

UNDER THE ‘THREE-LEGGED-SWASTIKA’:
Celtic Studies and Celtic Revival in the Isle of Man
in the context of National Socialist / Fascist ideology¹

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1. The Three-Legs and Swastika as symbols in Man

The “Three-Legs” or “Triskele” is the national symbol of the Isle of Man, and on the national flag it is found in the centre of a red field. The Three Legs symbol has a long association with Man. Heraldically, the kings of Man bore, at least from the thirteenth century, the three-legs clad in chain mail. They are found in four places on the medieval Manx Sword of State. The earliest known documented record, dated 1277, is at the end of the French Wijnbergen Roll (Brault 1993).² The first known visual representation agreeing with the foregoing is to be found in the Armorial de Gelre (ca. 1370-80).³ In Manx folklore *Manannan Beg Mac y Leir* (G. *Manannán Mac Lir*), the protective god of Man and its people, is said to roll down from the mountain top against Man’s enemies in the form of a fiery three-legs as part of his protective mechanism (Morrison 1911(1929): 181-82), and as such this association may predate the Scandinavian period in Man (10th-13th centuries).

The Swastika has also a long association with Man and is found on a number of runic crosses of 10th century date in the form of a so-called “Fylfot or spiral-headed Gammadion” (Kermode 1907: 29). On Thorwald’s Cross-Slab from Andreas (Andreas 128; cf. Cubbon 1977: 32-33) the Swastika seems to appear three times, twice spiral-headed (anti-clockwise) and once as a simple design (clockwise).⁴

1 This paper was first read at the two-day conference *Keltologie an der Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität vor und während des Nationalsozialismus* held at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin 27-28 March 1998 and published under the title ‘Under the ‘Three-Legged Swastika’: Celtic Studies and the Celtic Revival in the Isle of Man in the context of the ‘National Socialist Idea’ in Heinz (1999: 195-209), and in a partially revised, enlarged and updated version published in Fischer, Ó Dochartaigh, Kelly-Holmes (eds.) (2004): 39-50. Here with minor revision and enlargement 2015.

2 Here the arms are described thus: “Roy de Men: *Gules, three mailed legs embowed and conjoined at the thighs Argent, spurred Or*” (Brault 1993: 27-36).

3 cf. Dunbar (1890-91): 9-18, Plate 1.

4 The precise number of Swastikas is difficult to discern from the pattern on the stone. The original pattern is damaged, and later graffiti may easily be confused.

Concerning the above patterns my friend and colleague Dr. Ross Trench-Jellicoe recently noted that “the fylfots Kermode cites are degenerations of spiral bosses with snakes emerging from them to interweave, while the possible example on Andreas 28 is certainly an ambivalent motif in so far as those who commissioned the monument may have wished to use a swastika-like motif (in the negative of the relief) to refer back to pagan symbolism and perhaps synthesise Cross & Swastika (although I would not buy such an argument) but the motif itself derives from the design of a cross head produced from formalised twisted strands, much as a step pattern is also derived from a formalised and angularised two-strand twist” (Dr. Ross Trench-Jellicoe,

2. The Three-Legs and Swastika as symbols in the Manx cultural revival

However, in the 1920s both symbols became associated with Manx cultural organisations and were loosely referred to as a “Swastika”. In November 1924 the Manx cultural gathering *Cruinnaght Vanninagh Ashoonagh (sic)* (‘Manx National Gathering’) was established. This evolved from an idea based on that of the Welsh National Eisteddfod suggested at the Annual General Meeting of the World Manx Association (WMA) in Douglas in May of that year, and developed under the auspices of the WMA in tandem with *Yn Çheshaght Ghailckagh* (‘the Manx Gaelic Society’) (YCG), whose secretary J. J. Kneen gave the *Cruinnaght* its title.⁵

The emblem of the World Manx Association, then as now, shows a Viking ship in full sail, bearing a black Swastika (in the form that we now know it, with four angular legs running anti-clockwise) in the centre of the sail. The emblem used on the Gold and Silver medals awarded at the first *Cruinnaght* (1924) came from an idea suggested by William Cubbon,⁶ Librarian at the Manx Museum (1922-32), then its Director (1932-40), and was described on page 11 of the subsequent official report (MM.L3) as “a primitive Swastika design”. The design, even today, is a Triskele with curved legs running clockwise.

It seems therefore that for the period ca.1920-1945, i.e. the period under discussion, both symbols were loosely termed “Swastika” in cultural circles in Man and seem to have been closely associated with one another. Both symbols are still in use in Man today; the Three-Legs as the National Symbol is used ubiquitously in various forms, including at the present *Yn Chruinnaght* (see above), while the Swastika remains the emblem of the World Manx Association, though the WMA and *Yn Chruinnaght* are no longer connected organisationally and earlier close associations no longer obtain.

3. National Socialist / Fascist ideology in ethnicity and identity in Man

The 1924 *Cruinnaght* formed part of the surge in interest in Manx language and culture then prevalent in Man. The inspiration for this came from Ireland in the closing decades of the 19th century, the founding of *Yn Çheshaght Ghailckagh* in 1899 as the main promoter of Manx Gaelic, then as now, taking its cue from *Conradh na Gaeilge* ‘the Gaelic League’ set up in Ireland in 1893. Such a surge formed part of a general

Lancaster, pc. 04.06.1999).

5 The *Cruinnaght Vanninagh Ashoonagh* (i.e. *Cruinnaght Ashoonagh Vanninagh*) ran until 1940. It was revived by Mona Douglas (see below) in 1977 under the title *Yn Chruinnaght* (‘the gathering’). The earlier events were mainly Manx Dialect (Manx English)-based and served to promote the memory of Manx dialect poet T. E. Brown. The event today is essentially an Inter-Celtic dance festival with peripheral events serving the interests of Celtic traditional music, song, poetry, etc. The only common bond between the two is the Triskele of the 1924 event.

6 cf. minutes of a *Cruinnaght* meeting of July 16, 1924 (MM.Ms.L3). Cubbon was also one of Prof. Carl Marstrander’s colleagues in Man during the latter’s visits (see below).

movement throughout Western Europe in matters to do with ethnicity and identity which promoted the “exaltation of the native thing”, e.g. language, music, song, dance, folklore, etc, and in some places included exaltation of the ethnic grouping, employing terminology such as “race”, “blood”, “blood and soil (*Blut und Boden*)”, as a fundament to the concept of identity: “Manxness”, “Irishness”, “Germanness”, etc. In the promotion of the foregoing, particularly where revival activity may be involved, an element of kitsch and pseudo-tradition can be found mixed in as part and parcel of the whole, but which has little or nothing to do with historical reality. In Germany, for instance, although promotion of, and interest in, most if not all the foregoing took place long before 1933, these concepts 1933-45 fell under the auspices of the Nazis (National Socialists in Germany).⁷ For our purposes here the term “National Socialist/Fascist Ideology”, hereinafter “1930s sentiments”, is used to embrace the foregoing in the ideology of ethnicity and identity in a cultural, not a political context.⁸ It was in Germany under the Nazis particularly that the “exaltation of the native thing” in all its facets was perfected to a fine art.⁹

Fervent interest in 1930s ideology in many of its facets took place also in Man in the period under discussion (see below). From the beginning and even today, interest in and enthusiasm for matters Manx, particularly the language, is linked in the minds of many Manx people with pride in “Manxness” and Manx national identity, hence the YCG motto *gyn çhengey, gyn çheer* ‘no language, no country’.¹⁰

4. Academic activity in Man in the context of 1930s sentiments

Concomitant with a surge in the promotion of matters Celtic at this time was an awakening of interest on the academic scene. In Man¹¹ the main thrust came in the personage of Carl J. S. Marstrander (1883-1965), Professor of Celtic Languages in the University of Oslo, who visited Man 1929, 1930, and 1933 to record the remnants of Manx Gaelic speech (Marstrander 1929-33a). Marstrander was a Norwegian nationalist and patriot and was not immune from the surge in interest and feelings in matters Germanic of the period. According to his diary (Marstrander 1929-33b), Marstrander

7 ‘National Socialism’ as a concept, though nowadays associated with Hitler’s Germany, is not a German creation. The combination of these two notions to form a specific idea is older. An early appearance of these two notions occurred in Ireland and was seemingly first used, in the context of Irish independence aspirations, by the Irish Revolutionary leader James Connolly in his treatise *Socialism and Nationalism* of 1897 (cf. Connolly 1897). It goes without saying, of course, that these notions mean different things to different people at different periods. But this lies outwith the scope of the present discussion.

8 National Socialism in Germany had a strong racial component and anti-semitic slant. Though there may have been a racial component in equivalent ideas in Man during our period and after (see below), there is, so far as I am aware, no anti-semitic content in the Manx cultural movement.

9 For details as to how this manifested itself, see Dow & Lixfeld 1993 and Lixfeld and Dow 1994.

10 This is made quite clear in the article “Language is Central to National Identity” in *Yn Pabyr Seyr* The Manx Free Paper, Issue No. 16 (July 1995), published by the Manx Nationalist organisation *Mec Vannin*.

11 Initial academic interest in matters Manx began with Edward Lhuyd’s investigations of 1703/04 (cf. Lhuyd 1707, Thomson 1969, Ifans & Thomson 1979-80) and in the 19th century by John Rhŷs (cf. Rhŷs 1894).

obtained samples of Manx speech from some 36 informants. But all the time he was looking for someone from whom he could learn good Manx, and finally he found him in Thomas Christian, Ramsey, (his main informant) whom he described as

[...] an excellent old man, a Nordic type through and through. (Marstrander 1929-33b: 47).

For Marstrander, a Nordic type obviously possesses the following attributes. Marstrander (1929: 33b: 48) continues:

Here I seem finally to have found the man to work with. His pronunciation is clear; the man is intelligent, patient, and understands that he can be of great service to scholarship by making himself available. He answers small test examples quickly and idiomatically (Marstrander 1929-33b: 48).

Marstrander was very sympathetic to the Manx local historian and language enthusiast J. J. Kneen referred to above, whose work on Manx place-names (Kneen 1925-28) he praises highly (Marstrander 1929-33b), to such an extent that he obtained £200 from the Fridjof Nansen Fund in Norway for Kneen to continue his academic work. In his letter to Kneen dated 16.10.1929,¹² Marstrander, in his capacity as the Nansen Fund's "delegate to the Island", says that he was able to persuade the Fund to support Kneen's Manx place-name research by emphasising the Norwegian connection with Man:

[...] Neither can they forget that the population of the Island is to a great extent of Norwegian origin, that for centuries the Isle of Man was held and cultivated by our ancestors and that even at the present day the place-names of every parish bear testimony to this ancient chapter of our common history (Letter Marstrander-Kneen 16.10.1929, J. J. Kneen Papers, MNHL).

The evident over-emphasis of the Norwegian connection, still in place today,¹³ was clearly to obtain funding for Kneen. Marstrander himself, in his work on Manx place-names (cf. Marstrander 1932, 1934), would have known perfectly well that the overwhelming majority of the extant place-names in Man are of Gaelic provenance. In addition, an examination of Manx surnames in the local telephone directory reveals a Gaelic-Scandinavian proportion of roughly 2 : 1 in favour of Gaelic.

However, also in line with some of the thinking of his time Marstrander was also prone to apparent anti-semitic sentiment. This is to be found in the material collected from his main informant, Thomas Christian, published in *A Handbook of Late Spoken*

¹² Letter: Marstrander-Kneen 16.10.1929 (J. J. Kneen Papers, MNHL).

¹³ The Isle of Man's national parliament, Tynwald (Sc. *thing-völlr* 'assembly field'), is believed by many in Man today to have been established by the Vikings, a thesis promoted also by the island's Department of Tourism. However, in spite of the name, this assembly shows parallels with the Irish *óenach* 'popular assembly, gathering, fair' (cf. DIL/O:103). The Tynwald Fair (held traditionally every 5 July (Old Midsummer's Day) at which the Manx parliament meets in open-air session to promulgate the laws (in Manx and English) passed since the previous 5 July) even today exhibits a number of aspects (e.g. the strewing of the rushes as rent to Manannan, the white tent on the hill, the Three Legs design on the national flag, etc) that are in all probability pre-Scandinavian in origin (cf. Megaw 1976/78), though it is not known how long each has been associated with the Tynwald Fair itself. On this subject see now Broderick 2003.

Manx (cf. Broderick 1984-86). In Vol. 2 Dictionary we find the following examples requiring translation into Manx:

1. Under the item *Hew* ‘Jew’ (p. 220) ‘I hate the Jews’, Mx. *ta feoh aym er ny Hewnyn*. Informant Thomas Christian, Ramsey.
2. Under the item *custey* ‘accursed, damned’ (p. 115) from the same informant we find ‘he is a damned Jew’, Mx. *t’eh ny Hew custey*.

It is evident from Marstrander’s diary (cf. above quote about Christian) that the test samples emanated from himself and not volunteered by his informants, and this appears to be the case also with Christian. The fact that such samples were elicited at all would indicate that even in Man at that time the expressing of anti-semitic sentiment evidently did not cause offence.

5. Nazi academic interest in matters Manx

The Nazis took a keen interest in matters Celtic (including Manx), especially the *SS-Wissenschaftsamt* (‘Office of Academic Studies’) *Ahnenerbe* (‘heritage of the forefathers’), set up in 1935 by Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler and two others and attached to the SS. This Amt was renamed ‘Amt A’ within the *Hauptamt* (main office) of Himmler’s personal staff in 1942. The purpose of *Ahnenerbe der SS* was evidently to attract specialists in a number of fields of study that could also serve the political interests of the state (cf. Simon (1985a, 1985b), Lerchenmüller (1997: 265, note 88)). One such field was devoted to matters Celtic and was headed by Prof. Dr. Ludwig Mühlhausen (1888-1956) who became Professor of Celtic in Berlin in 1936 on the enforced resignation of his Jewish¹⁴ predecessor Julius Pokorny (1887-1970). Mühlhausen joined the NSDAP (Nazi Party) in 1932 and the SA in 1933, and in 1943 transferred to the SS. In December 1936 Mühlhausen and others set up in Berlin the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für keltische Studien* ‘German Society for Celtic Studies’ (DGKS) which had as its *Geschäftsführer*, or manager, the West Prussian Celticist Gerhard von Tevenar (1912-1943), already referred to, and the renowned Celtic scholar Rudolf Thurneysen (1857-1940) as its honorary president; Mühlhausen was president. By 1942 through Mühlhausen’s endeavours the DGKS (along with the Celtic studies periodical *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, with vols. 22 (1941) and 23 (1943) entitled *Zeitschrift für keltische Philologie und Volksforschung* under Mühlhausen’s editorship) had come under SS control.¹⁵

¹⁴ According to Heinrich Wagner (pc. Dublin 1982), a student of Pokorny in Zürich 1944-45, Pokorny’s father was Jewish but not Pokorny himself, who was brought up as a Roman Catholic in Vienna. For further details, see Lerchenmüller (1997: 283).

¹⁵ Bundesarchiv Abteilung III, Akte Mühlhausen M/32 (courtesy Dr. Gerd Simon, Tübingen); Lerchenmüller 1997. See also Ó Dochartaigh (2003: 77).

In addition to his duties as *Geschäftsführer* of the DGKS Tevenar evidently had an interest in Celtic fringe matters (Lerchenmüller 1997: 387), including Manx; it could be said that he was the DGKS's 'specialist' for Manx. In September 1941 he delivered a lecture on the Isle of Man, its history, constitution, traditions, language, cultural promotion, etc, entitled *Die völkische Eigenart der Insel Man* ('the ethnic peculiarity of the Isle of Man') at a joint symposium of the DGKS and a science ministry sponsored initiative (primarily directed against England) styling itself *Kriegs-einsatz der Geisteswissenschaften* ('deployment of the Humanities in wartime') at Wernigerode, Sachsen-Anhalt (Tevenar 1941a). It is clear from the contents of the published version of the lecture that, in spite of one or two minor slips, Tevenar was fairly *au fait* with the Manx situation. It is also clear that he had made contact with Man (probably with J. J. Kneen himself), since it is Kneen's unpublished language map of Man (drawn in 1910 and in 1997 discovered in his papers at the Manx Museum) which appears with one or two modifications in Tevenar's article.¹⁶

The Irish Rising of 1916 and its aftermath had made clear to the Nazis that it was possible for a Celtic country to detach itself from its dominant neighbour, and SS interests in matters Celtic evidently had as an aim, in a British Isles context, to fragment English control through support for political and cultural movements in the Celtic countries, hence especial interest in the Celtic Congress (cf. Tevenar 1941a: 289).¹⁷ Tevenar was also the author of an obituary and *laudatio* to J. J. Kneen after Kneen's death in November 1938 (Tevenar 1941b).

6. The Manx cultural revival in the context of 1930s sentiments

The cultural revival in Man can be shown to have taken place in three phases: Phase 1 embraces the period from the closing decades of the 19th century to ca. 1930, Phase 2 from ca. 1930 to ca. 1940-45, Phase 3 from ca. 1945 to the present. Pertinent to our topic here would be Phase 2. Personal enquiry seems to indicate that the Manx revival

¹⁶ In fact under his printing of the map Tevenar acknowledges that the information concerning the state of Manx is *nach einheimischen Schätzungen aus der Zeit um 1910* 'according to local estimates around the time 1910'.

¹⁷ The Celtic Congress before the Second World War was the main Celtic politico-cultural movement, with branches in all six Celtic countries (*viz.* Scotland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany). After the war the political aspect was taken over by the Celtic League, founded in 1961 by Alan Heusaff (and others), a Breton nationalist who lived in Co. Galway, Ireland, till his death in 1999. The Celtic Congress is now a purely cultural movement comprising an ageing membership.

However, even within the Celtic Congress itself allusions to the Third Reich could still manifest themselves, albeit in jest. On page [22] of the first issue of the bilingual Manx-English *Lioaran y Banglane Manninagh jeh'n Cohionnal Celtiagh* 'the Bulletin of the Manx Branch of the Celtic Congress' August 1954 (Manx Museum Ms.13/6) the following occurs. The English version runs: 'It is with great pleasure that I say that the winter Manx Gaelic Concentration Camp of last year was the most successful that was ever held. Last September, we sent fifty people to the Calf of Man. At the end of the winter they all spoke Manx - that is, those who were left; a peculiar thing this, but some did not want to stay on the island - most of these were drowned in the Sound. Here's luck to the Commandant of the Camp, who himself arranged the barbed wire, the searchlights and the watch dogs. The future of Manx is assured while there exist such true Manxmen as the Commandant and his willing fellow workers'. The piece is, needless to say, anonymous.

received a second major impetus in enthusiasm ca.1930 lasting till just after the outbreak of the Second World War. The catalyst here seems to have been Marstrander's visits of 1929, 1930, and 1933 which encouraged language enthusiasts to seek out those still alive who had learned Manx from the cradle (Broderick 1999). In addition to the language enthusiasts, two main activists at that time figure in Phase 2. They were J. J. Kneen (1872-1938) and Mona Douglas (1898-1987).

J. J. Kneen, also active during Phase 1, was a producer of mint rock by profession who found time to be a productive local historian. He brought out a six-volume work on Manx place-names (Kneen 1925-28), a Manx grammar (Kneen 1931), and a work on Manx personal names (Kneen 1937), not to mention a flood of smaller works, including a number of plays, connected with the Manx Revival (see Cubbon 1933, 1939). As we have seen, Marstrander was generous in his praise of Kneen's efforts during his visits to Man (Marstrander 1929-33b). Kneen was active in YCG, holding the posts of secretary and latterly of president.

Mona Douglas, a rural librarian and journalist by profession, was also involved in Phase 1. As a protégée of Sophia Morrison (active in Phase 1), she collected folksong and folkdance material at a time (particularly in the 1920s) when scant attention was apparently being paid to things Manx, collecting from ca.1912 to ca.1930 from some of the last bearers of the relevant traditions (see Douglas & Foster 1928, 1929, 1957; Cubbon 1933, 1939; also Speers 1997). Mona Douglas was also a poetess and romantic, and some of her poetry about Man was inspired by the 1916 Rebellion in Ireland (Douglas [1916], 1919). In 1931 she (with others) founded the Manx youth movement *Aeglagh Vannin* ('youth-band of Man'), with resonances of *Óglaigh na hÉireann* ('warriors of Ireland'), the Irish title of the IRA (Douglas 1932), at a time when such movements were in vogue, and was active in YCG and the Celtic Congress right up until the Second World War and after.

Mona Douglas was evidently equally vigorous in pursuing her interests in Manx nationalist politics, she evidently played a central role in the seemingly shadowy organisation *Ny Manninee Dhoovie* 'the true Manx' in April / May 1947 shortly after the Second World War.¹⁸ In a pamphlet sent to interested parties, including Manx classes,¹⁹ the group promoted a "Mann for the Manx" philosophy and advocated self-independence and closer ties with Ireland and Scotland. The *Ramsey Courier and Northern Advertiser* for Friday 2 May 1947 prints the following from the pamphlet:

You belong to a nation which, though probably the smallest one in the world, has never been conquered or absorbed, despite many invasions, both hostile and peaceable, from the greater powers surrounding it. Through many stormy centuries we, the Manx nation, have kept our integrity, our Constitution and Tynwald, and our Gaelic language until now.

But in these latter days we are faced with grave danger to that nationality of which we are so justly proud, in that we are allowing the control of the Island to pass little by little into foreign hands. To-day, despite our proud and ancient heritage, we suffer almost without realising it from a bad inferiority complex which persuades us that strangers are more wise and clever and

18 I wish to thank Stephen Miller, Vienna, and Trudi Thompson, Tynwald Library, Douglas, for their assistance in supplying the relevant documentation regarding *Ny Manninee Dhoovie*.

19 *Mona's Herald*, Tuesday, May 20th, 1947.

efficient than ourselves - an attitude which the English, in particular, have been trying to drill into us ever since the days of the Derbys [1405-1736]; and its insidious poison is seen working in the way in which we allow English and other foreigners to be appointed to all the more important posts in the Government, the Civil Service, business enterprises, and even such a truly national institution as the Manx Museum.

As a preliminary to such action, you are asked to attend an informal meeting to be held at Cronk Bane, Falkland Drive, Onchan, on Monday April 28th, at 7-30 p.m., for the purpose of forming a Society which will work by any means available for a threefold aim: Mann for the Manx people, self-dependence as a nation, and later on, co-operation with our sister-Gaelic nations of Ireland and Scotland, both of which have their own strong national movements and are hoping for an effective Gaelic combination in the future based on similarity of race and ideals. It is suggested that the proposed Society should be named Manninee Dooie 'True Manxfolk', and it will be expected of all members that they will be ready and willing to work. It will NOT be a social club or learned society, but an organisation of serious patriots prepared to pull their weight in any task which may be undertaken, no matter how heavy.

Become a Manninagh Dooie ['true Manxman'] and help to preserve our birthright as Manx Gaels! (*Ramsey Courier and Northern Advertiser*, Friday 2 May 1947, p. 5, col. 5).

The *Ramsey Courier and Northern Advertiser* then reported that twelve persons attended the meeting at which Mona Douglas outlined the aims of the proposed society. Two letters in support of the movement's sponsors were read out by the meeting's host Mr. R. Ennett, one of which was sent in by former Director of the Manx Museum, William Cubbon, himself a known ardent Manx nationalist.

However, the Manx authorities evidently regarded *Ny Manninee Dhoioie* as a subversive undertaking and decided to "put a shot across its bows." According to the *Mona's Herald* for Tuesday 20 May 1947, they struck back on Friday 16th May 1947 in the Douglas Police Court in which the printers of the pamphlet, Victoria Press Ltd of Victoria Street, Douglas,

did between 13th and 29th April [1947] at Martin's Bank Chambers [Douglas] print 200 copies of a paper bearing the heading "Manx Men and Women" which was intended to be disbursed and unlawfully omitted to print upon the front of every such paper the name of the Victoria Press Ltd (*Mona's Herald* 20 May 1947, p. 6, col. 3).

The authorities prosecuted the printers under a nineteenth century Act of Tynwald - the [Isle of Man] Newspaper Act 1846. The case rumbled on until Friday 23 May 1947 when the court decided to impose a £5.00 fine plus £3.00 costs on the printers.²⁰ Further details relating to the case came to light during the House of Keys debate on the Administration of Justice Bill 1947 on 28 October that same year when a comment was made about

a recent case in the Manx Courts where a firm of printers was prosecuted for failing to put their imprint on a pamphlet. The case was taken under a very old Act - the Newspaper Act 1846 - which prescribed that for every such paper published the offender should be fined the sum of £5. The result was that the printers, for this small oversight, were liable to a fine of £1,250 [in fact £1000], which the High-Bailiff had no option but to impose, and had no power to reduce. In this particular case the matter was got over by amending the summons to one specific charge of

²⁰ *Mona's Herald* 27 May 1947

publication of one copy (Hansard: Administration of Justice Bill 1947: House of Keys: Second Reading - 28th October 1947, p. 46).²¹

In talking to Manx nationalists, the late Leslie Quirk, latterly of St. Jude's, and the late Jack Irving of Peel during the 1990s, both former members of *Ny Manninee Dhooie*, told me that the movement was in fact set up in the weeks running up to the Second World War and in addition to advocating a neutral stance for the Isle of Man in the event of hostilities (as Ireland had in fact taken and as Plaid Cymru had apparently argued in the case of Wales) it pursued a line of total self-government for the Island. Leslie Quirk thought that the court action had taken place before the war, but Jack Irving told me he was fairly certain it took place after the war. In any event both, but Leslie Quirk more so, criticised Mona Douglas for "rank incompetence" in handling the matter. Nevertheless, this was not Mona Douglas's last excursion into nationalist politics. According to the *Ramsey Courier and Northern Advertiser* for 24 February 1950, Douglas was involved in the setting up of the Manx Freedom League which aimed

to unite all freedom-loving people in the Island to obtain full control for the Island over its finances, and to secure responsible self-government for the Isle of Man as a full member of the British Commonwealth (*Ramsey Courier and Northern Advertiser* 24.02.1950, p. 8, col. 6).

In comparison with the aims of *Ny Manninee Dhooie* those of the Manx Freedom League were quite tame and sedate, advocating greater fiscal control by Tynwald and full self-government for the Island within a British framework. It is not known what became of the Manx Freedom League. It was not until the 1990s, however, that the Isle of Man achieved full self-government, albeit internal.²²

Mona Douglas's interest in Manx nationalist politics (which for her was evidently inseparable from the promotion of the Manx language, music, and dance, etc.) seems to stem from her view of hostile (English) immigrant attitudes over the years towards things Manx. In a letter to *The Observer* 01.02.1924 Mona Douglas wrote:

[...] The painful fact is that the bulk of immigrants to Mann, the number of whom grows every year, are of the type that disfigures our countryside with red-roofed jerry-built bungalows, laughs at our traditions to scorn, and, so far from attempting to help in the preservation of our ancient tongue (Mona Douglas, "Letter to the Editor", *The Observer* 01.02.1924, quoted after Peter 1984: 36).

This view is reiterated as late as 1981 in *Rallying Song* (Douglas 1981), a novel based on the aspirations of the Manx nationalist cause:

[...] A few new residents could be absorbed [...] and some of the newcomers did try to integrate and were accepted [...] but not the overwhelming numbers arriving today, most of whom had no interest in Manx history and culture, did not, in fact, admit that it had any real existence or

²¹ The court case was reported in the *Mona's Herald* for 20.05.1947 and 27.05.1947, in the *Ramsey Courier and Northern Advertiser* for 23.05.1947, and in the *Isle of Man Examiner* for 23.05.1947.

²² For details of the Isle of Man's progress towards full internal self-government see Kermodé 2001.

value, and did not wish to become involved with the Manx people except in so far as they could pay them to do menial work (Douglas 1981: 22).

Concomitant with this is her belief, spelled out in the same book, in the “spiritual roots of the [Manx] race” from which a true faith would emanate, which would inculcate a dedication to “a national and racial image built of dreams and visions, tradition and history [...]” (Douglas 1981: 25). Such a belief would be a

[...] vision born of the very spirit of the race, taking its nourishment from the roots firmly bedded in the immemorial past and springing afresh in each generation to become a great force which would transcend and weld together all the dedication and sacrifice now directed to material and mental temporal aims, a real religion of the future which would sweep through the lands of the Gael and go onward like a flame into the world beyond, transforming the general materialism and violence of the present age (Douglas 1981: 25-26).

Mona Douglas’s interest in ‘race’ and ‘nationalism’ has a long history, and sentiment in that direction finds expression even at the founding in 1931 of the Manx youth movement *Aeglagh Vannin* in her article ‘Manx Nationalism and Aeglagh Vannin’ (Douglas 1932: 5):

[...] Nationalism itself is a passion of the soul. Nationalism is a force which can be used for either good or evil [...], for the invisible National Being, the image of the Nation in the hearts of its children, the overshadowing, composite spirit of the race (Douglas 1932: 5).

In her appeal to the youth of Man to join the movement Mona Douglas beckons:

Volunteers! The new nationalism calls on. Look back on the splendour of our racial past - your own past [...]; look forward into the golden vista of the future, alive with dreams - and then step out under the banner of Aeglagh Vannin to do your bit for your country’s sake [...]. So shall Ellan Vannin go forward, steadfastly and full of national consciousness, to possess her Tir nan Oge (Douglas 1932: 6).

These sentiments are echoed in religious tone in the *Aeglagh Vannin* Rallying Song, composed by Mona Douglas in 1934 and set to the traditional Manx tune *Carval ny Drogh Vraane* (‘carval (i.e. religious carol) of/about the bad women’).²³ It was latterly printed in her novel *Rallying Song* referred to above (Douglas 1981: [3]), and from personal enquiry frequently sung at meetings:

O Land of our allegiance	For us thine ancient glories
O Mannin of the sea	Gleam yet on sea and shore
May we be ever worthy	In us the nation’s spirit
To claim our share in thee!	Renews for evermore

²³ This tune appears set to English words (celebrating the deeds of *Illiam Dhone* (‘Brown-haired William’), William Christian (1608-1663), regarded as hero of the Manx Rebellion of 1651) by Irish poet Arthur Percival Graves and first published in Gill (1896: 112-14). Given the foregoing the choice of this tune for the Rallying Song is perhaps apt. Mona Douglas was personally acquainted with Graves, a former schools inspector in Man with relatives in Peel (cf. Bazin 1998: 15).

We hold thy soil as sacred
And though we wander far
Thy flame of song and story
Burns where thy children are

And still our dreams make holy
The hills our fathers trod
For in our Sacred Island
We touch the veil of God

Tir nan Oge (G. *Tír nan Óg* ‘land of the (ever) young’) is a concept of ‘heaven’ found in Gaelic literature. Here Mona Douglas sees the achievement of that ‘heaven’, a Manx Utopia perhaps, through nationalism and a reinforcement of the “splendour of our racial past” idea.

Mona Douglas returned to this theme some years later. In an article on traditional Manx folk songs and dances (Douglas 1941 (1949), in Miller 1994), in which she gives details of their collection and reconstruction, Mona Douglas saw the re-availability of these songs and dances (evidently prompted by the English Folk Dance Society’s Easter Vacation School held in Douglas, Isle of Man, in 1929 (Miller 1994: 9-12)) in romantic folkloristic terms as a visible demonstration of Manx identity in the face of change:

[...] A modern and alien life is all about us now, and before its onslaught the old Gaelic culture of our land and race is in danger of being lost unless we can persuade the rising generation to love, appreciate and use our national heritage of artistic expression. In doing so we believe sincerely that they will keep our tiny but proud and ancient nation continually nourished and revitalised from the inexhaustible springs of racial tradition, eternally young and vigorous and full of the deathless beauty of Tir-na’n Oge (Douglas 1941(1949), in Miller 1994: 12).²⁴

Such sentiments pervaded Mona Douglas’s thinking right through her life. As we have said before, they were in vogue in Western Europe, particularly in the Celtic countries, in the early decades of this century, as well as in Germany, and are clearly reminiscent of aspects of National Socialist and Fascist ideologies. The references to “Tir-na’n Oge”, given the individual concerned, would almost certainly indicate direct contact with Ireland. The excesses of the Nazi régime in Germany rendered such senti-ments unfashionable after 1945. However, it does not follow that a belief in them implied sympathy with such excesses or support for such ideologies. Nevertheless, their whole ethos seems to have permeated Mona Douglas’s ideas regarding the establishment of a youth movement, the promotion of Manx Gaelic, and the re-establishment of the Manx folk-music and dance traditions, from the 1930s onwards right through to her re-inauguration of the Manx Inter-Celtic Festival of *Yn Chruinnaght* (‘the gathering’) in 1977 and thereafter. Given these circumstances, it is evident that Mona Douglas could not have made her not-inconsiderable contribution to the Manx cause without a firm belief in such sentiments.

In 1976 Mona Douglas, aged 78, retired as leader of *Aeclagh Vannin* on health grounds; shortly after the movement was disbanded.

²⁴ At the official opening of *Yn Chruinnaght* 1999, at which I was present along with some 200 others, the main guest of honour, the then President of Tynwald, the late Sir Charles Kerruish, quoted this passage at the end of his address, a eulogy to Mona Douglas, and added that he wished to be associated with the sentiments therein contained.

After the war Mona Douglas's overt interests in Manx politics appeared to have evaporated (cf. also Broderick 1991-92). In fact, in a quest by the Celtic Congress to jettison its political image after the war, Mona Douglas was sacked as secretary of the Manx Branch on a suitable pretext at its Annual General Meeting in 1952 (John Belchem, Liverpool, pc 1997).

7. 1930s sentiments and the Manx cultural movement today

The Manx cultural movement today can be divided into three parts: language, music / song, and dance, each having attached to it a number of societies (language), session groups (music/song), and dance groups (dance). As we have seen above, all three aspects received considerable impetus in their promotion during the period under discussion, especially due to the indefatigable efforts of Mona Douglas, particularly in the "restoration" and promotion of Manx folksong and dance (Douglas 1941 (1949), Miller 1994). We have seen also that Mona Douglas's world view was permeated by sentiments of a National Socialist / Fascist hue and that the dynamism in her involvement in the promotion of Manx culture owes its impetus to such sentiments. Her view particularly of Manx traditional dance is still revered among many enthusiasts in Man today. In addition, the re-inauguration of *Yn Chruinnaght* in 1977 by Mona Douglas is a celebration *inter alia* of Manx music and tradition in the way she understood them, and the ritual of semi-obedience to her memory each year at the opening of the festival carries on a tradition that has its roots in the 1930s and has thereby generated a certain amount of "mythology" surrounding Mona Douglas and her activities.²⁵

We have also seen that Mona Douglas's "restoration" and promotion of Manx dances was motivated by the visit of the English Folkdance Society to Man at Easter 1929, to provide a Manx balance to something that was seen as intrusive and non-Manx. That is to say, that Mona Douglas's commitment to the promotion of Manx "traditional" dance served the interests of identity and national aspiration at a time when it was felt necessary in Man to do so.

The 1930s material is now some seventy years old and could itself be regarded as a tradition in its own right. These dances are still performed and are regarded by many as "traditional" purely on the length of time they have been danced, irrespective of whether their provenance is genuine or not. In addition, the circumstances of their creation at a time imbued with apparent fascist ideology is regarded by many today as irrelevant. The further away we move from the 1930s and the attitudes of that time, the dimmer that memory becomes.

In their place an up-and-coming generation of young people in Man are now creating their own dances that have very little to do with the Mona Douglas corpus, but,

²⁵ Such "mythology" finds perpetuation in a recent populist book on Manx music (cf. Crowe-Bazin 1997), apparently intended for use in schools.

probably unintentionally, have more in common with the genuinely traditional material. There is a similar tendency in the music, i.e. new material is being created, not necessarily in the old traditional style (as there is no reference point), but which has the dynamism and vitality of the old traditional material (cf. Speers 1997). It is attracting a large following and at the same time has nothing to do with 1930s attitudes. This is probably aided and abetted by a current change in population in Man involving considerable immigration into Man from all parts of Britain and Ireland, as well as from abroad, with new and exciting ideas and attitudes contributing to a new slant on the Manx identity at the start of a new millennium.

Abbreviations

BDC - Berlin Document Centre.	NTS - Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap.
CMCS – Cambridge / Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies.	pc. - personal communication.
DGKS - Deutsche Gesellschaft für keltische Studien.	SA – Sturmabteilungen („storm department“) (Nazi stormtrooper detachment).
DIL - Dictionary of the Irish Language (Royal Irish Academy).	Sc.- Scandinavian.
G. Gaelic.	SS – Schutzstaffel („protective detachment“).
IRA - Irish Republican Army.	WMA - World Manx Association.
MM - Manx Museum.	YCG - Yn Çeshaght Ghailckagh.
MNH – Manx National Heritage.	ZCP - Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie.
MNHL - Manx national Heritage Library.	ZKPV - Zeitschrift für keltische Philologie und Volksforschung (i.e. ZCP 22 (1941) & 23 (1943)).
nd - no date.	
NSDAP - Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (Nazi Party).	

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