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Three Cornish Place-Names

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1. Two Cornish place-names in the Isles of Scilly

The rocky islets known as Melledgan and Hanjague are to be found on the south-western and north-eastern fringes respectively of the Isles of Scilly (in the parishes of St Agnes and St Martin). They are located at OS grid references SV 862064 and SV 958151 (OS 1: 25,000).

Both names have all the appearance of a Cornish language origin. The Cornish language may have still been in use on the Isles of Scilly about 1600, but if so it probably died out during the following century.[1] Thus the evidence of Cornish place-names in the islands may provide a *terminus ante quem* for otherwise undatable sound-changes in the language. However, it is not impossible that some at least of the Cornish place-names on Scilly (particularly the maritime ones) owe their modern forms to the pronunciations of seafarers from the Cornish mainland speaking Modern (Late) Cornish.

(a) Melledgan

Melledgan (almost always so spelt;[2] also *Mellidging* c.1708 Gostelo and *Meledgan* 1859 Murray) is probably to be associated with Late Cornish *molhuidzhon* 'a naked snail' recorded by Edward Lhuyd.[3] Here the spelling *-dzh-* is Lhuyd's own (one which was adopted by others writing in Cornish) for the Cornish sound represented by *-dg-* in modern *Melledgan*. Like the great majority of modern Cornish place-names this is now spelt in accordance with the orthographical rules of Modern English.

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[1] C. Thomas, *Exploration of a Drowned Landscape. Archaeology and History of the Isles of Scilly* (London, 1985), pp. 35–36.

[2] e.g. 1693 Collins, 1748 Martyn, 1794 Tovey & Ginver, and 1808 Greig & Alexander. For abbreviated sources of place-name forms, see list on pp. 10–11, below.

[3] Edward Lhuyd, *Archaeologia Britannica*, vol. I [all published] (Oxford, 1707), p. 48c.

The Cornish word apparently survived in the English dialect of western Cornwall as *melwidgeon* 'slug'.[4] The root can be seen in the Late Cornish plural form *molhuez* 'snails', also recorded by Lhuyd (compare Breton *melc'hwed* 'slugs'). *Molhuidzhon* is a singulative form, created by adding the suffix *-en* to the root (as also in Breton *melc'hwedenn*). In the Late Cornish forms the original Common Brittonic dental stops are realised medially as /dʒ/ ('palatalisation'), and finally as /z/ ('assibilation'). Breton is thus more conservative in this respect.

An adjective deriving from the root seen in the name Melledgan presumably survives as Meludgack (reflecting an unrecorded Middle Cornish **melwhegek*, with g representing the palatalised medial stop), the name of a rock off Beagle's Point in the parish of St Keverne (OS 1:25,000, SW 769164).[5]

(b) Hanjague

Unlike *Melledgan*, *Hanjague* is not an easy name. Here the lack of any early (Middle Cornish) evidence, and the absence of an obvious etymology, compound the problems presented by the variety which is apparent in the recorded forms: *Hingjake* 1693 Collins, 1744 Heath, *Hingjack* 1699 Gascoyne, *Hanjake* c. 1708 Gostelo, *Hinjack* 1748 Martyn, 1794 Tovey & Ginver, (*race of*) *Hingeg* n.d. Tovey, '*Hanjague, or the Sugar-Loaf*' 1859 Murray. Thomas records two earlier forms —*Ingeak* 1655, and *Hengiack* 1680—and states that the modern pronunciation is '"Hanjig" or "Anjig" (stress on the second syllable)'.[6]

Thomas associates Hanjague with an adjectival derivative of Old Cornish *guins*, Middle Cornish *guyns* 'wind' (Breton *gwent*; the expected Late Cornish form would be something like **gwindjack*), as

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[4] R. Morton Nance, 'Celtic Words in Cornish Dialect', *Annual Report of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society*, 86 (1919), 143–54 (p. 154).
[5] This particular word may also occur as Bolijack (Landewednack parish), the name of part of Housel Bay. Denasalisation of initial /m/ (or perhaps the erroneous de-lenition of its lenited manifestation /v/) is a common feature of Late Cornish; compare Late Cornish *buz* as against Middle Cornish *mes* 'but', and in place-names the numerous instances of Mellingey and Bolingey (various spellings), both meaning 'mill-house': O. J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society, vol. 56/57 (Nottingham, 1985), p. 161.
[6] Thomas, *Drowned Landscape*, p. 46.

found in such place-names as Croft Windjack, and Adjawindjack 'windy gap', where the initial *g-* has regularly been lost by lenition following a feminine noun.

While the location might suit this interpretation, the consistent absence of any reflex of initial /gw/ or /w/ tells against this derivation. If Thomas is right to assume that there has been a shift of stress to the second syllable, then Hanjague looks more like an adjectival derivative (Middle Cornish **hingek* or **hinsek*) of the Old Cornish element *-hins-* 'way' (Breton *hent*, Welsh *hynt*), which is found in combination in Old Cornish *camhinsic* 'unjust, injurious' and *eunhinsic* 'just', and survives in later Cornish *cammensyth* 'injustice' (sixteenth century).[7] Old Cornish *camhinsic* apparently survived in the Cornish dialect of English in the form *camondjack* 'ugly-looking, mean'.[8] The spelling *Hinjack* in particular looks like a Late Cornish form of such an adjective.[9]

However, the usual position of the stress in Cornish, and Cornish place-names, is on the penultimate syllable. In this it is exceptionally conservative, and the modern stress noted by Thomas thus tells against a derivation from either *guyns-* or *hins-* + *-ek*. In fact, most of the other recorded forms, especially when taken as a whole, tend to suggest that the modern stress is original:

(a) the spellings *Ingeak* (with *ea* for /ɛː/ or /ɛi/), *Hingjake*, *Hanjake*, *Hanjague*, all point to long vowel quantity in the second syllable;

(b) in Cornish place-names the voicing of final /k/, apparent in *Hingeg*, and in the modern spelling and pronunciation, is a feature of stressed final syllables—compare Meneage (traditionally pronounced

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[7] John Tregear, 'Homelyes XIII in Cornysche', British Library, Additional MS 46,397, p. 15.
[8] Anon., 'Cornish dialect words (continued)', *Old Cornwall*, 10 (1985–91), 18–20 (p. 20).
[9] It should be noted that the frequency of a given form on maps or charts cannot serve as basis for weighting its value, given the cartographer's practice of copying this kind of information from earlier surveys. Tovey, for instance, who was Master-Gunner on the islands at the time of the Napoleonic Wars, may have followed Martyn in using the form *Hinjack* on his map, while employing a form he knew at first hand, *Hingeg*, in his writings. (This illustration is, of course, conjectural). Conversely, Gascoyne admits to relying on Collins for his map of Scilly, but spells this name differently—but see Thomas, *Drowned Landscape*, p. 57 and n. 31 (p. 296).

/mən'ɛig/, also found compounded in Treveneage and Lesneage), Killeganogue, Lanzeague, Reskajeage, Tregeague and other examples on the Cornish mainland.

(c) in Scilly place-names the adjectival suffix *-ek* generally shows the usual Late Cornish development to *-ack* (compare Meludgack, above): for example, the other Eastern islets now known as Great and Little Ganinick are the *Keninaks* ('place of wild garlic') in 1689 Robyn; similarly the Crebinicks (close to Bishop Rock) are Great and Little *Crebinack* in 1693 Collins, 1744 Heath, 1794 Tovey & Ginver, and 1808 Greig and Alexander;[10]

(d) the development of (written) *e* to *a* (= [ə]?) in an unstressed initial syllable is paralleled in *Keninak* > Ganinick (see (c) above).

Since either the displacement of stress from a penultimate syllable, or its attachment to a final syllable, would be highly unusual, the examples of Meneage already cited (which is *Manahec* 'place of monks' in 1269), Reskajeage (*Roskediec* in 1252) and Lanzeague (*Lansioch* in 1204) all suggest on every count that the final syllable of *Hanjague* likewise represents a contraction of two syllables. For this reason we should perhaps regard Thomas's early (seventeenth-century) form *Hengiack* as critical, presenting as it does the possibility of a third syllable.[11]

On the surface *Hengiack* passes muster as a reflection of an adjectival derivative (Middle Cornish **hengy̌-ek*) of Middle Cornish *hensy* 'ancient house'. Middle Cornish *hensy* occurs relatively frequently in place-names (sometimes as *hengy*), both alone and in name-phrases. The usual modern form is *Hingey* or *-hingey*, which may have the significance of 'ruin' in a place-name context.[12] If we accept

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[10] The comparative distribution of forms in *-ick* and those in *-ack* warrants a separate study. The substitution here of *-ick* for earlier (Late Cornish) *-ack* is parallelled on the Cornish mainland, in Tremethick (Madron), for example, which was *Tremethack* in the Ordnance Survey of 1813.

[11] But not unequivocally: some late forms for Kenidjack, for example, offer parallels to the forms of Hanjague: *Keniggiack* 1589, *Canyjack* 1696, *Kanidgeak* 1859; here, however, the modern stress and the abundance of early (fourteenth-century) forms of the type *Kynygiek*, *Kynysiek* point to a derivation from Middle Cornish *kunys* 'firewood' + *-yek*, a variant of *-ek*.

[12] e.g. Goonhingey (St Gluvias parish; *Goynhensy* 1342), *Hingey* (Gunwalloe parish; *Hensy-* 1405), *Hensafrane* (St Stephen in Brannel parish; *Hensivran*, *Hengyvran*, both mid-14th century).

the existence of an adjectival derivative, a figurative application to a prominent rock like Hanjague is semantically quite plausible.

There remains another possibility. Garland records an English dialectal (West Cornwall) word *jan-jeak* with the meaning 'snail'.[13] Now, the initial *h-* of a Cornish word surviving as Hanjague in Scilly might easily have been assimilated to the *-j-* which introduces the second syllable once the original significance had become opaque in English dialect.[14] If Hanjague were ultimately the same word as *janjeak*, a name meaning 'snail' might have been given to a rock whose shape rising from the surface of the sea might suggest the creature, as was presumably the case with *Melledgan*.

The etymology of *janjeak* is obscure, and it is not easy to associate it with **hengyek* semantically. It should, however, be noted that the adjective-forming suffix OCo *-oc*, MlCo *-ek*, is commonly found in what must originally have been nicknames for small animals, such as Middle Cornish *cronek* 'toad' (literally 'thick-skinned'; Old Cornish *croinoc*, Late Cornish *kranag*, and English dialect *cronack*), Late Cornish *lostek* 'fox' (literally 'tailed') and *skyuarnak*, *skouarnak* 'hare' (literally 'long-eared'; English dialect *skavernik*, *skavarnack*; compare Breton *skouarnek*).[15]

In the absence of further evidence we must content ourselves with the assumption of a trisyllabic origin for Hanjague, a potential formal

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[13] T. Garland, 'A List of Words in Common Use in West Cornwall', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, 1 (1864–65), iii, 45–52 (p. 49).

[14] One need only compare the example of the humble bumble bee in English!

[15] Formally *Hengiack* could represent *hen* 'old' + the Cornish word surviving in Late Cornish *teeack*, *tyacke* 'farmer' (the first element, Old Cornish *ti*, Middle Cornish *chy* 'house', being the same as the *-sy* in *hensy*). However, this seems an unlikely compound. Formally, too, an adjectival derivative of Middle Cornish *hynse* or *hense* (< **henseth*, Breton *hentez*) 'neighbour, fellow' is equally possible. Middle Cornish *hensy* or **hengy* may also be preserved in the otherwise obscure Cornish place-name Jangye-ryn (Gunwalloe parish), with an assimilation of the initial consonant as here suggested for *janjeak*. Here *ryn* is apparently cognate with Welsh *rhyn*, Breton *rinn* 'point'. If so, the order of the elements in this name is of interest in that it is the reverse of the normal Cornish word order. If the second element is to be associated with *rhyn* and *rinn*, then it too must have survived into English dialect to be used in this way (despite being recorded only in place-names), unless *ryn* is here the qualifier.

identity with an unrecorded Middle Cornish *hengyek 'ruinous or ruin-like (place)', and a similarity to dialectal janjeak 'snail', the semantic plausibility of which association is enhanced by the example of *Melledgan*.

Significance

In the case of a defunct language such as Cornish, the evidence of place-names surviving in an externally imposed orthography can be of special value in understanding its historical phonology where its own older orthography is imprecise or ambiguous. The modern spellings of Cornish-language place-names generally reflect an attempt by speakers of English to render the phonological system of (Late) Cornish using a modern English system of orthography.

The etymologies which have been suggested for Melledgan and Hanjague bear on the innovation in Cornish phonology which most clearly distinguishes it from its sister languages, Breton and Welsh, and which remains the most controversial aspect of Cornish linguistics. As I have illustrated above, Melledgan probably derives from an Old Cornish form cognate with Breton *melc'hwedenn*, and surviving as *molhuidzhon* and *melwidgeon* in Late Cornish and local English dialect respectively. Although it is recognised that Old Cornish dental stops had become /dʒ/ medially by Late Cornish in certain environments, a position immediately preceding the singulative-forming suffix -en is not one of them. Indeed, it is usually suggested that /d/ remains unchanged before any vowel + /n/.[16] However, the evidence of *Melledgan* supports that of Late Cornish *lygodzhan* 'mouse', recorded by Lhuyd (Old Cornish *logoden*), in suggesting that the development was possible at least before /e/ + /n/.[17]

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[16] So J. Loth, 'Études corniques', *Revue celtique*, 18 (1897), 401–22 (p. 412); H. Lewis and H. Pedersen, *A Concise Comparative Celtic Grammar* (Göttingen, 1961), §263 (2); K. George, 'The Phonological History of Cornish' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Brest, 1984), p. 298.

[17] For a similar example in the lexicon compare Middle Cornish *egen* (also *esen*) '(I) was' alongside *eder* 'was' (impersonal form) (and compare the cognate Breton and Welsh forms in *ed*- and *yd*-). Analogy, however, has obviously been a force throughout the paradigm of *bos* ('to be') in Middle Cornish; see Henry Lewis, *Llawlyfr Cernyweg Canol* (Cardiff, 1946), §54 (p. 59). Late Cornish *lygodzhan* may also occur in the place-name *Parken* (i.e. *Park an*) *Legagen* (St Keverne, 1710), equivalent to English 'Mouse Field'. The

Hanjague apparently demonstrates the expected development of Celtic /nt/ to Late Cornish /ndʒ/ medially. However, it has been suggested that this development was not complete until the early seventeenth century. It seems unlikely that we should expect examples of the full development in the Scillies if the Cornish language was by and large defunct there by that time. Either Cornish continued in use in an appropriate context for longer than has been thought, or the full development is earlier than has been supposed.

Postscript

In fact, consideration of Melledgan and Hanjague, and the other names we have adduced in evidence, serves to demonstrate that most of the characteristic features of Late Cornish phonology, to wit:

(a) the development of MlCo /e/ to a (= /ə/?) in unstressed final syllables: *melwhegen* > Melledgan, *keninek* > Keninak;

(b) the subsequent development of MlCo /e/ to a (= /ə/?) in initial unstressed syllables: *Hengiack* (etc.) > *Hanjake* (etc.), *Keninak* > Ganinick;

(c) the development to /dʒ/ of the reflex of Common Brittonic /d/ which is represented in Middle Cornish by written s, g and j: Melledgan, Hanjague;

are present, indeed pervasive, in the Cornish place-names of the Isles of Scilly.

If we add to these:

(d) the almost universal loss of /θ/ in the combination /rθ/ which is evident in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forms of the numerous Scillonian names with the initial element *porth* ('cove', which also survives in island, and mainland, dialect as *par*, *por*): e.g., the forms *Porcrasa*, *Perconger*, *Permmellin*, *Perminnis* (sic) and *Perskilla* (all 1808 Greig & Alexander), now *Porth Cressa*, *Porth Conger*, *Porth Mellon*,

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Late Cornish form *logosan* must be by analogy with the plural form preserved in Late Cornish *logaz* (the Breton plural is *logod*, and the singulative form *logodenn*). The only other case where a singulative form is recorded for both Old and Middle Cornish is Old Cornish *guibeden*, Middle Cornish *'webesen* 'gnat' (see Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, p. 119, for an explanation of the disparate initial consonants). Here too the Middle Cornish form has apparently been remodelled by analogy with an unrecorded outwardly simplex plural form *(g)webes* (compare Welsh *gwybed*, Breton *hwibed*).

Porth Minick and *Porth Killier*, with the historical spelling restored in the modern forms;[18]

(e) /nn/ > /dn/: *Penbrose* (Collins 1693, Tovey and Ginver 1794) > modern *Pednbrose*;

then it is apparent that the Cornish which was spoken on Scilly shared in the very latest general phonological developments of the language. In the circumstances it must be inferred that these developments were complete before the language became moribund in the islands. That they were only later reflected in the spelling of place-names is presumably due to the orthographic conservatism which has always been a feature of Cornish place-names.

One thing is certain, though. Either the Cornish language remained in use on the islands, among the maritime community perhaps, until later than has generally been supposed (and it should be remembered that apart from place-names there is *no* evidence of its ever having been used there), or the phonological developments which are assumed to characterise Late Cornish (from *c.* 1600 onwards) had taken effect earlier than is usually supposed, but remained unreflected in the orthography until they were revealed when the norms of spelling of Early Modern English were adopted, or rather applied, during the Late Cornish period.

2. Bosistow (St Levan)

The first element in this name is Old Cornish **bod* 'dwelling', and the second probably a personal name. Amongst the earlier forms recorded are: *Bodistou*, *Bodustou*, *Bosestou* (all 1302); *Bosustou* (1320), *Bosustow*, *Bossistow* (1668).[19] The 1302 forms exemplify both the archaic spellings with -*d*- and newer spellings with -*s*-, apparently reflecting the assibilation of medial /d/ in Middle Cornish in this environment. A

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[18] The loss of /θ/ in *porth* in place-names is not necessarily late: see for example, the early forms cited for *Porthpean* (St Austell) and *Portquin* (St Minver) in O. J. Padel, *A Popular Dictionary of Cornish Place-Names* (Penzance, 1988); it may be significant that /θ/ was later restored in forms which had lost it at such an early date. However, it is a common feature of late-recorded maritime, non-settlement names, as evinced both here and on the mainland: compare Perhaver (Goran) and Perbargus (Veryan) for example.

[19] P. A. S. Pool, *The Place-Names of West Penwith*, 2nd edition (Penzance, 1985), p. 40.

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doublet of the modern form survives in the surname *Bosustow*.[20]

The modern spellings of a number of Cornish place-names in *bod*- seem to reflect a 'subsequent' palatalisation of this -*s*- (presumably = /z/) to /dʒ/, e.g. Bojorrow (Mawgan in Meneage; *Bodeworwei* 1086).[21] It has been suggested, though on little evidence, that the development of original /d/ to /z/ or /dʒ/ respectively reflects a dialect distinction within Cornish.[22] Even if we reject the idea of a geographical distribution, the historical forms of the many names like Bosistow which show only *s* seem to suggest that original /d/ could become /z/ in Middle Cornish and in undefined circumstances escape the hypothetical further development to /dʒ/.

However, the parish registers for Helston and Manaccan apparently contain some early forms of Bosistow in the form of personal names which show that this placename also shared in the development of Old Cornish /d/ to Late Cornish /dʒ/ after all. The forms of the surname in question are:[23]

> *Bajeista* (Helston, twice: 1757)
> *Bejusto* (Manaccan, five times: 1683, 1686, 1688, 1692, 1695)
> *Bejester* (Helston, twice: 1777, 1779)
> *Bojesta* (Helston, twice: 1756, 1760)
> *Bojesto, Bojeisto, Bojestar, Bogestar* (Helston, once each: 1760, 1759, 1781, 1773)

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[20] Interestingly enough, the form Bosistow does not, apparently, occur as a surname.

[21] Wakelin (1975, p. 76) lists nine Cornish place-names with *Boj*- or *Bej*- for OCo *Bod*-. In addition to Bosistow or *Bejusto*, other possible contenders for such a list are the two instances of Boswarthen (Madron and Sancreed), both examples of which appear as *Bushwharton* in the Ordnance Survey of 1813. As far as I am aware, all other recorded forms show only *Bos*- at both locations.

[22] N. J. A. Williams, 'A Problem in Cornish Phonology', in *Celtic Linguistics: Ieithyddiaeth Geltaidd. Readings in the Brythonic Languages: Festschrift for T. Arwyn Watkins*, edited by M. J. Ball and others (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 241–74 (pp. 258–62). Williams acknowledges that he had access only to Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, and was 'for the most part unaware of earlier forms of any of the names' (pp. 258–59).

[23] The dates and geographic distribution of these examples reflect the scope of the International Genealogical Index from which they are taken.

The significance of these forms is that they constitute evidence of palatalisation in an item, in this case an onomastic item, which does not otherwise display it. The situation is too complex for this alone to throw any real light on the problem (the identification of the conditioning factors). However, taken together the forms *Bejusto*, *Hanjague* and *Melledgan* oblige us to consider the possibility that palatalised forms may have existed unrecorded at a certain level for every item where only forms with a sibilant are now known to have existed in Middle or Late Cornish, or survive in place-names. Viewed in conjunction with *janjeak* and *melwidgeon* this may provisionally be identified as the level of minor place-names and vernacular speech, that is to say the last stronghold of spoken Cornish.

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Early forms of Cornish place-names are taken, except where otherwise stated, mainly from J. E. B. Gover, 'The Place-Names of Cornwall', typescript, 1948 (copy at Royal Institution of Cornwall, Truro).

The Nature of Irish Pub-Names

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Despite the fact that a very large proportion of Irish people do not drink alcoholic liquor,[1] pubs form a prominent element in the Irish cultural landscape, both North and South. In many Irish villages, pubs outnumber shops. Since much of their business is transacted in the evenings, their position in the streetscape is emphasised by lighting. Furthermore, unlike many churches, pubs proclaim their presence through large name-signs, so that their visual impact tends to be disproportionately strong. As a result, the role of the pub and of the pub-name in moulding the cultural landscape in built-up areas in Ireland is very marked.

Pub-names in large urban areas tend to differ somewhat in character from those in villages and small towns, principally because the matrix of street-names exercises a strong influence over them. For this reason, even though it contains some seven hundred pubs, the Greater Dublin area has been excluded from consideration here, but it will be the target of a separate study later. Similarly, most of the larger urban centres (Belfast, Cork, Derry, Waterford, Galway, Drogheda and Dundalk) have been avoided, though Limerick has been included in order to maintain some urban input. Because the large number of pubs in this island would have rendered the study unwieldy, it was decided to concentrate on an arbitrarily-selected sample consisting of the pub 'population' of two counties in each province—Leitrim and Roscommon in Connaught, Cavan and Down in Ulster, Laois and Longford in Leinster, and Clare and Limerick in Munster (Fig. 1, p. 73). Pub numbers are unstable due to the closure of uneconomic concerns, to the opening of new establishments,[2] and to the law

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[1] It is difficult to estimate how many. Walsh, referring to the population aged fifteen and over, implies a figure of 43% for 1974, though this was declining fairly rapidly: Brendan M. Walsh, *Drinking in Ireland* (The Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin, 1980), p. 22.

[2] Population growth is very uneven in Ireland. Decline is common in many