

EMPIRE AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES THE CASE OF SCOTLAND

By John M. MacKenzie

READ 26 SEPTEMBER 1997 AT THE INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH,
LONDON

THE modern historiography of the origins of British national identities seems riven with contradictions and paradoxes. First there is a major chronological problem. Is the forging of Britishness to be located in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth or nineteenth centuries? Second, there is a difficulty in the compilation of such identities. Are they to be found in negative reactions to the perceived contemporary identities of others or in positive, if mythic, readings of ethnic history? Third, can there be a British identity at all when the cultural identities of what may be called the sub-nationalisms or sub-ethnicities of the United Kingdom seem to be forged at exactly the same time? And fourth, did the formation of the British Empire and the vast expansion of British imperialism in the nineteenth century tend towards the confirmation of the identity of Greater Britain or of the Welsh, Irish, English and Scottish elements that made it up?

The number and complexity of these questions, and the equally complicated answers which they stimulate, is a reflection of the extensive multi-disciplinary interest in identities which has emerged in recent times. In order fully to understand these concerns, it is necessary to comprehend their instrumentality. Most modern scholars seem to comply with Sir John Seeley's injunction that history should be read upwards and not downwards.¹ Generally they have accepted the notion that historians have always done this even when they have denied doing so. The practical objects of history seem once more to be recognised, that its study does indeed modify views of the present and consequently influence the framing of the future, and that it should be inseparably bound up with contemporary culture and politics. It is no longer a surprise to find a scholarly discussion of the Union of the Crowns of England and Scotland of 1603 directly linked to the surprises of the 1992 British General Election in an article in the *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*.²

¹J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London, 1883), p. 130.

²Jenny Wormald, 'The Creation of Britain: Multiple Kingdoms or Core and Colonies', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, sixth series, II (1992), p. 194.

The interest in national identities also inhabits a current scholarly yearning for globalisation. Modern concerns with internationalism and inter-culturalism have turned the spotlight on the national identities which seem to stand in their way. For Europeans, the complex layering of region, nation and supra-nationalism and the inter-relationship of the multiple ethnicities which they represent have become important in the cultural, economic and political formation of the European Union. So have been concerns with the post-imperial and often synthetic nationalisms of Asia and Africa, now sometimes construed as the means for the continued dominance of specific elites, as the source of major ethnic stress and as barriers to material and cultural development.

These problems of multi-ethnic societies within specifically nineteenth-century state configurations have been just as apparent in Europe. In the British case, the renewed propaganda for a patriotic history stimulated by the Thatcher government, with its promotion of a national educational system and curriculum, produced an almost inevitable reaction among scholars. That was certainly the case with the History Workshop group's fascination with patriotism and national identity.³ Post-colonialism and other multi-disciplinary scholarly alliances have continued to develop concerns with cultural values, myths, constructions of the past and inventions of traditions. The emergence of a new environmental history has also played a key role. Here, a significant shift has taken place from a supposedly realist and scientific approach to a largely constructivist one. Nature, landscape, and perceptions of environmental change have themselves been increasingly recognised as cultural constructs which play their own part in notions of identity.⁴

Perhaps all this helps to explain why the chronological landscape has been so complex, stimulating the four questions posed at the beginning of the paper. First, which century is the key? English and Welsh, and in a more negative form Irish, identities have inevitably looked to the Tudor period for the origins of Britishness. This was the period when the word 'empire' was first used to mean the enlarging state, a time when Welsh figures were influential at the royal court, when both history and the theatre were bent towards propagandist underpinnings of that state, when settlements were begun across the Irish Sea and tentative steps taken towards more distant colonisation. For Scots, the 1603 Union of the Crowns inevitably marks a significant turning-point, leading to a period of intense theorisation about two

³ *Patriotism: the Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, 3 vols., ed. Raphael Samuel (London, 1999); 'History, the Nation and the Schools', Special Feature, *History Workshop*, 29 (spring, 1990), pp. 92–133.

⁴ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London, 1995); Jane M. Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (London, 1996).

nations with a single monarch, with visible representations of such intellectualisation expressed in the court masque, architecture and public pageants, particularly those associated with the visits of the monarch.⁵ But the 1707 Union of Parliaments seemed even more significant; for Sir John Seeley it marked virtually the start of Scottish history because it represented both the beginnings of material progress for the Scots (and therefore of the cultural and intellectual achievements of the Scottish Enlightenment) and the true origins of the creation of nineteenth-century Greater Britain.⁶ If modern historians have departed from the first proposition, stressing significant economic and intellectual foundations in the seventeenth century, they have perhaps continued to accept the second. And if imperialism brought this Greater Britain to apparent fruition in the nineteenth century, it also helped to form the myth of British national character. This concept of national character relates to the alleged characteristics of individuals rather than the more all-embracing totality of national identity. We can now recognise, however, that national character as formulated in the nineteenth century was a myth that was essentially English and masculine, represented as phlegmatic, unemotional, unintellectual, individualist, eccentric, sporting (both literally and metaphorically), fair-minded and essentially youthful.⁷ It was a national character which was often promoted by those who were not English (John Buchan would be a good example), but which was also frequently contrasted with the characteristics both of the English of the eighteenth century and before, and of the other ethnic groups of the British Isles.

If there seems, then, to be a problem of origins, there is equally a difficulty in construction. Many scholars of identity and representation, including Linda Colley, see national identities as constituted of negative elements in relation to Others. Thus, for Colley, the formation of a distinctively British identity was made up in the later eighteenth century in contradistinction to France: Protestantism contrasted with Catholicism, constitutional monarchy with absolutism, a commercial and progressive economy with an agrarian and backward one, an essentially bourgeois with an aristocratic society.⁸ For Edward Said and the later post-colonialists, the Others are non-European and the manichean polarities become white and black, rational and emotional,

⁵ Wormald, 'Creation of Britain'; *Scots and Britons: Scottish Political Thought and the Union of 1603*, ed. Roger A. Mason (Cambridge, 1994); Charles W.J. Withers, 'Royalty and Empire: Scotland and the Making of Great Britain, 1603-1661', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 113 (1997), pp. 22-32.

⁶ Seeley, *Expansion*, p. 131.

⁷ The most recent examination of this myth of English national character is Jeffrey Richards, *Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to Dad's Army* (Manchester, 1997).

⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons, Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992).

technologically sophisticated and primitive, with subjection to the western rule of law on the one hand and the supposedly arbitrary whims of indigenous rulers on the other.⁹ Here identity is formed out of notions of racial difference and a profound sense of superiority already present in the eighteenth century, but considerably developed in the nineteenth.¹⁰ But as Anthony D. Smith has argued, self-formulated national identities in Europe and elsewhere are invariably about fractions of uniqueness as well as about alleged cultural superiority.¹¹ They therefore have a much greater depth than these contemporary negative reactions: they are forged out of a reading of history upwards into the realm of myth. They search for and construct a unique complex of national ethnic origins, often expressed through linguistic identities and literary formulations of heroic migration and community cohesion, with chivalric encounters and cultural interpretations of a distinctive geography and landscape. They also often appeal to a distant past in order to establish a critique of more recent times. In any case, the binary Other has surely been emphasised too much. We need to pay more attention to the positive referent society, not only the mythic Merrie past, but also the geographically distant positive Other. It is interesting that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Japan was used in this way, both by British propagandists anxious about the lack of a true social and political coherence, and therefore of national efficiency, in the United Kingdom, and by the re-emerging nationalities of the Celtic periphery. The Meiji political and intellectual myth-making about her own distant past, and her communication of such historical myths to the populace, was indeed keenly followed.¹²

While such readings of mythic origins begin in the late fifteenth century, it was in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries that they became powerfully instrumental. And the uniqueness that they celebrated was not British, but English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish. They often interwove both aristocratic and folk traditions, as in James Fergusson's Gaelic Ossian fabrications of 1762, Joseph Ritson's work on the medieval outlaw hero, Robin Hood, published in 1795, Sir Walter Scott's avowedly fictional recreations of Scottish and English pasts, or the Welsh inventions of Edward Llyud, William Pughe and

⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978); *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993).

¹⁰ Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London, 1971); Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians* (Leicester, 1978); *The Expansion of England: Race, Ethnicity and Cultural History*, ed. Bill Schwarz (London, 1996).

¹¹ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Harmondsworth, 1991).

¹² See, for example, Arnold White, *Efficiency and Empire*, edited by G. R. Searle (Brighton, 1983, first published London, 1901); Alfred Stead, *Great Japan, a Study in National Efficiency* (London, 1906); Sir Henry Norman, *The Peoples and Politics of the Far East* (London, 1907).

Edward Williams between the 1690s and 1790s.¹³ According to Jeanne Sheehy, Irish cultural traditions were being formed at a slightly later date.¹⁴ All these 'Celtic' myths quite specifically contrasted their cultural character with that of the English, in their devotion, for example, to epic poetry and music, with various forms of the harp interestingly turning up in each. How then do these sub-nationalities relate to the imperial identity of Greater Britain? Do they cohere with it or run counter to it? Seeley, of course, had nothing to say about such British ethnicities except to draw some very curious comparisons. He likened Maori resistance in New Zealand to that of Highland Scottish clans, by which he presumably meant the Jacobite revolts of the eighteenth century. He also considered the presence of French in Canada, Maoris in New Zealand and Dutch and Africans in South Africa as being no different from the peoples of Wales, Scotland and Ireland, who had distinctive Celtic blood and similarly spoke, as he engagingly put it, unintelligible languages.¹⁵ Despite its cultural arrogance, this is a curiously non-racial formulation. Moreover, it seems to recognise the essentially romantic character of ethnic identities. And it reflects the coherence between the construction of such identities and Seeley's view of history. His vision was akin to the literary adventure tradition distinguished by the American scholar, Martin Green: lively, dramatic, broad events upon a large canvas, easily captured in story and communicated to the young.¹⁶ Here, imperial history and romantic nationalism meet on a common cultural ground. They also bring together the essentially bourgeois and intellectual character of the construction of both ethnic identities and the ideologies of imperial idealism.

Gwyn Williams, in his impressive book *When Was Wales?*, demonstrated that there was no incompatibility between the continuing construction of Welsh cultural identity in the nineteenth century and the emergence of Wales as a major auxiliary economy of Empire. On the contrary, most Welsh cultural and intellectual figures found in Empire a wider and justificatory stage for the Welsh character.¹⁷ Cardiff's status as the Welsh capital was enormously enhanced by its emergence as a grand imperial city.¹⁸ Early in the twentieth century, the patriotic journal *Welsh Outlook* actually compared the Welsh with the Japanese

¹³ Prys Morgan, 'From a Death to a View: the Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 43–100.

¹⁴ Jeanne Sheehy, *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past: the Celtic Revival 1830–1930* (London, 1986).

¹⁵ Seeley, *Expansion*, pp. 47, 50.

¹⁶ Martin Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (London, 1980).

¹⁷ Gwyn A. Williams, *When Was Wales?* (Harmondsworth, 1991), pp. 124–5, 139, 225.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 223.

as an old people finding a new role on the world stage.¹⁹ Not only were the Welsh dissenting churches strongly implicated in the missionary endeavour of Empire, Welsh liberalism, as Kenneth Morgan has demonstrated, was distinctly of the imperial variety.²⁰ We should not be confused by the pro-Boer tendencies of Lloyd George. In that respect he was a maverick and, by the time of the First World War, he could marshal imperial rhetoric with the best of them. Even the Irish negotiated their cultural nationalism in relation to Empire, as in the plays of Dion Boucicault or the prominence of both Protestant and Catholic Irish (admittedly often at different levels of the hierarchy) in the military and police forces of the colonial territories.²¹

But there was one great difference between the Welsh and the Irish and the Scots and that was in the levels of emigration. Welsh emigration declined in the course of the nineteenth century and by the 1890s Wales, uniquely, experienced net immigration. Hence, while Welsh names abound in the West Indies from an earlier period, and while the exploits of Welsh regiments and individual missionaries were celebrated in the Empire, the fame of the relatively small Welsh settlements in Pennsylvania or Patagonia indicates the extent to which there was nothing like the interactive experience of homeland and colonial settlement of the Irish or particularly the Scots.²²

In the Scottish case, another great paradox is the relationship of Scottish participation in Empire to Jacobitism. In the eighteenth century, Scottish commercial involvement in empire was specifically anti-Jacobite. The Scottish burghs resoundingly turned their backs on Jacobitism, often at some temporary cost to themselves.²³ The involvement of Scots personnel in Empire and the formation of London factions connected with such imperial patronage also distanced themselves from romantic Stuart treason. The sons of Highland aristocrats migrated to the Empire to try to reverse the attainders of the post-1745 'pacification', and Highland regiments were formed as evidence of loyalty to the victorious Hanoverian imperial dispensation.²⁴ Yet, by the later nineteenth century,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

²⁰ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 30-1, 45.

²¹ Richard Allen Cave, 'Staging the Irishman' in J. S. Bratton *et al.*, *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790-1930* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 62-128; *An Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Keith Jeffery (Manchester, 1996).

²² Dai Smith, *Wales! Wales?* (London, 1984), pp. 29-32.

²³ Colley, *Britons*, p. 83; Irene Mavor, 'The Guardianship of the Community: Civic Authority Before 1833' in *Glasgow: Vol. 1: Beginnings to 1830*, ed. T. M. Devine and Gordon Jackson (Manchester, 1995), pp. 244, 259.

²⁴ G. J. Bryant, 'Scots in India in the Eighteenth Century', *Scottish Historical Review*, lxiv (1985), pp. 22-41; Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Clans of the Great Glen, 1650-1784* (London, 1984), pp. 209, 217-18.

as Murray Pittock has argued in relation to domestic Scotland, it was to be partly the romantic signs and symbols of a re-invented Highland culture which were to become the key elements of the interaction of home and Empire in the reconciliation of Scottish ethnic nationalism with its global stage.²⁵ I say partly, because this imperial interaction was also bound up with the securely Lowland Burns traditions and the effort to construct Scottish heroes, such as David Livingstone, as combining in their persons both Highland and Lowland characteristics.²⁶ We need to remember that Scots linguistic distinctions embraced Scots as well as Gaelic. Such a cunningly contrived amalgam of Highland and Lowland elements, neatly represented in the Burns societies and Highland games, Caledonian and St Andrews organisations that sprang up around the Empire, in colonies of settlement, India and dependent territories, helped to satisfy what was already clearly perceived as the basic geographic, ethnic and cultural problem in a Scottish nationalist identity. And by the mid to late nineteenth century, the Scots had a very considerable stage upon which it could be worked out.

The eighteenth-century Scottish grasp of imperial opportunities is startling. The city of Glasgow, soon to arrogate to itself a claim as 'Second City of the Empire', expanded mightily and rebuilt itself on the strengths of its American, West Indian and later Asian trades.²⁷ The Scots' infiltration of the East India Company's marine and medical establishments was notorious.²⁸ So was their presence at every level of the Company's activities, as soldiers, governors, diplomats and orientalist scholars. As is now well known, Warren Hastings gathered a group of Scots around him, and Scots governors in southern India were later to institute a wholly new land revenue system based upon the peasantry.²⁹

²⁵ Murray Pittock, *The Invention of Scotland: the Stuart Myth and the Scottish Identity, 1638 to the Present* (London, 1991); see also Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity, 1689–c.1830* (Cambridge, 1993) and *The Manufacture of Scottish History*, eds. Ian Donnachie and Christopher Whatley (Edinburgh, 1992).

²⁶ John M. MacKenzie, 'David Livingstone: the Construction of the Myth', in *Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Popular Culture in Modern Scotland*, ed. Graham Walker and Tom Gallagher (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 24–42; John M. MacKenzie, 'David Livingstone and the Worldly After-Life: Imperialism and Nationalism in Africa' in *David Livingstone and the Victorian Encounter with Africa*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (London, 1996) pp. 201–17.

²⁷ T. M. Devine, 'The Golden Age of Tobacco' and Gordon Jackson, 'New Horizons in Trade' in *Glasgow*, ed. Devine and Jackson.

²⁸ George Kirk McGilvary, 'East India Patronage and the Political Management of Scotland, 1720–74' (Ph.D. thesis, The Open University in Scotland, 1989); Michael Fry, *The Dundas Despotism* (Edinburgh, 1992).

²⁹ John Riddy, 'Warren Hastings: Scotland's Benefactor' in *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, ed. Geoffrey Carnall and Colin Nicholson (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 30–57; Jane Rendall, 'Scottish Orientalism: from Robertson to James Mill', *The Historical Journal*, 25

In the early nineteenth century, the University of Aberdeen supplied most of the doctors and botanists of the Company service.³⁰ The Hudson's Bay Company famously recruited many of its factors in the Orkneys. The most influential missionaries in southern Africa after the British control of the Cape was confirmed at Vienna were Scots, as were figures active in the press in both India and Cape Town.³¹ The most powerful merchant houses in Montreal, Calcutta and the Far East were also Scottish.³² To all of these were added the large numbers who left Scotland in both the forcible and semi-voluntary migrations of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Thus the influence of Scots was to be found in almost all colonies. As I have argued in the past, although the administration and legal systems of empire seemed to be predominantly English, the Scots set about exporting those aspects of their civil culture that had been preserved by the 1707 Act of Union.³³ They asserted their right to develop Presbyterian missions and education in India freed from the established Anglican hierarchy.³⁴ They developed colleges and schools in India and elsewhere in the dependent territories. Many universities in the colonies of settlement were founded on the Scottish model. The schismatic tendencies of the Church of Scotland, particularly symbolised by the Disruption of 1843, served to enhance rather than inhibit the energy of Presbyterian missions throughout the Empire. In India, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta acquired two Scots colleges each where previously there had been one. The Scottish Episcopal Church was just as influential as its Church of England sister in establishing churches of the Anglican Communion within the Empire. While the Scottish universities passed through a difficult period in the middle decades of

(1982), pp. 43–69; Martha McLaren, 'Writing and Making History: Thomas Munro, John Malcolm, and Mountstuart Elphinstone: Three Scotsmen in the History and Historiography of British India' (Ph.D. thesis, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, 1992).

³⁰ John D. Hargreaves, *Academe and Empire: Some Overseas Connections of Aberdeen University 1860–1970* (Aberdeen, 1994), pp. 26, 28, 34–5, 62–5 and *passim*.

³¹ John M. MacKenzie, 'On Scotland and the Empire', *International History Review*, XV (1993), p. 734.

³² David S. Macmillan, 'Scottish Enterprise and Influences in Canada, 1620–1900' and James G. Parker, 'Scottish Enterprise in India, 1750–1914' in *The Scots Abroad*, ed. R. A. Cage; *The Thistle and the Jade: a Celebration of 150 Years of Jardine Matheson and Co.*, ed. Maggie Keswick (London, 1982).

³³ MacKenzie, 'Scotland and the Empire', pp. 732–7; the notion of the Scottish ethic is based upon George Elder Davie, *The Democratic Intellect: Scotland and her Universities in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1961). See also *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the British Union of 1707*, ed. James Robertson (Cambridge, 1995).

³⁴ David S. Forsyth, 'Empire and Union: Imperial and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Scotland', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 113 (1997), pp. 7–8.

the century, Scots retained a reputation as a people uniquely trained for medical, technical and environmental services.³⁵

Scottish missionaries such as Robert Moffat and David Livingstone had a keen eye for natural historical and environmental concerns. Livingstone of course viewed himself as a scientist as well as a medical missionary and explorer and was accepted as such by great scientific figures of the day like Sir Roderick Murchison, William Whewell and Adam Sedgwick.³⁶ Richard Grove has suggested that Scots helped to transmit climatic, botanical and environmental ideas from the Continent to the British Empire at a time when English intellectual activity in this area was largely moribund.³⁷ Certainly, when Robert Croumbie Brown gave evidence to the parliamentary committee on the possibility of establishing a national school of forestry in 1866, he asserted that 'Scotchmen can be most efficiently, and at the least expense, trained up so as to manage our Colonial forests advantageously'.³⁸

It is perhaps not surprising that the presence and talents of Scots were much commented upon by such imperial travellers as Anthony Trollope, Sir Charles Dilke, J. A. Froude and many others: clannish, highly visible and often financially successful, they were invariably contrasted with the Irish as colonists.³⁹ By the final decades of the century, this had an inevitable effect upon Scots' estimation of themselves, not least at home. With the publication of John Hill Burton's *The Scot Abroad* in two volumes in 1864 (with a second edition in 1881) and W. J. Rattray's monumental four-volume *The Scot in British North America* in 1880, a very considerable tradition of celebrating Scots settlement and achievements was begun. In many ways, this was to climax with the publication of Andrew Dewar Gibb's avowedly nationalist *Scottish Empire* of 1937.⁴⁰

³⁵ Hargreaves, *Academe and Empire*, *passim*; see also John D. Hargreaves, *Aberdeenshire to Africa: Northeast Scots and British Overseas Expansion* (Aberdeen, 1981).

³⁶ For the scientific reputation of David Livingstone see *Dr. Livingstone's Cambridge Lectures Together with a Prefatory Letter by the Rev. Professor Sedgwick*, ed. with an introduction, life of Dr Livingstone, notes and appendix by the Rev. William Monk (London, 1858).

³⁷ Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 312, 347; Richard Grove, 'Scottish Missionaries, Evangelical Discourses and the Origins of Conservation Thinking in Southern Africa, 1820-1900' in *Ecology, Climate and Empire: Colonialism and Global Environmental History, 1400-1940*, ed. Grove (Cambridge, 1997) pp. 86-123.

³⁸ John Croumbie Brown, *Management of Crown Forests at the Cape of Good Hope Under the Old Regime and the New* (Edinburgh, 1887), p. iii.

³⁹ See, for example, Anthony Trollope, *Australia* (London, 1873), p. 420; Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, *Greater Britain* (London, 1872), pp. 373-4 and 533; J. A. Froude, *Oceana or England and Her Colonies* (London, 1886), p. 116.

⁴⁰ For a survey of this literature, see MacKenzie 'Scotland and the Empire'. As well as Gibb's *Scottish Empire* (London, 1937), he also published *Scotland in Eclipse* (London, 1930) and *Scotland Resurgent* (Stirling, 1950).

Such pride in imperial achievement, coupled with a sense of duty towards the colonial enterprise, was to be powerfully reflected in the religious, social, intellectual and economic life of Scotland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A great deal of work remains to be done on the role of the churches in the dissemination of notions of identity in relation to empire, but there can be little doubt that the missionary societies and missionaries on furlough had a hand in stressing the imperial field as a means to the expression of a distinctively Scots Presbyterian duty. The hero-worship of David Livingstone and the countless biographies written in his memory indicate this strongly.⁴¹ Further evidence comes from the number of missionary memoirs which pointed to Livingstone as the classic Scots exemplar which their authors wished to follow. We now know of the existence of many societies which particularly involved women in the imperial enterprise. These included the Greenock Ladies' Overseas Missionary Association, which raised money for Christina Forsyth's mission school in Fingoland on the eastern Cape, the Glasgow Ladies' Colonial Association and the Glasgow Ladies' Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India.⁴² If these represent the strongly imperial orientation of Glasgow and the Clyde region, it should not be a surprise that Mary Slessor, so often depicted as one of the principal heroines of missionary endeavour in Africa, came from the notably imperial city of Dundee, its economy tightly connected with the jute of Bengal, shipping and whaling.⁴³

The 1880s, the decade in which the Partition of Africa was pushed forward with particular vigour, are key years in the coming to fruition of these imperial identities. The Boy's Brigade, founded by William Alexander Smith in Glasgow in 1883 and destined to expand throughout Britain and the Empire, as well as to spawn many imitations among other denominations and religions, had a distinctly imperial tone and inevitably venerated the Scots imperial heroes.⁴⁴ The Royal Scottish Geographical Society, founded in the four centres of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen in 1884–5, initially emphasised the intellectual and economic relationships between Scotland and Africa and later promoted wider imperial connections, including Scotland's

⁴¹ MacKenzie, 'Livingstone, Construction of the Myth', pp. 32–5.

⁴² Stana Nenadic, 'The Victorian Middle Classes' in *Glasgow: Vol. II, 1830–1912*, ed. W. Hamish Fraser and Irene Maver (Manchester, 1996), p. 288.

⁴³ Cheryl McEwan, '“The Mother of all the Peoples”: Geographical Knowledge and the Empowering of Mary Slessor' in *Geography and Imperialism 1820–1940*, ed. Morag Bell, Robin Butlin and Michael Heffernan (Manchester, 1996), pp. 125–50; Gordon Stewart, *Jute and Empire* (Manchester, forthcoming 1998).

⁴⁴ J. O. Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society* (London, 1977); *Sure and Steadfast: a History of the Boys' Brigade, 1883–1983* (London, 1983).

own expedition to Antarctica.⁴⁵ Many of its early speakers suggested that Scots had a particular genius for exploration and colonisation.

This seemed to be reflected in the presence of so many industrial, shipping and commercial figures who represented the self-help ideals of Samuel Smiles, born in Haddington, East Lothian. Smiles was himself heavily influenced by the imperial experience and shifted in his own lifetime from a tradition of domestic radical auto-didacticism to one of personal achievements through Empire.⁴⁶ The Indian Mutiny had a profound effect on Smiles and he set about emphasising British heroism in the face of the Revolt, including that of the Scottish hero, Sir Colin Campbell, Lord Clyde. Soon, David Livingstone became Smiles's principal self-help hero, and after the drama of his death and the return of his body in 1873, an engraving of the famous Annan photograph of the missionary was used as the frontispiece for all subsequent editions. In Glasgow and the West of Scotland, figures such as Livingstone's fellow student and friend James 'Paraffin' Young, Sir William Mackinnon, Lord Overtoun, and Sir Donald Currie became involved both in Scottish enterprise and missionary endeavour (particularly that of the Free Church in Nyasaland, Malawi).⁴⁷ The personnel of companies such as the African Lakes, founded by the Moir brothers of Edinburgh to advance Livingstone's ideals, and the Imperial British East Africa, the belatedly chartered brainchild of Mackinnon, stressed their Scottish character, as did the wealthy magnates of the Far Eastern *hong* of Jardine Mathieson.⁴⁸

It has sometimes been objected that the Scottish relationship with Empire reflects different and disconnected regions of the country. The East India Company connections were primarily with the North East. So was much early missionary endeavour. The Western Highlands contributed more than their fair share of migration through the Clearances. Much of the imperial activities of the later nineteenth century were connected with the central belt and in particular with Glasgow and the Clyde. Scots themselves thought regionally rather than nationally. This may have been true in the eighteenth century, a time when the Scots were more powerfully under attack for their opportunistic seizure of imperial enterprise and were therefore eager to seek acceptability through British patriotism. But there can be little doubt that an overall conception of Scotland had been created by the

⁴⁵ John M. MacKenzie, 'The Provincial Geographical Societies in Britain, 1884-1914' in *Geography and Imperialism*, ed. Bell *et al.*, pp. 93-124.

⁴⁶ Angus Calder, 'Samuel Smiles: the Unexpurgated Version', *The Raven Anarchist Quarterly*, v (1992), pp. 79-89.

⁴⁷ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940* (Cambridge, 1977).

⁴⁸ F. L. M. Moir, *After Livingstone: an African Trade Romance* (London, n.d.); Gibb, *Scottish Empire*, p. 147; *Thistle and the Jade*, ed. Keswick.

later nineteenth century. Although regiments supposedly had local or clan connections, they often recruited most successfully among the urban population of the central belt. The resulting iconographic status of the Scottish soldier thus contributed to a sense of an integrated Scottish culture, even if marked out by supposedly distinctive Highland forms of dress. Popular imperial art, in paintings and in engravings in the illustrated press and popular books of heroes and school texts, celebrated the Scottish soldier, easily recognised in his kilt or trews, throughout the century and particular regiments became inseparably associated with such imperial events as the Relief of Lucknow or the Battle of Omdurman. Such associations were equally potent in the Highlands, as so many monuments testify. These would include the striking memorial to the Lovat Scouts in the Boer War in Beaulieu or the massive tower commemorating 'Fighting Mac', Sir Hector MacDonald, at Dingwall (despite the rather dubious circumstances of MacDonald's death), both erected in Edwardian times. Improvements in communications and the development of the mass market, with the cultural and imperial strategies of its advertising and the projection of distinctive commodities would also have contributed to this.

It might also be objected that regional distinctions would have been matched by differences in class responses. Mary Slessor and David Livingstone were resolutely working-class imperial heroes who were certainly manipulated by middle-class writers. But there can be little doubt that figures such as these, together with the churches, schools and youth organisations which promoted them, had an influence upon working-class identity. They were celebrated as much as such by the auto-didacts of the trade union movement, the working men's clubs and left-leaning politicians. There is also solid evidence that the working class responded to commercial heroes who inhabited the sentimental fantasy land of rags to riches. The classic case would be Thomas Lipton, whose connections with Ireland and the Empire (notably the Ceylon of his extensive tea plantations) were promoted through his shops, advertisements and packagings.⁴⁹ Other Scottish-produced commodities, like Camp Coffee, brought together imperial and military iconography in a potent mix.

This negotiation of Scottish identity in relation to Empire was particularly notable in the Scottish imperial exhibitions which took place in both Glasgow and Edinburgh. These consciously vied with their English equivalents and set out to create imaginative geographies in which Scotland was placed at the centre of the empire of trade, heavy industries, settlement and culture. The Glasgow Exhibition of

⁴⁹ Sir Thomas J. Lipton, *Leaves from the Lipton Logs* (London, 1931); Bob Crampsey, *The King's Grocer: The Life of Sir Thomas Lipton* (Glasgow, 1995).

1888, which was conceived as a direct competitor of the Manchester Jubilee exhibition of 1887, not only stressed Glasgow and Scotland's role in shipping, technology, heavy industrial manufactures and iron work, but also invoked a Scottish past with a realistic mock-up of the medieval Archbishop's Palace of Glasgow, demolished more than a hundred years earlier.⁵⁰ Scottish archaeological and antiquarian concerns were also emphasised, as was a distinctive cultural identity through matching colossal statues of Burns and Scott.

Inevitably, the exhibition also promoted Scotland as a destination for tourism, as a romantic and sublime landscape worthy of being visited in association with the exhibition, particularly by returning imperial migrants. Clyde steamers and Glasgow's Clydeside resorts did well out of this stress upon Scottish scenic and historical heritage. In a conscious aping of South Kensington, the profits of the exhibition were to fund a School of Art and a Museum and Art Gallery. The painting by Sir John Lavery of Queen Victoria opening the exhibition deserves an imperial deconstruction all its own. This didactic and idealistic spirit also ran through the 1901 Glasgow exhibition and the 1907 equivalent in Edinburgh. It reached a considerable climax in 1911 when the Glasgow exhibition was specifically designed to promote the Scottish cultural renaissance which had already been manifested throughout the Empire in the founding of Caledonian societies, the holding of Highland games, and the erection of statues of Burns.

This Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry laid considerable emphasis on the Scottish past, on distinguished Scotsmen and on Scotland's contribution to the world, and its profits were to fund a chair of Scottish history and literature at Glasgow University. Lord Kelvin's role in the laying of Atlantic and other imperial cables, David Livingstone's appropriation of East and Central Africa for Scotland and the contribution of Scots to Canada were all prominently featured. The reconstructions of the Auld Toun and the Highland Clachan set out to reconcile Lowland and Gaelic culture, while suggesting their joint role in the creation of the Scottish spirit that had produced modern technology and industry. Historical pageants featured the traditional heroes of the Scottish past. It is perhaps not surprising that the exhibition attracted pilgrimages of Scottish Americans and parties of New Zealanders as well as Scots from other colonies.⁵¹

As Richard Finlay and David Forsyth have shown, a whole range of

⁵⁰ Perilla Kinchin and Juliet Kinchin, *Glasgow's Great Exhibitions* (Bicester, 1988), pp. 17–53; *Illustrated London News*, 12 May 1888. The Glasgow Room of the Mitchell Library, Glasgow, holds albums of cuttings and photographs relating to this exhibition.

⁵¹ *Official Catalogue, Scottish Exhibition*, Glasgow, 1911; *Souvenir Album of the Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry*, Glasgow 1911; *Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry, Glasgow 1911, Palace of History, Catalogue of Exhibits*, 2 vols., Glasgow, 1911.

Scottish political organisations and their associated journals, including the National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights of 1853, the Scottish Home Rule Association and the Scottish Patriotic Association of the Edwardian period and *The Scottish Patriot* claimed Scottish rights precisely in relation to her imperial prominence.⁵² This was also emphasised by leading aristocratic politicians like Aberdeen and Rosebery, as well as a host of bourgeois civic leaders. Even figures of the Left like Keir Hardie, James Ramsay MacDonald and James Maxton stressed Scotland's imperial role as part of the legitimisation of their political demands. The imperial relationship remained a lodestar of one significant fraction of Scottish nationalism until at least the Second World War and remained central to the myths and symbols of Scottish Conservatism and Unionism.

Finlay, however, argues that these imperial cultural and political relations waned considerably after the First World War, a view which connects with a long-standing interpretation in British history as a whole.⁵³ The evidence does not, however, seem to support this. All the characteristics of an imperial culture seem, on the contrary, to continue in a relatively unbroken line until after the Second World War.⁵⁴ Despite the economic disasters of the inter-war years, for example, Glasgow continued to stress her imperial status and emphasised the municipal socialism that was closely related to it.⁵⁵ The cinema and juvenile literature continued in the modes carved out in the later nineteenth century and Scottish nationalism was at its most imperial at this time.⁵⁶ The Scottish Empire Exhibition of 1938 was an even grander affair than its predecessors, specifically designed as a means of lifting western Scotland out of the depression by emphasising the potential of imperial preference as laid out in the Ottawa Agreements of 1932.⁵⁷ Once again,

⁵² Forsyth, 'Empire and Union', pp. 9–11; Richard J. Finlay, 'The Rise and Fall of Popular Imperialism in Scotland 1850–1950', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 113 (1997), pp. 13–21.

⁵³ Finlay, 'Rise and Fall', pp. 19–20.

⁵⁴ John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* (Manchester, 1984), pp. 256–7 and *passim*.

⁵⁵ See for example, *Scotland's Welcome, 1938*, ed. G. F. Maine (Glasgow, 1938); C. A. Oakley, *The Second City* (London, 1946).

⁵⁶ Jeffrey Richards, *Visions of Yesterday* (London, 1973); *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, ed. Jeffrey Richards (Manchester, 1989); MacKenzie, 'Scotland and the Empire', p. 738. See also Richard J. Finlay, "'For or Against?": Scottish Nationalists and the British Empire', *Scottish Historical Review*, LXXI (1992), pp. 184–206 and 'National Identity in Crisis: Politicians, Intellectuals and the "End of Scotland", 1920–1939', *History*, 79 (1994), pp. 242–59.

⁵⁷ Kinchin and Kinchin, *Glasgow's Great Exhibitions*, pp. 127–85; Bob Crampsey, *The Empire Exhibition of 1938: the Last Durbar* (Edinburgh, 1988); *Empire Exhibition, Official Guide* (Glasgow, 1938); *A Souvenir of the Empire Exhibition* (Glasgow, 1938), among many other sources.

a distinctive Scottish culture was delineated in the Highland clachan and in the pageants held at Ibrox Stadium.

Given the character of the displays in the various pavilions, no visitor could have been in any doubt as to the imperial economic system which was being projected through the exhibition. Although the Glasgow working class—and indeed other classes—would have exhibited a great range of identities, including Protestant, Catholic, Highland, Lowland, Irish, as well as class and professional affiliations linking them to national and international connections through unions, churches or societies, none would have been in any doubt that this was an imperial city whose workforce was highly dependent upon the export opportunities of empire. This was strongly projected through both the working- and middle-class press of the city, even through its architecture, street furniture, public parks and statuary.⁵⁸ The common enterprise of Empire, sanctified by Church, school and a broad spectrum of political opinion, surely helped to overlay these social fractures and sometimes competing interests. Shipbuilding and all its related heavy industries was inseparably connected to imperial companies, and noticeably so.⁵⁹ The notion that the Clyde was a highway of Empire was much hyped and the highly visible coming and going of ships from and to imperial destinations served to emphasise this. Many of the manufactures of the city were closely connected to the imperial market, and the companies involved in such trades never failed to emphasise such relationships, almost as a patriotic imperative, however short-sighted it may have been in economic terms. By 1953, the various companies that made up the North British Railway Company (amalgamated in 1903), had sent well over half of its total production to imperial territories.⁶⁰ It even exhibited a locomotive intended for the by then independent India at the ‘Colonial Week’ of 1950.

In an earlier article, I argued that Scotland has long required a European or global connection to set over against the dominance of its English neighbour.⁶¹ Until the eighteenth century, this relationship was satisfied both by the Auld Alliance with France and by the trading relationships of Scotland with the Baltic and the Low Countries.⁶² From the eighteenth until the mid-twentieth centuries, it was supremely

⁵⁸ John M. MacKenzie, ‘Glasgow: an Imperial City?’ in Felix Driver (ed.), *Imperial Cities* (Manchester, forthcoming).

⁵⁹ Michael S. Moss and John R. Hume, *Workshop of the British Empire: Engineering and Shipbuilding in the West of Scotland* (London, 1977).

⁶⁰ *A History of the North British Locomotive Company Limited* (Glasgow, privately published, 1953), p. 10 and *passim*.

⁶¹ MacKenzie, ‘Scotland and the Empire’, pp. 732–7.

⁶² *Scotland and Europe, 1200–1850*, ed. T. C. Smout (Edinburgh, 1986); *Scotland and the Sea*, ed. T. C. Smout (Edinburgh, 1992); Th. A. Fischer, *The Scots in Germany: Being a Contribution towards the History of the Scot Abroad* (Edinburgh, 1902).

justified by Empire, where the Scots were able to establish a distinctive identity which reflected back upon the survival of her religious, intellectual, legal and ethical civil culture. Today it remains reflected in the currently dominant nationalist cry of Scotland and Europe. Thus, when the Scottish experience is put together with that of Wales, Ireland—both the Republic and Ulster in their very different ways—and, it must be said, the English regions, we arrive at the greatest paradox of all. The British Empire, supposedly central to the forging of the national identity of Britons in opposition to the French, may well have performed a very different function. Instead of creating an overall national identity, it enabled the sub-nationalisms of the United Kingdom to survive and flourish. Each was able to create a loop beyond the English, a loop whereby ethnic myths could be reciprocally nurtured and developed. Perhaps the Empire was more notable in preserving a plurality of British identities than in welding together a common imperial tradition. That may well be the principal lesson of the end of Empire and the discovery of distinctive regionalisms within Europe.

Imperialism is all too glibly depicted as a culturally repressive force. From opposite ends of the political spectrum and with very different intentions, both Tom Nairn and one of the last of the imperial historians, Sir Reginald Coupland, have argued that this was the case. For Nairn, the end of Empire was a necessary precondition for the break-up of Britain.⁶³ Coupland was expressing similar anxieties in his last book, *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism*, published posthumously in 1954.⁶⁴ He had been involved in discussions regarding the status of the Irish Free State and in the constitutional debates leading to Indian independence, and these experiences led him to suggest that decolonisation would test the bonds of the metropolitan state.⁶⁵ As an apologist for Empire, it was inevitable that he would be convinced of the beneficence of Union to the development of the British state. It represented 'a great political and psychological achievement', creating an Imperial patriotism both superseding local nationalism and confirming the Hanoverian line.⁶⁶ The Celtic fringe had to be absorbed by the Anglo-Saxon heartland to create a complementary economic system, enhance the population available for the imperial enterprise, and ensure that the danger of foreign invasion was reduced or eliminated. Coupland's consolatory reaffirmation, almost a deathbed plea for Union and national greatness, was virtually the last gasp of imperial scholarship.

⁶³ Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain* (London, 1977).

⁶⁴ Sir Reginald Coupland, *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism* (London, 1954).

⁶⁵ See, for example, Coupland's memorandum on Ireland, July 1933, published in *Imperial Policy and Colonial Practice, 1925-45, British Documents on the End of Empire*, ed. S. R. Ashton and S. E. Stockwell (London, 1996), Part I, pp. 281-6.

⁶⁶ Coupland, *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism*, pp. xv, 12, 113.

It is true that the imperial state did attempt the suppression of regional ethnicities, particularly through educational and linguistic policies,⁶⁷ but these were notably unsuccessful. Indeed, it may be argued that, as such policies invariably do, they stimulated a powerful defensive reaction and fed into the major cultural and language revivals that took place in Wales and Scotland from the later nineteenth century. In the Scottish case, that revival had important imperial dimensions: not only were societies founded throughout the Empire, but there was a realisation that Scottish linguistic and musical traditions has survived among migrant populations eager to maintain their cultural identities in colonies of settlement, notably in Canada and New Zealand.⁶⁸

Imperialism was repressive in many ways, but throughout the British Empire, it had a tendency to perpetuate and enhance regional and ethnic identities among indigenous peoples, whether through indirect rule policies or divide and rule tactics. Clearly, the social, cultural and political objectives of the ruling Establishment were very different at home, but maybe the unintended results were not so distinct. It surely does a disservice to its metropolitan participants to imagine that imperialism always tended towards the suppression of regional and ethnic identity. The end of Empire is too easily seen as the precondition for the rekindling of the suppressed nationalisms of the so-called regions of the British Isles, heading them towards their referenda. In fact, Empire, in establishing those world-wide connections and global loops, had just as much an effect upon the preservation and strengthening of the distinctive identities of the Scots and the other ethnicities of Greater Britain. Diasporas have their origins in considerable distress, but ultimately they invariably strengthen the ethnic and nationalist causes from which they stem. Empire was as capable of producing an enlarged consciousness as a false consciousness.

⁶⁷ Tim Williams, 'The Anglicisation of South Wales' in *Patriotism*, ed. Samuel, vol. II, *Minorities and Outsiders*, pp. 193–203; Gwyneth Tyson Roberts, '“Under the Hatches”'; English Parliamentary Commissioners' Views of the People and Language of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Wales' in *The Expansion of England*, ed. Schwarz, pp. 171–97.

⁶⁸ Ian McKay, 'Tartanism Triumphant: The Construction of Scottishness in Nova Scotia, 1933–1954', *Acadiensis*, XXI (1992), pp. 5–47; Tom Brooking, '“Tom McCanny and Kitty Clydeside”—the Scots in New Zealand' in *The Scots Abroad*, ed. Cage, pp. 156–90.