Lexical influence of the 1767 Scottish Gaelic New Testament on the Manx Bible translation

CHRISTOPHER LEWIN

University of Galway

This article discusses two neologisms *eaghtyrys* 'authority' and *clooisag* 'pillow' introduced in the 1775 Manx New Testament, which incorporates a revision of the 1763 Gospels and Acts, adducing phonological, orthographical and circumstantial evidence to show that the revisers adapted these items from Scottish Gaelic *ùghdarras* and *cluasaig* in the corresponding passages in the 1767 Scottish Gaelic New Testament. This provides further evidence for the senior Manx clergy's interest in the other Gaelic languages, as seen also in their contact with James McLagan (Ó Muircheartaigh 2016) and John Kelly's pan-Gaelic lexicographical enterprises (Thomson 1990).

Keywords: Manx; Scottish Gaelic; Bible; translation; orthography; phonology; pan-Gaelicism

1. Introduction

The first part of the Manx Bible to be published was St Matthew's Gospel in 1748, in the final years of Bishop Thomas Wilson's long reign as Bishop of Sodor and Man (1697–1755). The translation and publication project continued under Wilson's successor, Mark Hildesley (bishop 1755–72), with the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles appearing in 1763, with financial assistance from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The 1748 and 1763 texts were based on a now lost manuscript translation made in the 1720s by Vicar General William Walker (1679–1729) (Stowell 1819: 171; MNHL MS 10537). In 1765 a translation of the Book of Common Prayer appeared, followed in 1767 by the second half of the New Testament (Epistles and Revelation), the same year as the publication of the first edition of the Scottish Gaelic New Testament. The Manx Old Testament appeared in two volumes in 1771 and 1772, followed in 1775 by both a single-volume New Testament and a complete Bible (Cubbon 1939: 764–6). The 1763 text of the Gospels and Acts was substantially revised for the 1775 editions by the clergymen Matthias Curghey (1699–1771) and James Wilks (1719–77) (Butler 1799: 238–9). The 1775 text was reproduced essentially unchanged in later editions, including the 1819 full Bible (reprinted in facsimile, 1979) which is the standard reference edition.

Christopher Lewin, University of Galway
Studia Celtica Fennica XIX (2023), 5–13, eISSN 2242-4261

It is known that the translators and editors of the Manx Bible consulted the available translations in other Gaelic languages, but it has been assumed that the influence was slight, owing primarily to difficulties of comprehension (Butler 1799: 477; Kelly 1866: 89; Thomson 1969: 193–4). This note presents evidence specifically showing that the 1767 Scottish Gaelic New Testament was consulted and influenced the introduction of two lexical items, *eaghtyrys* 'authority' and *clooisag* 'pillow' into the 1775 Gospels, which are not present in the 1763 version. It is evident from his extant manuscript book list (MNHL MS 00178A)[1] that the general editor of the Manx Bible, Philip Moore (1705–83), possessed a copy of the Scottish Gaelic New Testament, which he lent to his amanuensis and assistant John Kelly (1750–1809) on 24 August 1773, and to another of the Bible translators, Henry Corlett, on 20 November 1780. Moore also possessed an Irish Bible, which he lent to the translator of Ecclesiastes, Charles Crebbin (1736–1817) in May 1767.

Both of the cases discussed below involve the misinterpretation of Gaelic orthography, and the borrowing and adaptation of items not present in vernacular Manx. That those involved in the translation were at least potentially open to such interventions in the Manx lexicon is evident in the following comments in a letter from Bishop Hildesley to Philip Moore:

> We have some curious thoughts here, you must know, of attempting an English and Manks Dictionary; and thereby of recovering some of the many words that seem to have been lost in the latter tongue. The word *chumhach,* for power, is one: *pooar* is manifestly English. I have been teasing all our connoisseurs for a derivation of *sushtal* [*soiscéal* 'gospel'], which, at first, to a man, they were at a loss for: but we, (observe WE) are now agreed, that it must come from *seoseskeall* [*suas-scéal* or *scaoil*?].
>
> The Manks is a very ancient language, beyond doubt; and could we but get such a thing as an Erse Dictionary, we should be capable of improving, or rather restoring it. We have been able, with a little study and attention, clearly to make out the sense of every word in the Erse Lord's Prayer, baring two or three at the most and the specimen I sent you is, if possible, still more intelligible. (Bishop Hildesley > Philip Moore, 3 February 1764, in Butler 1799: 477; notes in square brackets by present author)

There are also numerous headwords adapted from Irish and Scottish Gaelic in John Kelly's Manx–English dictionary (Thomson 1969: 186–7; 1990). The latter work was begun in 1766 (Kelly 1804: iv),[2] apparently

1 I am grateful to Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh, University of Edinburgh, for supplying a transcription of this manuscript. See Ó Muircheartaigh (2020) for further details.

2 Early drafts of Kelly's Manx–English dictionary as well as his grammar survive in MNHL MS 01477, with a later draft of the Manx–English dictionary in MNHL MS 01045–01047A. The grammar was printed towards the end of its author's life (Kelly 1804), but the Manx–English dictionary did not appear until it was published posthumously in 1866 (Kelly et al. 1866). Kelly also authored a 'triglott' dictionary of English to Manx, Scottish Gaelic and Irish (Thomson 1969: 205–6). Printing of

inspired by the 'curious thoughts' recounted by Hildesley (cf. Thomson 1969: 186).[3]

It may be no coincidence that Hildesley mentions the example of *chumhach* [*leg. cumhacht*] in the above passage, and that this word occurs in the Irish translation of Luke 9:1, as discussed below. Even though these revisions would not bear fruit until 1775,[4] Hildesley was eager that work on revising the text of the Gospels and Acts should begin as soon as the 1763 edition was printed, as he explains in a letter to Thomas Wilson, the son of the late Bishop Wilson and owner of the manuscript of the Manx translation, a couple of weeks before the date of the above letter to Moore:

> The reason of my printing so few of these [the Manx *Christian Monitor* (Thomson 1998)] & the Gospels was, that we might have another Edition still more correct; for I think the Sacred Text cannot be too carefully translated. (Bishop Hildesley > Thomas Wilson, 18 January 1764, MNHL MS 10537)

Indeed, special interleaved copies of the 1763 volume were printed to accommodate the clergy's suggestions for corrections (MNHL 08059). It is conceivable that the matter of *pooar* 'power', 'authority' was discussed in this context. It would not be until 1767 at the earliest that *ùghdarras* could enter the discussion, however.

In any case, the excerpt above from Hildesley's letter to Moore would suggest that a group of senior clergy around Hildesley were actively interested in the Gaelic sister languages of Manx and in etymological speculation. They also had direct help from at least one Gaelic speaker, the Scot James McLagan (cf. Ó Muircheartaigh 2016), as John Kelly relates:

> When the Rev. Philip Moore and myself were engaged in preparing the Manks translation of the Holy Scriptures for the press, the Rev. — Mc. Laggan, [*sic*]

this began in 1809 but came to nothing in a fire in the printing shop. Manuscripts of this survive (MNHL MSS 02045, 00051), as well as a section of the proofs corrected in Kelly's hand (MNHL MS 00422B), and these were consulted in the production of the English–Manx section of the 1866 publication (Wheeler 2020), although this is largely a new compilation.

3 There was also financial inducement: according to Philip Moore in a letter to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 'the late good bishop had engaged him [Kelly] in forming a Vocabulary or Dictionary of the language, with a promise of ten guineas, when finished'; upon considering the matter, the SPCK resolved to give Kelly 'one hundred pounds, or guineas, as Mr. Moore should think proper' (Butler 1799: 234).

4 Some minor alterations were made in the 1769 second edition of the published Manx translation of the Book of Common Prayer (lessons from the Gospels and Acts in the 1765 first edition having reproduced the 1763 text), but in general the 1769 emendations appear to be independent of those which appear in the 1775 New Testament and the 1777 third edition of the Prayer Book (Wheeler 2021b).

> chaplain to his Majesty's 42nd Regiment of Highlanders, frequently visited us and often assisted us in the recovery or the application of obsolete words, and assured us that he made use of no other Bible in his regiment but the Irish Bible, which had been published by Bishop Bedell, from whence I conclude that these three languages are the same, though I must observe that the Manks tongue is more corrupt than theirs, having a mixture of Danish and English words, in consequence of this island having been so long under the government of Norway. (Kelly 1866: 89)

Despite McLagan's reported loyalty to the Irish Bible, he had a close connection to the Scottish Gaelic New Testament, later marrying the daughter of the translator (Thomson 2004). It is plausible that it was via McLagan that a copy or copies of the Gaelic translation reached Man. A further example of influence from the pre-existing Gaelic translations is the notorious example of *muc-awin* (as if *muc abhann* 'river pig') for 'bear', as Kelly reports:

> MUC-AWIN. s. a bear. (Ir. *magh-ghamhuin* which see.) This word was used in the translation of the Bible for bear, from supposing that the Irish word *gamhuin* signified a river; but it means *gauin*, a heifer, or the young of any large quadruped (Kelly 1866: 136)

The examples analysed in this article demonstrate that the Manx clergy responsible for the Bible translation showed more interest in the other Gaelic versions than has hitherto been appreciated, and provide further illustration of the network of intellectual exchange across the Gaelic world to which certain of the Manx clergy belonged in the 1760s and 70s (Ó Muircheartaigh 2016; 2022). The present discussion also shows that interest in inter-Gaelic etymological speculation, however misguided by the standards of modern linguistics, was by no means restricted to John Kelly's lexicographical projects, and that he likely took his cue from the more senior figures with whom he worked, including Bishop Hildesley himself.

2. *EAGTYRYS* 'AUTHORITY'

This word, ostensibly a derivative of *uachtar* (Manx *eaghtyr*) 'surface, upper part', occurs only once in the corpus of Manx texts, in the 1775 revision of Luke 9:1:

> Eisht deïe eh er y daa ostyl yeig cooidjagh, as hug eh daue pooar as **eaghtyrys** harrish dy chooilley ghrogh-spyrryd, as dy lheihys doghanyn.
>
> *Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and* ***authority*** *over all devils, and to cure diseases.* (Luke 9:1, 1775 Manx New Testament)

The 1763 edition has *reill* lit. 'rule' instead of *eaghtyrys*:

> Eisht deïe Eh er y daa ostyl yeig cooidjagh, as hug Eh daue pooar as **reill** harrish dy chooilley ghrogh-spyrryd, as dy lheihys doghanyn. (Luke 9:1, 1763 Manx Gospels and Acts)

Elsewhere in the Manx scriptures, 'authority' is rendered by a loose equivalent, most usually *pooar* 'power', and twice by the loanword *'torrity*, which is also attested in the wider corpus. There is no evidence for *eaghtyrys* in the wider corpus, beyond Kelly's dictionary (1866 [1766–]), who cites the above biblical passage; it is not in Cregeen (1835). It seems likely, then, that this item derives from an attempt to interpret Scottish Gaelic *ùghdarras* in the 1767 New Testament:

> Agus ghairm sè a dhà-dheisciobul-deug ann ceann a chéile, agus thug è cumhachd agus **ùghdarras** doibh air na h uile dheamhnaibh, agus chum easlaintidh a leigheas. (Luke 9:1, 1767 Scottish Gaelic New Testament)

This would give something like **oodyrys* in Manx orthography, but the reviser of the Manx text evidently interpreted <gh> with its Manx value in this position, namely /x/. The resultant form, even if a ghost word in origin, is quite appropriate semantically, and may have been easily accepted by Manx readers and listeners: compare the familiar phrase *laue yn eaghtyr* (Ir. *lámh in uachtar*) 'the upper hand'. It is clear that the influence is from the Scottish New Testament, as the earlier Irish translation has *neart agus cumhachda* 'strength and power' here:

> Agus ar ngairm a dhá dhisgiobal dég dhó, tug sé neart agus **cumhachda** dhóibh ar na huile dheamhnuibh, agus ar easláintibh do leigheas (Luke 9:1, 1601 Irish New Testament)

The base form *ughdar* 'author' is similarly unattested in the Manx corpus, but is adapted into Manx as **ughtar* by Kelly in his dictionary. The assumption that *eaghtyr* (*uachtar*) is identical with *ughdar* is apparent in the entry for *eaghtyr* in the dictionary:

> EAGHTYR s. pl. YN. the surface, the scum, the cream of milk, &c.; a superior; also, an author. (Kelly 1866: 70)
>
> UGHTAR s. an author. (Kelly 1866: 187)

Neither *ughtar* nor the addition of 'author' to the definition of *eaghtyr* are found in the earliest manuscript of Kelly's Manx–English dictionary (MNHL MS 01477), which generally excludes Kelly's later Gaelic borrowings and speculations.[5]

5 For discussion of these, see Thomson (1990).

3. *CLOOISAG* 'PILLOW'

This is a near *hapax legomenon* in the 1775 revision of Mark 4:38:

> As v'eshyn ayns jerrey ny lhuingey ny chadley er **clooisag**
>
> *And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow* (Mark 4:38; 1775 Manx New Testament)

The 1763 version of the above passage has the loanword *pillow*, which also occurs elsewhere in the Bible (also pl. *pillaghyn*):

> As ve eshyn ayns jerrey ny luingey ny chadley er **pillow** (Mark 4:38, 1763 Manx Gospels and Acts)

The word *clooi(e)sag* appears in Cregeen's dictionary and in a nineteenth century religious tract *Joseph Boght* (c. 1822) (Wheeler 2021a) translated from an English original, as well as in a translated text from 1913 by revivalist H. Percy Kelly (1880–1938). However, these seem likely to derive from the Biblical example, and there is no evidence for vernacular use of the word.

> **clooiesag** s. f. a bolster of feathers; pl. -yn. (Cregeen 1835)
> Hug eh eisht e laue fo yn **chlooisag**, as ghow eh shenn chlout, ayn va kianlt seose queig guinneeyn as hug eh eh ayns laue yn Taggyrt
>
> *He then put his hand under the pillow, and took an old rag, in which were tied up five guineas, and putting it into the Doctor's hand* (*Joseph Boght*, Wheeler 2021a)

> As eisht she "Hoie Vie, as cur lhiu ta mee guee, / Meer y verreen dy chur fo yn **chlooisag** 'syn oie"
>
> *And then it's "Good-night," and "I hope you will take, / For under the pillow, a bit of the cake."* ('Mr. Gill's "Manx Wedding" translated into Manx Gaelic', H. Percy Kelly, *Isle of Man Examiner*, 3 May 1913)

The word would appear to be cognate with Scottish Gaelic *cluasag* (G. *cluasóg*), a derivative of *cluas* 'ear' (cf. Welsh *clustog*, perhaps modelled on French *oreiller*). The word form in the Manx text poses a number of phonological problems, however, which suggest it may have in fact been consciously adapted from the Scottish form. Firstly, a long vowel or diphthong in the first syllable usually correlates with stress shift and length maintenance in the second syllable (Lewin 2020: 362); and secondly, we would expect a fronted vowel as the usual reflex of G. /uə/, as in *cleaysh* 'ear' /kliəʃ, kləːʃ/ (Lewin 2020: 252–3), giving **cleaysage* /kliəˈsɛːg/ as the expected form. The spelling <ooi> (usu. = /u/ or /uː/ preceding a palatalized consonant) is also odd, since in cases where the back value of /uə/ is maintained the usual spelling is <ooa> or <ua>; there is no merger with /uː/ in eighteenth-century Manx.

It seems more likely that the insertion of *clooisag* into the revised text of Mark 4:38 represents an attempt to interpret and adapt the Scottish form *cluasag*. It would appear the Manx editors failed to recognize *cleaysh* (*cluas*) here, and instead made an association with *clooie* /klu:i/ ‘down, feathers’ (*clúmh*, ScG. *clòimh*), a folk etymology also seen in Cregeen’s definition. It is not impossible that this is an inherited Manx word after all, and that such a folk etymology served to inhibit the usual development, but the lack of wider attestation and the evidence of a willingness to adapt Gaelic forms in the Manx text would seem to tilt the balance of probability in favour of the latter option. Again, the Irish translation has a different word here, so the Scottish origins of the loan are clear:

> Agus bha eisean ann an deireadh na luinge, ’n a chodal air **cluasaig** (Mark 4:38, 1767 Scottish Gaelic New Testament)
>
> Agus dobhí seisean ar an dtileadh ana chodladh ar **chearchaill** (Mark 4:38, 1601 Irish New Testament)

Kelly (1866: 45) gives a form *cleayshteig* ‘a pillow, a cushion’, otherwise unattested. This would appear to represent the regular expected development with fronting of *ua* and stress shift outlined above, albeit with palatalized medial consonants and added *t*. These idiosyncrasies might suggest this is a genuine form, although it may simply be that Kelly at some point realized, or guessed, the true etymology of *cluasag* and created this form accordingly. In favour of its genuineness, it appears in the earlier manuscript of Kelly’s dictionary (MNHL MS 01477), although it seems to have been added later.

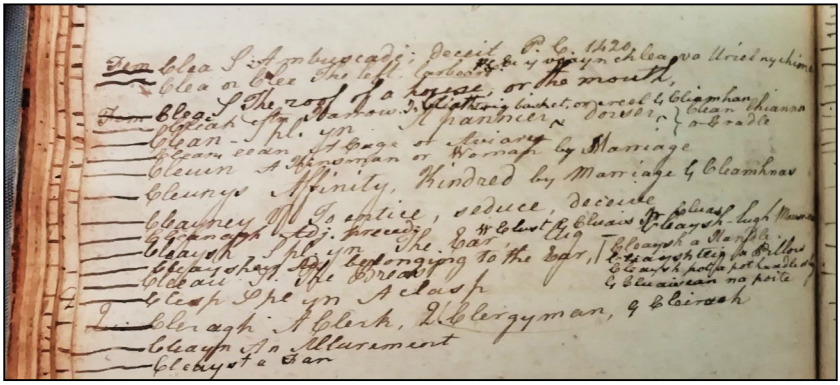

Figure 1. Items in <cle->, John Kelly’s draft dictionary (c. 1766–) (MNHL MS 01477)

Abbreviations

MNHL Manx National Heritage Library (Manx Museum, Douglas, Isle of Man)

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