THE SOCIETY IN SCOTLAND FOR PROPAGATING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE: ESTABLISHING IDENTITY UNDER THE UNION 1709-1715

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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Associate Professor Philip Dwyer and Professor Hilary Carey, for all their guidance and assistance. I would also like to thank my partner, Matthew Ward, and mother, Nola, for their endless patience and support; and Dr Claire Walker for her initial encouragement.

Dedication

For my father, Greig.

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Abstract

Established only two years after the Union between England and Scotland of 1707, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) sought to establish charity schools throughout the Highlands of Scotland, and eventually the New World. In recent years its efforts have been criticised as an assault on Highland culture, specifically with regard to the "language problem" that arose from its policy of teaching English to Gaelic-speaking children. However, the early SSPCK was full of contradictions. It taught with English texts while insisting on Gaelic speaking schoolmasters; warned against Catholicism while settling of schools in mainly Protestant parishes; and complained about the Highlands' difficult terrain while sending schoolmasters to some of its most inaccessible places. This thesis examines the early years of the SSPCK in terms of its place in the newly established Union, and its contradictions in ideas of space, religion and language. In doing so we begin to understand the SSPCK as an organisation confronted by conflicting perceptions of identity, both of itself and of the new nation it aimed to serve. As a product of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, national identity for the SSPCK was inextricably linked to Calvinism. Hence, although the SSPCK was pro-Union, there were elements of the new Establishment which challenged the Society's pro-Presbyterianism, especially with regard to perceived encroachments of Episcopalians in Scotland. The SSPCK's reaction was to negotiate various representations of identity so as to promote a homogenous Scotland in keeping with the Society's notions of loyalty to the Union, while at the same time ensuring the continued supremacy of the Presbyterian religion within Scotland.
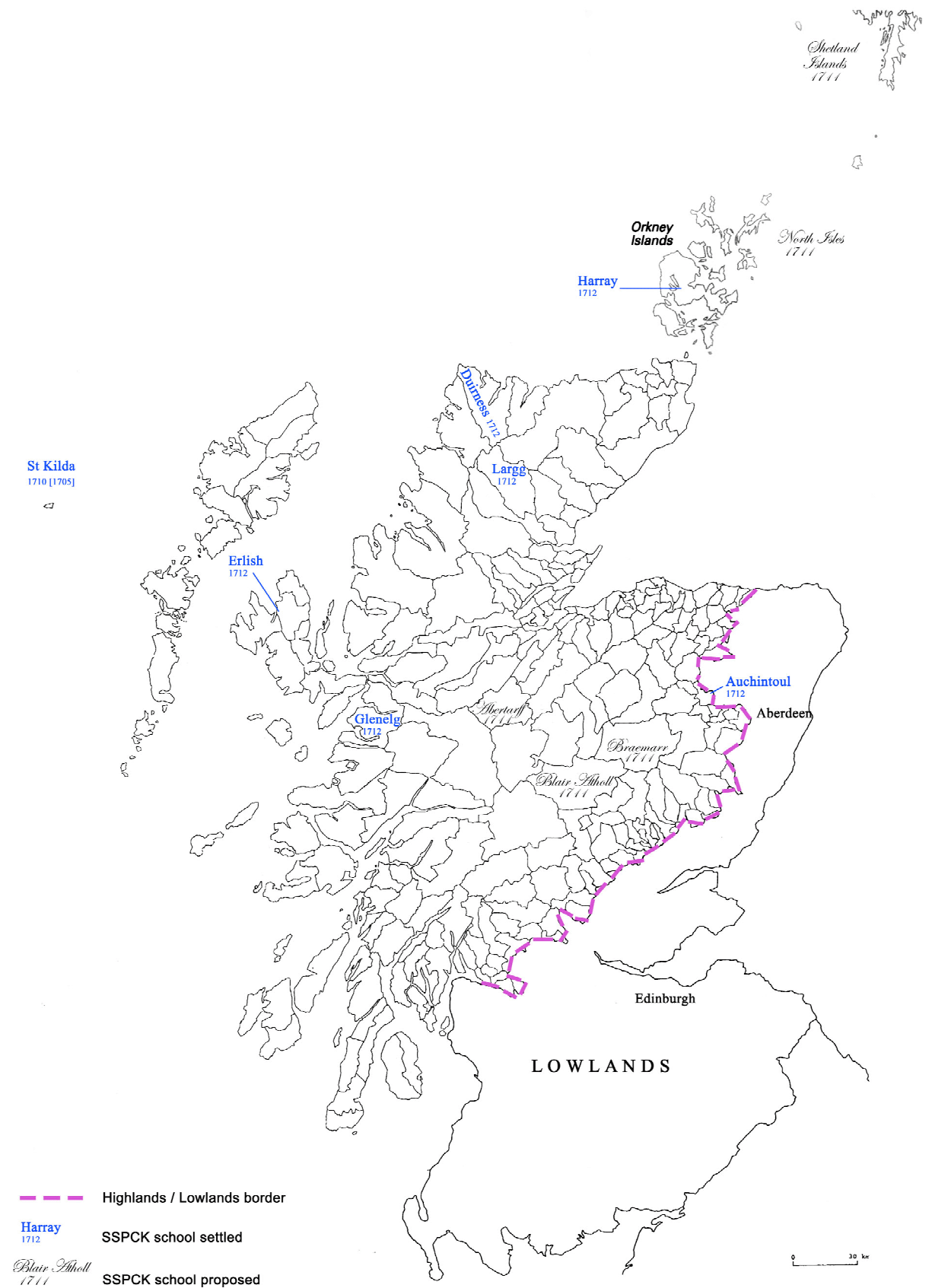
Figure 1. Earliest SSPCK Schools
Source: Map adapted from Clotilde Prunier, *Anti-Catholic Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 15.
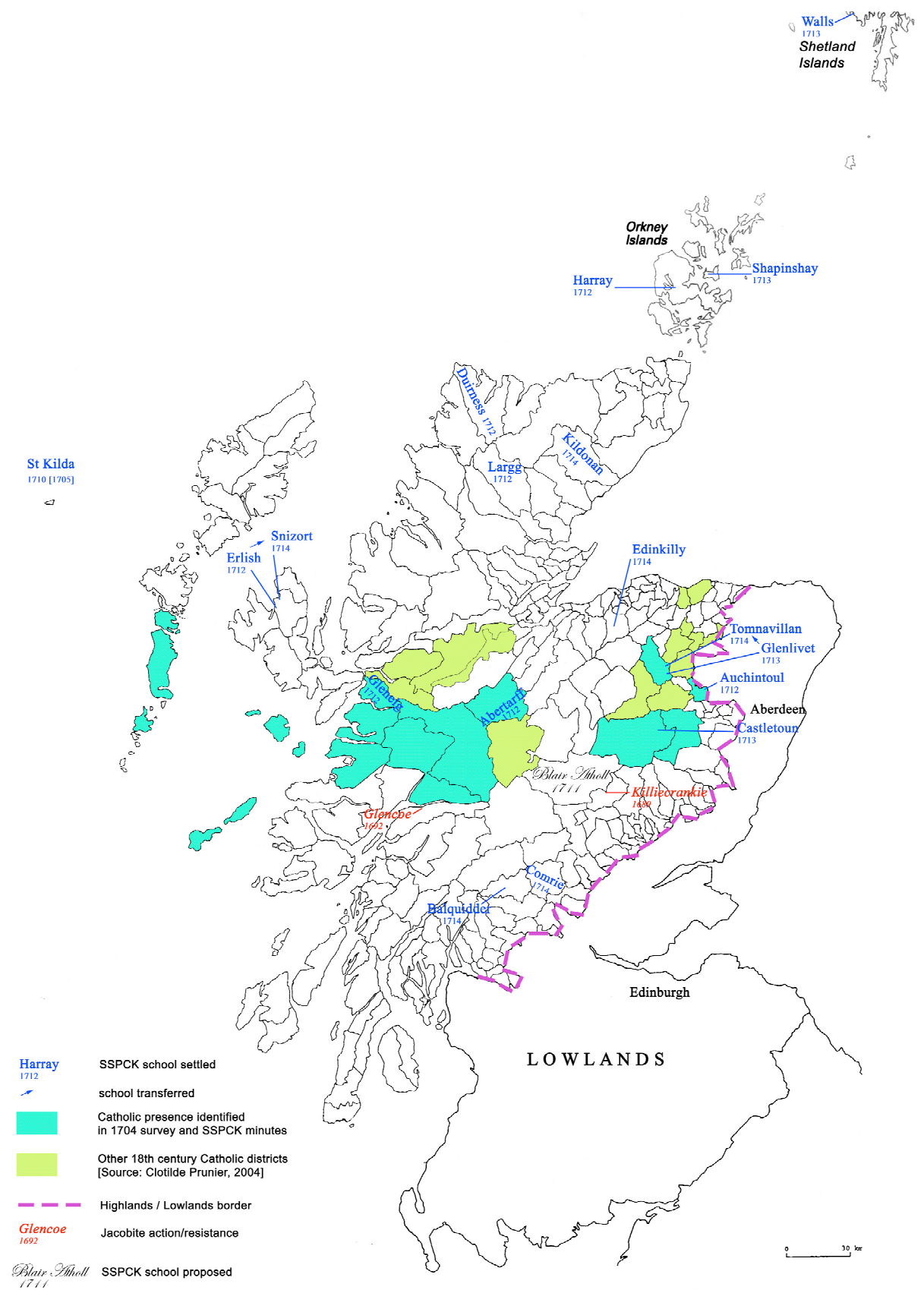
Walls
1713

Shetland
Islands

Orkney
Islands

Shapinshay
1713

Harray
1712

Duirness
1712

Kildonan
1714

St Kilda
1710 [1705]

Largg
1712

Snizort
1714

Edinkilly
1714

Erlish
1712

Tomnavillan
1714

Glenlivet
1713

Auchintoul
1712

Aberdeen

Glenelg
1712

Abertarff
1712

Castletoun
1713

Blair Atholl
1711

Killiecrankie
1689

Glencoe
1692

Comrie
1714

Balquidder
1714

Edinburgh

LOWLANDS

Harray
1712
SSPCK school settled

school transferred

Catholic presence identified
in 1704 survey and SSPCK minutes

Other 18th century Catholic districts
[Source: Clotilde Prunier, 2004]

Highlands / Lowlands border

Glencoe
1692
Jacobite action/resistance

Blair Atholl
1711
SSPCK school proposed

30 km

Figure 2. Early SSPCK Schools and Catholic Districts
Source: Map adapted from Prunier, *Anti-Catholic Strategies*, 15.
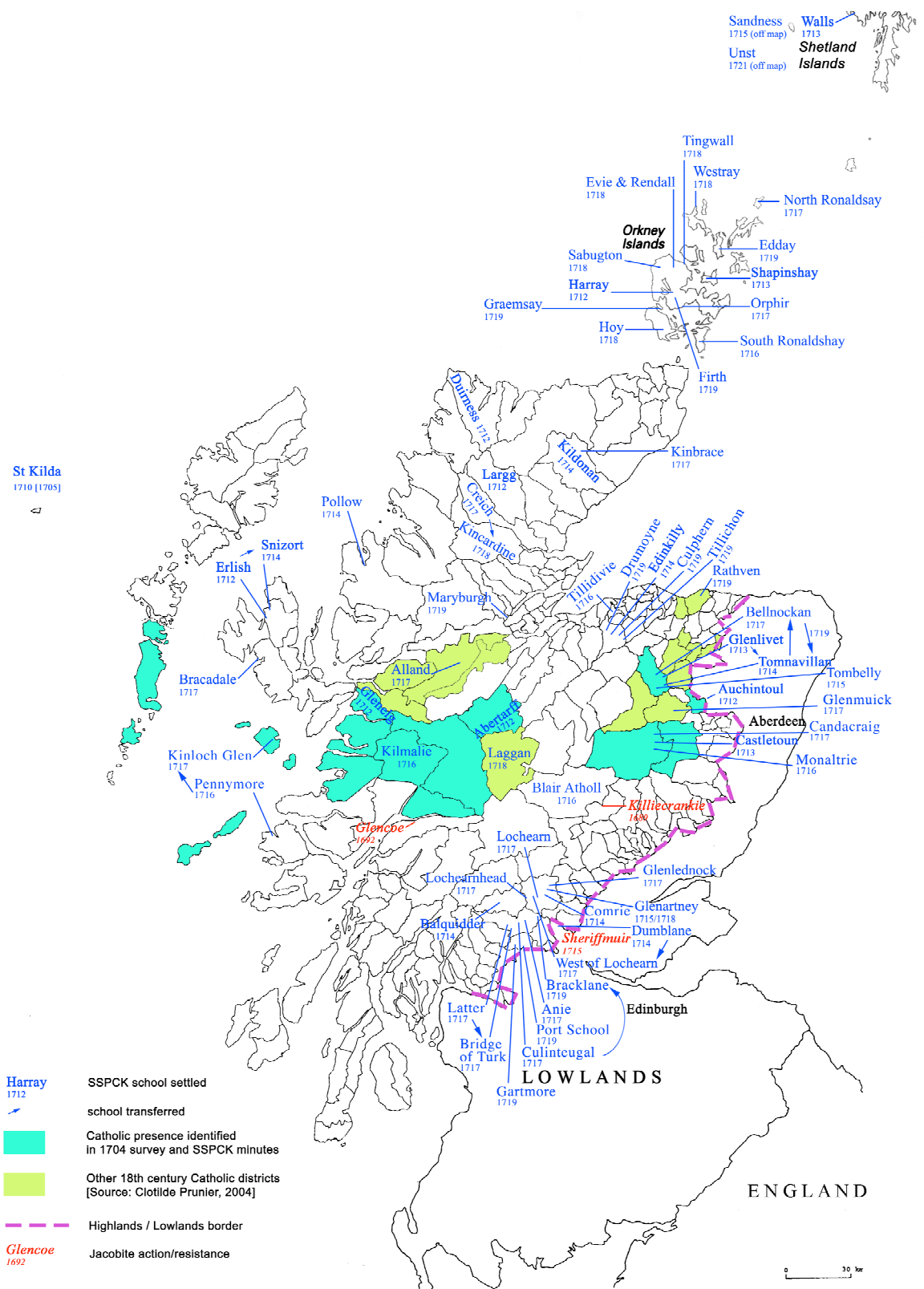
Figure 3. Early SSPCK Schools after 1715 Rising
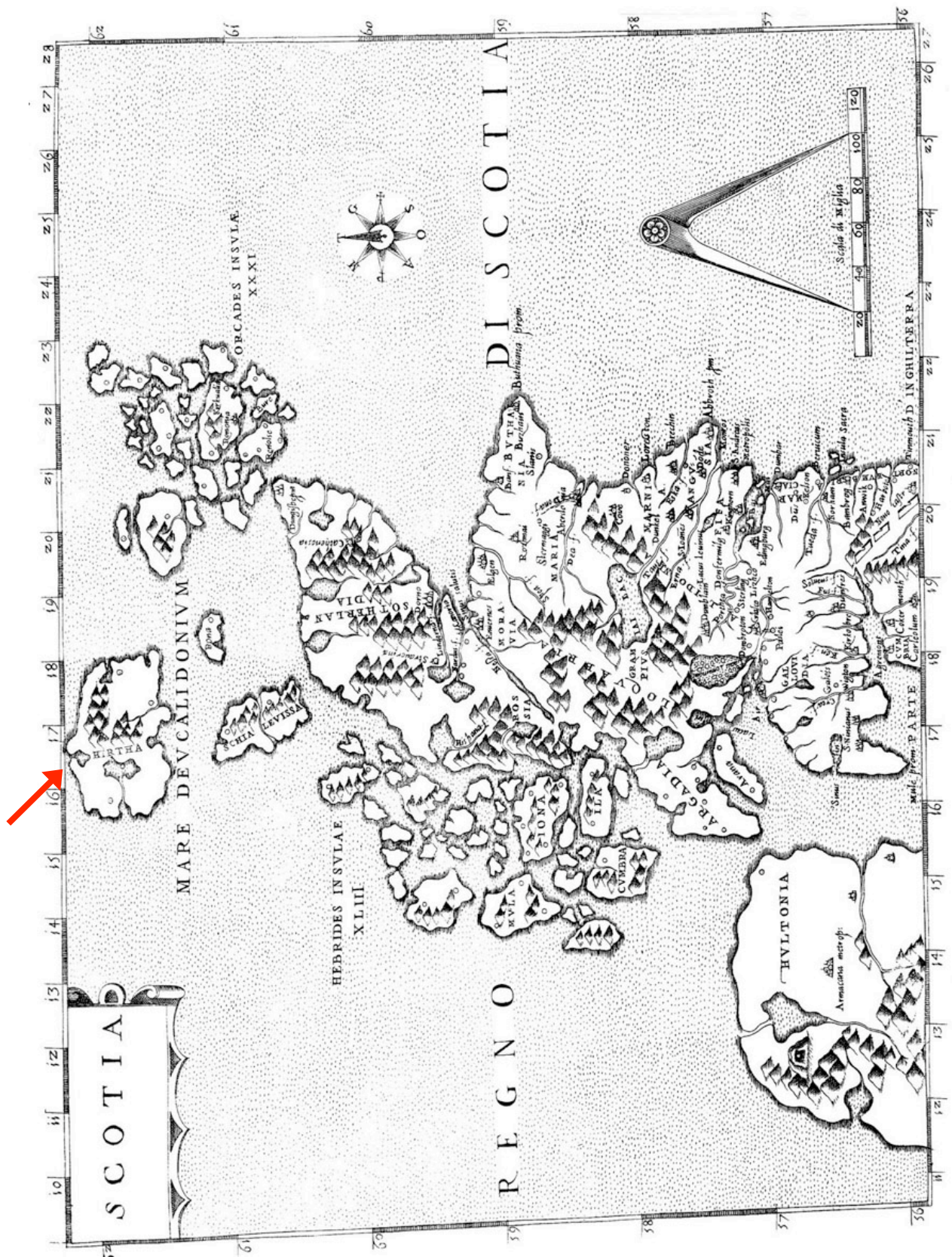*Source:* Map adapted from Prunier, *Anti-Catholic Strategies*, 15.

Figure 4. Italian Map, c. 1560
Source: Map adapted from Royal Scottish Geographical Society. *The Early Maps of Scotland to 1850*, 3rd ed. with *A History of Scottish Maps by D. G. Moir*. (Edinburgh: The Royal Scottish Geography Society, 1973).
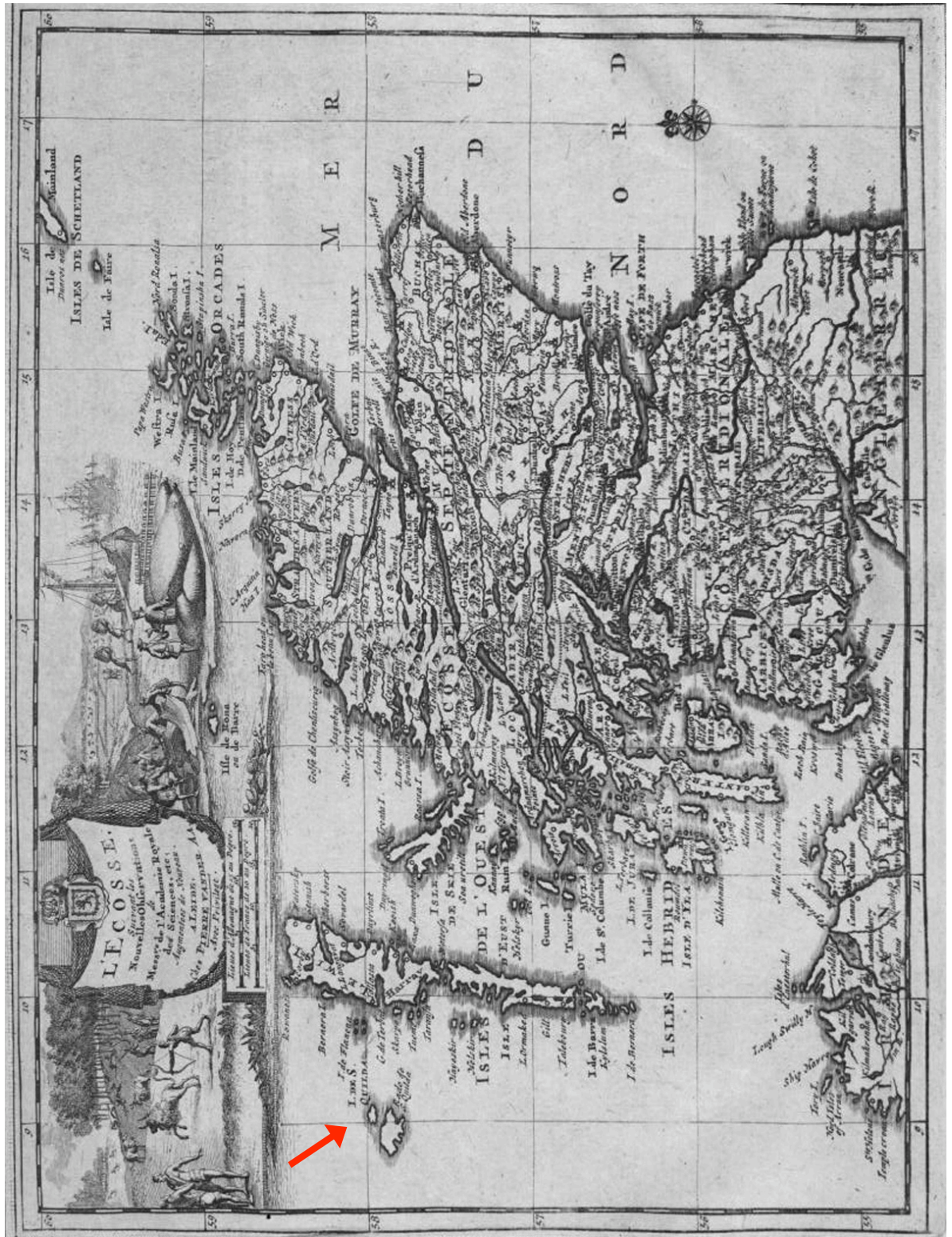
Figure 5. *Scotiæ Tabula* **by Abraham Ortelius, 1573**
Source: Map adapted from Royal Scottish Geographical Society. *The Early Maps of Scotland to 1850.*

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Source: Map from Blaeu Atlas of Scotland, 1654, National Library of Scotland,
http://www.nls.uk/maps/atlas/blaeu/page.cfm?id=77 (accessed 12 March 2010).

Figure 7. *L'Ecosse* **by Pieter van Aa, 1710**
Source: Map adapted from Charting the Nation: maps of Scotland and associated
archives 1550-1740. Edinburgh University Library,
http://www.chartingthenation.lib.ed.ac.uk/index.html