had an unpleasant experience while doing field-work in the neighbourhood. Dainaberg, on the other hand, is perhaps more likely to contain the word for 'Danes' but whether the hill was a look-out point against attack by the Danes or it was manned by Danes or how old the name is are questions that are impossible to answer.

I therefore turned to the place-names in *-bý* in Scotland to see whether I could find any trace of Danish influence there. The most characteristic type of Scandinavian place-name in the Danelaw is that consisting of a Scandinavian personal name and the generic *-bý*, for example Amotherby in Yorkshire (**Eymundar-bý*), with the genitive ending in *-ar* of the personal name surviving in fossilised form to the present day. There are three such place-names in Orkney: Trenabie (HY 4451) in Westray, Yesnaby (HY 2215) in Sandwick and Cattaby (c.HY 5804) in Deerness (Marwick 1952, 43, 157, 81), which may contain the personal names *Þrándr*, a completely inexplicable **Yesken*, and *Káti* respectively, although the specific of Trenabie could alternatively be the term for the inhabitants of the Trondheim area and that of Cattaby the common noun 'cat'. In Lewis the name Eoropie

(NB 5165) [jɔʀəbi] (Oftedal 1954, 371) may contain a compound personal name in *Jó-*, such as the feminine name *Jórunn*, while in Caithness, Canisbay (ND 344725) and Duncansby (ND 406732), probably contain a rare Pictish personal name or tribal name *Cano* and a Celtic personal name *Dungal* respectively (Waugh 1989, 147). The name Duncansby raises the interesting question as to whether the Celtic name *Dungal* was borne by a Pict who was living there when the Vikings arrived and who need not have been Celtic-speaking or whether it was borne by one of the post-Norse Gaelic settlers. It has no obvious connection with Denmark or the Danelaw, although it should not be forgotten that several place-names in *-bý* containing Celtic personal names are recorded in Northern England, for example Dubgilla [duvjilə] in Duggleby in Yorkshire.

It was not until I turned my attention to the Scandinavian place-names in South-West Scotland that I was struck by the clear links between this area and the Danelaw (Fellows-Jensen 1985). It had long been generally accepted that Scandinavian settlement in England could be divided into zones of Norwegian influence to the west of the Pennines and of Danish influence to the east. North-West England was thus considered to lie outside the legitimate stamping-grounds of a student of the Danelaw. I found, however, a complete absence not only in North-West England but also in South-West Scotland of names in *-setr* and *-bólstaðr* and a mere two possible instances of names in *-staðir*, Broxteth and Toxteth in southern Lancashire. This means that the name-types that characterise the Scandinavian settlements in Northern Scotland are not present in North-West England and South-West Scotland. There are admittedly many originally topographical names in these areas that have exact or close parallels in Orkney and Shetland but these names can just as well have been coined by Danes as by Norwegians. Although the place-names in *-skáli* 'shieling-hut' and *-sætr* 'shieling' in the Lake District, for example, have sometimes been taken as indicating Norwegian settlement, their evidence is not conclusive, for these generics do occur in Danish place-names, for example *skáli* in Løvskal in Jutland and *sætr* in Sædder in Sjælland (Jørgensen 1994, 190, 283). It is the local topography and the resulting agricultural practices and not necessarily a predominance of settlers of Norwegian origin that determine the more frequent occurrence in North-West England than in Denmark and the Danelaw of topographical names in *-dalr*, e.g. Patterdale 'Patrick's valley', and *-geil*, e.g. Skelgill 'ravine with a shieling-hut', and habitative names in *-skáli*, e.g. Portinscale 'the hut of the

town harlots', and *-sætr*, e.g. Ambleside 'the hut at the place known as "river sandbank"' (Fellows-Jensen 1985, 60, 152, 160, 210).

The really significant fact about the Scandinavian place-names in North-West England, however, is that the generic to occur most frequently here, as in all areas of Danish settlement in England is *-bý*. The names in *-bý* in North-West England are concentrated in the Eden valley, the Carlisle plain and the coastal plain of Cumberland and it can be seen that they also spread across the border into Dumfriesshire and some way up Annandale and Eskdale. In the light of my earlier work on the Scandinavian place-names to the east of the Pennines, I came to the conclusion that these *bý*s mark the arrival in Scotland of settlers from the Danelaw.

An interesting feature about the *bý*-names as a body in this region, however, is that many of them have as specifics a personal name which must be of Norman introduction, e.g. *Alain* in Allonby, *Wigan* in Wiggonby, *Lochard* in Lockerbie (NY 1381), and these are almost all found in and around Carlisle, in the coastal plain of Cumberland or in Dumfriesshire (Fellows-Jensen 1985, 22). It is clear that these twenty-eight *bý*s must be associated in some way with the plantation of Norman, Breton and Flemish settlers around Carlisle by William Rufus in 1092. The names have thus been considered to be evidence for the survival of *-bý* as a place-name-forming generic into the post-Conquest period. I argued, however, that they are more likely to represent partial adaptations of place-names in *-bý* that had originally been coined at the time when settlers from the Danelaw penetrated into Cumberland and Dumfriesshire (Fellows-Jensen 1985, 288). The distribution patterns of the *bý*s containing Nordic personal-names and those containing Norman ones show a negative correlation that in my opinion can best be explained as the outwards movement from Carlisle after 1092 of settlers with Norman names. Not everyone would agree with me. The philologist John Insley has pointed out that there is no firm evidence for the changing of place-names in southern Scotland (1986), while the geographer Brian Roberts considers that it is possible to detect visible elements of settlement morphologies that point to the development of villages as a post-1092 feature of the Eden valley (1989-90, 34-36).

I would nevertheless stand by my opinion that there is no reason to believe that the generic *bý* was used to coin names for completely new settlements in North-West England or South-West Scotland after the Norman Conquest. Geoffrey Barrow has pointed out that as the Norman settlers made their way up Annandale, they pushed beyond the concen-

tration of *bý*-names and came to a vill with an English name in *-tūn,* upon which they imposed a new specific *John* and transformed it into Johnstone (NT 2400) and not *Johnbie (Barrow 1980, 40 n. 37, 47). There are many settlement names in the Central Lowlands of Scotland which consist of a personal name of post-Conquest type and Old English *-tūn*, e.g. Stevenston (NS 2642). Barrow has argued that these names cannot all imply wholly new units of settlement but that many of them must be the result of partial or total renaming and I agree with him.

Some of the settlements may, of course, have been made on virgin land but I am more inclined to believe that settlements made on vacant land after clearing would have been given names in *-thveit*. This topographical generic, which originally denoted a 'clearing in woodland', would seem to have developed a quasi-habitative significance in England 'settlement in a clearing'. There are a few isolated occurrences in the Northern Isles, for example, Germatwatt (HU 244493) in Shetland and Twatt (HY 2724) in Orkney, but in mainland Scotland the generic *thveit* is almost only found in Dumfriesshire, where there are several instances in the hills and a cluster along the lower reaches of the Annan River. It seems likely to me that these *thveit*s reflect immigration from the Lake District and northern Yorkshire, in both of which regions *thveit*s are of common occurrence, for example Bassenthwaite 'Baston's clearing' in Cumberland, Husthwaite 'clearing with or for a house' in Yorkshire. The generic *thveit* occurs in both Norway and Denmark and we know that it was brought to England from Denmark early in the period of Viking settlement because of its occurrence in East Anglia, where there would not seem to have been new Danish settlement after 917 and where the corrupt surviving form of the name Crostwight in Norfolk suggests that the Nordic word soon dropped out of use in that county.

It was long believed that outside Dumfriesshire the only occurrence of a *thveit*-name in mainland Scotland was Moorfoot (NT 2952, *Morthwait* 1142) in Midlothian but Geoffrey Barrow has drawn my attention to an early spelling *Galtweied* of Galtway [gatta] (NX 7147) in Kirkcudbrightshire that seems to show that this name, too, contains the generic *thveit*. Both these names mark a movement outwards from Dumfriesshire of an element that had been introduced to this shire from the Lake District and northern Yorkshire, as suggested by the frequent parallels between the Dumfriesshire *thveit*-names and those in England.

There was also some dissemination of *bý*-names from Dumfriesshire

to Galloway. Seven such names are spread in a trickle along the lowlands: Bagbie (NX 492552), Bombie (NX 712502) and Mabie (NX 9470) in Kirkcudbrightshire, Applebie (NX 411409), Bysbie (NX 475359), Gribdae (*Gretby* 1356) (NX 7350) and Sorbie (NX 436408) in Wigtownshire (Fellows-Jensen 1991; Oram 1995). The settlements with these names show signs of having been squeezed in between pre-existing settlements. Many of the *býr*-names in Dumfriesshire and Galloway have parallels in England. These are Applebie, Bagbie, Bombay, two Bombies, Bysbie, Denbie, Esbie, *Gretby*, Newbie, Ouseby and two Sorbies. Richard Oram sees a linguistic divide between Mabie on the west side of the Nith estuary, marking the western limit of the Danish movement from the Vale of York, and the other Galloway *býr*s, which he thinks were more likely to have been introduced by Norse-speaking or Norse-influenced colonists arriving by sea (Oram 1995, 129-31). I would argue, however, that the many parallels to names in England point rather to the Danelaw and Cumbria as inspiration for all these names.

I also believe that it was at least in part from Dumfriesshire that the place-names in *-býr* spread to the Central Lowlands of Scotland (Fellows-Jensen 1989-90). This is not because their trail can be followed on the map. In fact, the only onomastic clue towards the route the names may have taken is the name Moorfoot in Midlothian. This name might seem to be very little on which to build a theory as to the route by which the Scandinavian place-names spread northwards but the only other possible land-route from the south, that along the coastal plains of Durham and Northumberland, can probably be ruled out, for Northumberland is a county utterly devoid of *býr*s (Watts 1995, 206).

There is, however, a considerable difference between the specifics in the *býr*s in the Central Lowlands as a body and those in Dumfriesshire, for in the former area 80% of the specifics are not personal names and there is not a single one containing a Norman or Flemish personal name. Of the twenty-five names in *-býr*, twenty-two have specifics which are certainly or potentially Scandinavian and all the names could have been coined by Scandinavian settlers in the Viking period, some of them perhaps, as suggested to me by Geoffrey Barrow, by men who had been settled there to watch the coasts and rewarded for their services by land or revenues. The problem is, however, to know whether these coast-watchers were placed there by Vikings in the period of lively communication between York and Dublin or by the King of Scots at a later date. The *býr*-names in the Central Lowlands as a group have a

closer similarity to those in the Danelaw than do those in Dumfriesshire. Begbie (NT 491708), the two Busbies (NS 239457; NS 392409), two Busbys (NS 582564; NO 032269), Corbie (NO 330230), Corsbie (NT 607442), two Crosbies (NS 217500; NS 344302), Gedbys (NT 260922), five Humbies (NT 460625; NT 116677; NT 114755; NS 548546; NT 196862), Leaston (*Laysynbi* 1294) (NT 485635), Newby (NT 265371), Ravensby (NO 536349), two Sorbies (NS 245446; NY 453846), Weathersbie (lost in Fife) and Weddersbie (NO 260130) all apparently have parallels there, and only Blegbie (NT 480617), containing the Nordic adjective *bleikr* 'pale', either describing the local vegetation or referring to the activity of bleaching, or perhaps the related by-name *Bleikr*, and Pogbie (NT 466607), containing Nordic *púki* 'evil spirit' would seem to be new creations.

Following a suggestion made by Barbara Crawford (1987, 100), I have noted that there are resemblances between the distribution of hogback tombstones, a distinctive form of Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture, and that of the place-names in *-bý* (Fellows-Jensen 1989-90). The hogbacks have been studied in great detail by J. T. Lang, who has shown that the style would seem to have originated in northern Yorkshire, probably in the neighbourhood of Brompton, where there is a particularly fine collection now, around the second quarter of the tenth century, that it spread along the Tees valley via the Stainmoor pass to the Eden valley and from there to the Carlisle plain, and that the fashion for such tombstones would seem to have died out in England by the end of that century (Lang 1972-74, 1984, 1994). There are very few hogbacks further south in the Danelaw or in English Northumbria. The hogbacks in Scotland can be shown to be later than, and derivative from, the English ones. The earliest ones in Scotland can probably be dated to the late tenth century, the rest to the eleventh. A stylistic and iconographic analysis of the corpus of hogbacks has revealed very clear affinities between those in Cumberland, for example the so-called "warrior's tomb" at Gosforth, and the ones in Scotland, for example those in Govan. It is probably not without relevance that many of the English *bý*-names which have parallels in Scotland are found in areas of northern Yorkshire where hogbacks abound. In the Vale of York and Craven we find settlements bearing the names Bagby, Busby, Danby, Eppleby, Lazenby and Sowerby.

Geoffrey Barrow, who has long been interested in the names in the Central Lowlands and has given me most generous help with early forms and identifications, has argued recently that the clusters in the area are disparate and hardly to be associated with each other (Barrow

1998, 70-72). There is a cluster of names of wholly Scandinavian character in East Lothian: Begbie, Blegbie, Pogbie, Humbie and *Laysynbi*, as well as Smeaton (NT 350694) (*Smithebi* 1154x59) in Midlothian, and Barrow looks upon these names as reflecting a genuinely Scandinavian settlement beneath the Lammermuir edge that lasted long enough for the names to endure into a period when a Scandinavian language had ceased to be in common use in the locality. Barrow also notes a smaller group of names in west Cunningham and north-west Kyle, Ayrshire: Sorbie, Busbie and two Crosbies, which might also possibly reflect Scandinavian settlement, while he seems convinced that this cannot be the case with names such as Corsbie in Berwickshire, Newby in Peeblesshire, Corbie, Gedbys, Humbie, Weathersbie and Weddersbie in Fife and Ravensby in Angus, and apparently takes these names as examples of the borrowing of Nordic place-name terms and forms into Scots-speaking and Gaelic-speaking societies of eastern and southern Scotland (Barrow 1998, 72).

Simon Taylor has also taken a look at the names in *-bý*, first in Fife (Taylor 1995) and then on the wider basis of the central and eastern lowlands of Scotland (Taylor 2001). In the earlier paper he makes the important point that if the names in *-bý* in Fife had been coined as early as the tenth century, they would have been expected to have undergone gælicisation in this subsequently almost exclusively Gaelic-speaking environment. An original **saurbý*, for example, containing Nordic *saurr* m. 'mud, sour ground' should have developed to Soroby in Fife, as in Tiree, rather than Sorbie (Taylor 1995, 148). The correct explanation for the name Sorbie in Fife was first revealed by Taylor in the 1999 paper. The Harrays family of Sorbie in Wigtownshire acquired the lands of Kingsmuir in Fife in the late eighteenth century and must have brought the name Sorbie with them to their new home. The earliest record of Sorbie in Fife is from c.1860 and this is clearly an instance of very late analogical naming. Only one of the names in *-bý* in Fife is recorded in an early source, Corbie (*Corbi* c.1231), but the others are found in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century documents. Although it is impossible to prove that any of them were coined in the Viking period, Taylor argues that their status and situations are such that their sites may well have been cleared and settled by those who named them and that these settlers may have arrived either in the late tenth century, together with the hogback tombstones, or in the twelfth century, when there is known to have been an influx of settlers into Scotland north of the Forth from Lothian and northern England.

In the more recent paper Taylor emphasises the significance of the fact that most of the *bý*-names in central and southern Scotland have parallels elsewhere in the British Isles and attempts to identify a political background against which the names may have been bestowed upon the settlements. He notes that when the place-names enter the written record, usually in the Late Middle Ages or the Early Modern period, they tend to be borne by settlements on royal land or in baronies held directly of the crown. He would therefore argue that the Scottish kings in the tenth century may have encouraged limited Scandinavian settlement within their kingdom, perhaps on land which had formerly been occupied and worked but had become waste as a result of unsettled conditions. He considers it less likely that the names were coined in the twelfth century, although the fact that the developments reflected in the names in Fife and Kinross are in keeping with those shown by similar names in Anglian-speaking Lothian and northern England makes me more inclined to think that the names were coined at this later date on analogy with names from further south and that their survival in "Anglian" form in Gaelic-speaking regions reflects the political control wielded there by David I and his successors. We should not, incidentally, forget that Malcolm III had many connections with Northumbria and that he is said to have planted "Irishmen" in the Central Lowlands in the eleventh century and that these "Irishmen" seem to have had Scandinavian connections and may have coined some place-names (cf. Crawford 2000).

In recapitulation I would argue that the majority of the Scandinavian place-names in South-West Scotland and the Central Lowlands reflect the influence of the English Danelaw. Some of the names in Dumfriesshire and Galloway may have been coined in the Viking period in connection with the general anti-clockwise movement out from the Danelaw at that time. To the Central Lowlands some of the names may have been brought in the late tenth century by the men who also brought the fashion for hogback tombstones from the Danelaw, others perhaps by men who were planted in Scotland by the Scottish kings in the twelfth century. The example of the name Sorbie in Fife shows that names could be given to settlements on analogy with the names of settlements further south as late as in the eighteenth century. In reality, the only method we have of dating the formation of the names, as opposed to the founding of the settlements bearing the names, is by noting their first occurrence in a written source. Such datings in Scotland tend to be very imprecise because small settlements could easily have been in ex-

istence for centuries without their names' being recorded in a source that has survived. Even though the coining of the names cannot be dated closely, however, it seems to me most likely that their source of inspiration lay in the Danelaw and Cumbria.

While the Danish influence on the place-names of Scotland would thus seem to be indirect, the Scottish influence on Danish personal names was in part direct and, being of a later date, better documented but it was more ephemeral. The presence of Scots in Denmark has been studied by Thorkild Lyby Christensen in an article entitled 'Scots in Denmark in the sixteenth century' (1970), by Allan Tønnesen in a monograph on the foreign citizens of, and inhabitants in, Elsinore between 1550 and 1600 (1985), and by Thomas Riis in his two-volume study of *Scottish-Danish relations c. 1450-1707*, which treats both military personnel and the more permanent immigrants, including wealthy merchants, refugees, pedlars and humble artisans (1988). These three works record many examples of names borne by Scots living in Denmark but the work that is of particular interest for the study of personal names is one by my Århus colleague Torben Kisbye, whose early death unfortunately meant that his ambitious socio-onomastic project on personal names in Denmark did not come to fruition.

The title of his article, which appeared in Danish in 1988, too early for him to have been able to exploit the material presented by Thomas Riis, can be translated as 'John Jamieson becomes Hans Jacobsen. The names of the Elsinore Scots – an example of transposed nomenclature'. By a transposed name Kisbye means here the replacement of a Scots name by its etymological equivalent or supposed equivalent in Danish. *John*, for example, is replaced by *Hans*, which is, like John, a development from the biblical name *Johannes* but one that had been borrowed into Danish from German in the middle of the fourteenth century. Since most of the Scots names were transposed by the Danish scribes and clergy who were responsible for keeping administrative, legal and ecclesiastical records, it can sometimes be very difficult to determine whether the bearer of a name is a Scot or a Dane. Kisbye developed some useful techniques for identifying bearers of apparently Danish names as being of Scottish origin and he is able to demonstrate that almost every forename of foreign origin was subjected to transposition in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the only exceptions being names which did not have easily recognisable Danish parallel forms, for example the name of the British saint *Ninian*, which was borne as forename by *Ninianus Blackj* in Elsinore in 1548, and some hereditary

surnames, e.g. *Craigingelt* and *Lyle*. A few of these surnames, usually those borne by families of a certain social standing, survived in use for generations, but in most cases the surnames disappeared and were replaced by Danish patronyms. The son of *Lauritz Fergusson*, for example, was baptised *Daniel Lauritzen* in 1600 and the son of *Frantz Birckie* was called *Hans Frandsen* in 1577. An example of the combination of a Danish patronym with a Scottish surname is the name of the famous Danish baroque poet *Thomas Hansen Kingo* (1634-1703). He was the son of a weaver, *Hans Thomassen Kingo*, who had come to Denmark with his father as a child.

The only occurrence of a *Mac*-surname in Kisbye's material is a *Iohanne Makgregor*, named in a copy of a Scottish charter in the Elsinore court records. It is possible that some *Mac*-patronyms are concealed behind Danish patronyms but it seems likely that most of the Scots in Denmark came not from Gaelic-speaking areas but from the harbour-towns along the east coast of Scotland, which had long been Scots-speaking, and the authorities at home in Scotland had also, of course, employed their own form of transposition. Refusing to accept Gaelic personal names, which they found barbaric, they had fixed substitutes for these names which were employed in official records. *Archibald*, for example, replaced Gaelic *Gilleasbuig*, and in later times Archibald and its short form *Archie* became very popular in Scotland. This practice of transposition probably lies behind the girls' name *Rachel*, given shortly before 1600 to a daughter of a butcher in Elsinore called *Anders Skotte* or *Anders Willumsen*. This feminine biblical name is not recorded in early sources in Denmark and it was not used in England until after the Reformation. It was, however, often employed in Scotland as a substitute for the Gaelic name *Raoghnaild* a name that was in turn a loan from Nordic *Ragnhildr* (Dunkling 1978, 115), so the Scottish butcher's daughter in Elsinore had in fact been given a heavily disguised Nordic name.

It seems to me that Torben Kisbye has on the whole done a very good job in identifying Scots in Denmark on the basis of their names but some errors can be pointed out. For example, the surname *Kirckilt* of *Mogens Nielsen Kirckilt*, mentioned in the Elsinore court records for 1563, which Kisbye, with reference to Tønnesen 1985, has identified (1988, 109) as a reflex of the Scottish place-name *Kirkcaldy*, must derive from the Danish place-name *Kirkelte* in Karlebo parish not far south of Elsinore (*Kirckiiholt* 1285), which is recorded as *Kirckilt* in 1582 (Jørgensen 1994, 156). This fact makes it much less likely that

Kirckilt's forename *Mogens* is a transposed form of Scots *Mungo*, as suggested by Kisbye, although a tailor named *Mungo Blackye* was admittedly registered as *Moenns Blackye* when he was given permission to set himself up in business with a stall in Elsinore (Kisbye 1988, 210). The girls' name *Gesse*, which Kisbye tentatively identifies as being a Low German hypocoristic form of a Continental Germanic name such as *Giseltrut* (Kisbye 1988, 112 and n. 51), is almost certainly a reflex of Scots *Jessie*, a diminutive of *Janet* (Dunkling 1978, 79), a name which is itself recorded with initial *G-* as *Genete*, e.g. *Genete Craigingelt* (Riis 1988, 58).

The major criticism that can be made of Kisbye's paper on transposition, however, is that he neglected to compare the body of Scottish forenames which he found in Danish sources with the body of names that was in use in contemporary Scotland. Roughly comparative material was readily available in Leslie Dunkling's *Scottish Christian Names* (1978), where the introduction (pp. 7-8) lists the names which occur most frequently in *The register of marriages for the parish of Edinburgh* for the period 1584-1700. Kisbye notes that the majority of the male Scots in Elsinore were called, or rather entered in the records as, *Anders*, *David*, *Hans, Jakob, Jørgen, Thomas*, *Sander* and *Villum*. These name-forms he rightly considers to reflect Scots *Andrew*, *David*, *John*, *James*, *George*, *Thomas*, *Alexander* and *William*. These eight names are among the nine most frequently occurring personal names in the Edinburgh register. The only Edinburgh name that is missing, number four in the list, is *Robert*, a name which Kisbye omitted from his survey because of the possibility of its being of German origin. Comparison with the Edinburgh material shows that Robert should be looked upon as a Scots name in Elsinore. The Edinburgh list also provides useful information about girls' names. The three names which occur most commonly among the Elsinore Scots are *Anne*, *Elisabeth* in various hypocoristic forms, and *Marine*. Kisbye argues that *Marine* is probably a substitute for *Mary* (1988, 112, n.49) but in the light of the fact that *Marion* was the fourth commonest name in Edinburgh and *Mary* only number thirteen on the hit-list, it seems more likely that *Marine* was a Danish substitute for *Marion*.

Five years before the appearance of his study of the names of the Elsinore Scots, Torben Kisbye had published a paper on personal names derived from the Ossianic poems (Kisbye 1983). A revised version of this paper appeared in English translation under the title 'The Ossianic names – A contribution to the history of Celtic personal names in Scan-

dinavia' in 1985 and my subsequent references will be to this later version, in which several errors have been corrected. The so-called Ossianic personal names, e.g. *Oskar*, *Orla*, *Selma*, *Malvina* and *Minona*, all derive ultimately from the works of the controversial Highland author and antiquary James Macpherson (1736-1796). When I was still a student of English literature in London, I looked upon the Ossianic poems as little more than a footnote to the fascination of the English poet Thomas Gray (1716-1771) with Old Norse literature. I was certainly surprised to find that Ossian played a quite prominent role in Danish cultural life, where Niels W. Gade's very popular overture entitled 'Nachklänge von Ossian' (1840) was performed at the very first orchestral concert that I attended in Copenhagen, and where the Danish artist Nicolai Abildgaard's painting 'Ossian sings to his own harp accompaniment' hangs in Statens Museum for Kunst and is frequently reproduced, and where the Danish author Steen Steensen Blicher's (1782-1848) translations of the Ossianic poems (1807-08) are probably better known than are Macpherson's originals in Britain.

Kisbye demonstrated in his paper how important it is to determine the immediate source of a loan-name and not just its ultimate origin. *Oskar*, for example, came to Denmark from Sweden in connection with an immigration of Swedish workers in the second half of the nineteenth century. Ultimately it owed its popularity in Sweden to Napoleon, who, as godfather, had bestowed the name Oscar upon the first-born son of one of his marshalls, Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, in 1799 (Kisbye 1985, 94). Bernadotte was subsequently made King of Sweden and his son succeeded him on the throne as Oscar I in 1844. In Denmark, Oskar, which originally had a modest number of bearers mainly of Swedish birth, temporarily became a so-called "idol-name", when Oscar I decided to side with Denmark in the war against Schleswig-Holstein, and it remained reasonably popular in the nineteenth century. There was a marked decline in the popularity of the name Oskar both in Denmark and to a lesser extent in Sweden, once the Swedish royal house stopped using it. There are, however, approximately 8,000 bearers of the name in Denmark today and the name has enjoyed a tremendous surge in popularity here since Kisbye's paper was published and is even expected to become an "over-fashionable" name (Meldgaard 1998, 117).

Orla, the name of a minor hero in the poems, was introduced to Denmark by a German-speaking family who called their son *Peter Martin Orla Lehmann* in 1810. This Orla Lehmann became a popular and influential National Liberal politician and advocate of constitutional gov-

ernment and the name Orla achieved a moderate popularity in Denmark. There are approximately 8,200 bearers of the name today, most of them probably rather elderly. Its comparative lack of success seems likely to reflect the fact that it is one of the very few names ending in *-a* in Danish which is not a girls' name.

Selma is a place-name in the poems but because it appears in such phrases as "the sons of Selma", translated into Danish as "Selmas sønner", it was mistakenly taken to be a feminine personal name. Kisbye explains its early popularity as a personal name in Sweden as a result of the popularity of the Selma poems by the Finno-Swedish poet Frans Michael Franzén (1772-1847). After its introduction to Denmark by Swedish immigrants, its popularity was further encouraged by the spread of the works of the Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf (1858-1940). The name Selma, with approximately 1,600 bearers, now seems to be enjoying a minor boom in Denmark (Meldgaard 1998, 240).

Another feminine name, *Minona*, was probably introduced to Denmark from Germany. The poems of Ossian influenced both Klopstock and Goethe and the latter included translations from the 1765 edition of Macpherson's work in his first novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* from 1774. The German-speaking Danish poet and critic Heinrich Wilhelm Gerstenberg, who was born in Tønder in 1737 and was responsible for arousing interest in Germany in Shakespeare and Danish ballads, composed a not very successful Ossianic tragedy entitled *Minona oder die Angelsachsen* in 1785. The literary influence led to a minor fashion in Ossianic personal names in German cultural circles. Minona von Stackelberg, born in 1813, was officially the daughter of the Hungarian Countess Josephine von Brunswick and the Russian Ambassador in Vienna, Count Gustav Magnus von Stackelberg. Her mother, however, is claimed to have said that the girl's father was in reality the composer Beethoven, from whom the countess is believed to have received a proposal of marriage before she married the Ambassador (Seibicke 1977, 243). In Denmark the name Minona did not come into use until the mid-nineteenth century. There are about 50 bearers of the name at the present time.

The only Ossianic name which was introduced to Denmark directly as a loan from the Ossianic poems would seem to be the feminine name *Malvina*. This makes its appearance as early as 1811 and occurs quite frequently there among upper- and middle-class families in the nineteenth century, probably as a result of literary influence (Kisbye 1985, 97). Strangely enough, Kisbye neglects to mention that Blicher, whose

free translations of the Ossianic poems into Danish were largely responsible for their great popularity in Denmark, gave the name *Malvina* to one of his daughters, who became his favourite one. At the present time there are approximately 220 bearers of the name Malvina in Denmark.

Several important points are raised by Kisbye's Ossian paper. Firstly, there is the problem of whether the personal names in question can really be considered to be of Celtic origin. Fiona Stafford's sober assessment of the poems themselves is that Macpherson "drew on traditional sources to produce imaginative texts not modelled on any single identifiable original" (Gaskill 1996, vii). This would also seem to be true of the personal names in the poems. As far as the routes taken to Denmark by the names are concerned, Kisbye has shown that these varied. Oskar came from France via Sweden, Orla from Germany, Selma from Sweden, and only Malvina was probably derived directly from Macpherson. There is also the question of "idol-names", which Kisbye had treated earlier (1984). The original popularity of Oskar among Danes in Denmark reflects the temporary popularity of Oscar I of Sweden, while that of Orla certainly reflects the popularity of Orla Lehmann. Once a name has achieved the status of an idol-name in a country, however, its survival depends not on the continued popularity of the idol concerned but upon the name's being adopted in general use. Most babies are not named directly after "idols" but rather after some relation, friend or acquaintance of the parents. The original model may be forgotten in the process.

There is a sting in the tail of this story. Oscar Wilde, whose father was eye-surgeon to King Oscar II of Sweden, was given the names *Oscar Fingal* (another Ossianic name) *O'Flahertie Wills Wilde* in 1854, perhaps as a gesture of respect to the Swedish monarch, but that it was also because of the literary and national background of the name is shown by his mother's comment in a letter to a friend: "He is to be called Oscar Fingal Wilde. Is not that grand, misty and Ossianic?" (quoted in Gaskill 1996, v). Probably as a result of Oscar Wilde's trial and public disgrace in 1895, which turned him into a kind of "anti-idol", the popularity of the name declined in the British Isles but it has survived, and not only as a name for dogs, as Charlotte Mary Yonge claimed was the case as early as in 1863 (2. 92), and *Oscar* may well come to experience the same kind of renaissance there as in Denmark.

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