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Ambivalent Self-Understanding?

Change, Language and Boundaries in the Shetland Islands (1970–Present)

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Foreword

The idea to study Shetland for a doctoral dissertation in Nordic History was born in 2006. Unconventionally, this decision was not made in a library, archives or university. It was made in the National Gallery Café in Edinburgh after a conversation with Michael Hance, a friend and currently the Director of the Scots Language Centre. By that time I had followed political and language developments in Scotland for several years and had written articles on Scots and Scotland but I was looking for a fresh start. Without Michael's suggestion the theme of this study would have been entirely different. Shetland opened a new and exciting world to me and the timing could not have been better – current issues made the theme of my work incredibly contemporary. Yet I needed a solid historical approach in order to find answers to the questions that had interested me for years.

This had already become possible the previous year when I met professor Nils Erik Villstrand at a time when I was teaching at the Department of Slavic languages in Helsinki. I am most grateful to Professor Villstrand that at the beginning of this process he believed in me and made this thesis possible. There are many individuals that in one way or another have contributed to this thesis. First, and above all, I am indebted to my colleagues at Åbo Akademi University. My deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor Professor Nils Erik Villstrand for all the constructive comments he has given me over the years. My colleagues Dr Ann-Catrin Östman and Dr Johanna Wassholm have offered various helpful comments and constant encouragement. I am also grateful to all the participants at the research seminar in history, especially professors Holger Weiss and Pirjo Markkola for the good comments at the beginning of my study. Many thanks go to my fellow research students, some of whom have become my friends, for their emotional support.

I would especially like to acknowledge the thoughtful and

constructive critique from the pre-examiners of my dissertation Prof. Steve Murdoch, University of St. Andrews, and Docent Andrew G. Newby, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies and University of Aberdeen. I feel fortunate to have had them as the pre-examiners of my dissertation and to have benefited from their comments and ideas. They also helped me realize, at a crucial moment, that my work was finally beginning to be close to its end and I shall always be grateful to them. This type of research would not have been possible without the cooperation of many Shetlanders, informants and contributors to this study, and without the cooperation of other scholars on Shetland and Scotland. I owe many thanks to all my anonymous informants in Shetland and to Shetlanders such as Mary Blance, Laureen Johnson, Alex Cluness, Malachy Tallack and all the people who participated in personal discussions.

Special thanks go to William Moore of Shetland ForWirds, to Neil Henderson of the Shetland Islands Council and to Mark Ryan Smith of the Shetland Archives, always ready to help with material and his own thoughts on the matter. I am very grateful to Brian Smith at the Shetland Archives for the many helpful discussions on historical and language-related issues. I am also indebted to Dr Robert Millar, of the University of Aberdeen, who gave me valuable ideas and suggestions regarding my fieldwork in Shetland. At the beginning of my project I discussed several issues with Dr Wilson McLeod of the University of Edinburgh. Many thanks also to Dr Klaske van Leyden and Prof. Marina Dossena who sent me their books and Prof. Lynn Abrams and Dr Robert Millar who provided me with chapters of their published works. Gratitude also to Dr Dauvit Horsbroch for his good advice, to Colin Wilson for his hospitality and friendship and to Stig Dreijer for his help with material on Åland.

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Ester, Rolf och Margareta Bergboms fond; Waldemar von Frenckells stiftelse; Ingrid, Margit och Henrik Höijers donationsfond II; Otto A. Malm Stiftelse and the Rector of Åbo Academy University. My research trips and fieldwork were funded by Stiftelsens för Åbo Akademi Forskningsinstitut, Historiatieteiden tutkijakoulu, Beijer-stiftelsen and Åbo Akademi.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. My husband and son have given me valuable technical advice and my husband Pekka printed at his work hundreds of pages of seminar papers. I dedicate this book with love to my family and especially to my son Rono, who has always been around when I needed company or a break from working. He is my joy and hope for the future.

Atina Nihtinen,

Helsinki, 27 August 2011.

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I. Introduction

Aims and key issues

> The Shetlander is proud of his Viking descent … The people of Shetland do not understand Gaelic. There are no "Macs" among them. The bagpipes are an importation … Whisky is not a native drink.[1]

Shetland lies at the most northerly point of the British Isles, between 60˚and 62˚and has a current population of around 21,880 people.[2] The islands represent one of the 32 unitary council regions in Scotland. The Norse heritage of the islands has been long considered both to create and to express the otherness of Shetland. However, it was not until the late twentieth century that Shetlanders initiated an autonomist movement, and only at the beginning of the twenty first century also a language movement. During the last forty years Shetlanders' self-understanding as different from mainland Scotland has been influenced by both economic and political change in the isles and Scotland as a whole.

From the 1970s onwards, Shetland became closely connected to the oil industry developing in the North Sea. From distant and seemingly peripheral the islands became wealthy, valued and important: suddenly Shetland featured prominently in the news. The population of the islands, which had consisted for centuries mainly of crofters and fishermen, was greatly affected by the fact that it turned into the most important oil area found in the North

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[1] W. Moffatt, *Shetland: The Isles of Nightless Summer* (London, 1934), pp. 34-35.

[2] *Shetland in Statistics* (Lerwick, 2007), p. 10.

Sea.[3] When the North Sea was first being explored for oil, Shetland reacted fast to the new possibilities and the islands avoided amalgamation into a wider Highland and Islands authority. The Zetland County Council Act was passed by parliament in 1974, handing over to the local council full control over all developments around the isles, and also enabling the development of substantial oil funds over the following years.[4] The funds obtained from dealings with the oil companies were instrumental in effecting a noticeable improvement in the Shetland population's quality of life.[5] The North Sea Oil Industry became an essential part of not only Shetland's, but also the UK's economy and it turned Shetland into one of the wealthiest parts of the UK. Almost a third of all manufacturing jobs in the Highlands and Islands were oil-related, although most of the work was located in the North-East.[6]

By the end of the seventies, oil provided employment for about 9000 workers in Orkney and Shetland, but migrant workers took most of these jobs. Oil had a greater impact on Shetland with housing almost doubled and incomes, earlier two-thirds of the Scottish average, were now ahead of that average.[7] Much of the transformation can be attributed to the decisions of the local council, which bought land for oil development and negotiated beneficial deals with the oil companies and central government. As a consequence of the general growth, while before the 1970s many young people born in Shetland remained in mainland Scotland after graduation, now it was possible for them to return and find employment locally. Migration from mainland Scotland and England to Shetland increased substantially as a consequence

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[3] See e.g. A. Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', in A. Macartney (ed.), *Islands of Europe* (Lerwick, 1986), p. 9.

[4] Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', pp. 12-13.

[5] J. Hunter, *Last of the Free: A Millennial History of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 365.

[6] R. Finlay, *Modern Scotland 1914-2000* (London, 2004), p. 312.

[7] Finlay, *Modern Scotland* , p. 312.

of economic change.

At the same time, there were also political changes in the isles and in Scotland as a whole. The nationalist movement in Scotland was growing in strength in the 1970s and although there were many reasons for this, the discovery of oil was one of the most significant.[8] In turn, Shetland of the 1970s saw the emergence of *the Shetland Movement*, a pro-autonomy for Shetland-party. Within this framework attitudes in the isles were seen by scholars to have evolved from being centred on distinct culture to being centred on ethnic separatism. It was claimed that Shetlanders defined themselves increasinly as "not Scottish at all". In Scottish contexts economic and political change stimulated the recreation of heritage in a range of forms, which included also growing interest in representations of the past in museums and heritage centers.[9] Similarly, Shetland witnessed growth in projects aiming at heritage protection and in official and popular representations of the past.[10]

The 1990s were a period of a major political change. Scotland saw the return of a Scottish parliament in 1999 and this can be argued to have influenced Shetlanders' views on political and cultural matters once again. Furthermore, in 2004 Shetland dialect activists joined their efforts in dialect promotion with the Scots language movement, while in the 1970s and 1980s the dialect spoken in Shetland was regarded as clearly distinct. The questions, which must be put forward in this connection, are: What might this say about Shetlanders' self-understanding and

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[8] Finlay, *Modern Scotland,* p. 312.

[9] L. Abrams, *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World: Shetland 1800-2000* (Manchester, 2005), p. 10-11. The relationship between history, heritage and Scottish identity in the case of Scotland has been examined for instance in D. McCrone, A. Morris and R. Kiely, *Scotland – the Brand: The making of the Scottish heritage industry* (Edinburgh, 1995); D. McCrone, A. Morris and R. Kiely, 'The heritage consumers. Identity and affiliations in Scotland', in M. Fladmark, *Sharing the Earth*, (Aberdeen, 1995), pp. 73-88; I. Donnachie and C. Whatley (eds.), *The Manufacture of Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1992).

[10] Abrams, *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World*, p. 12.

feelings of national belonging? What is the role of language and why? It is possible to assume that with the change in political circumstances Shetlanders express their belonging to the new Scottish contexts also by initiating a dialect movement and not a language movement. Yet this assumption is not sufficient to explain why Shetlanders needed a dialect promotion movement in the first place. Bearing in mind the simultaneous transformation of the economy and political discourses, the dissertation seeks to examine how recent developments and changes in prevailing discourses have affected Shetlanders' self-understanding and feelings of national belonging and the role of language in this process. By focusing on other aspects of Shetland culture and Shetlanders' self-understanding, both historians and social scientists have tended to give language questions little attention. Strictly linguistic issues have proved less popular among historians, perhaps because of their problematic character in Scottish contexts or because of the previously more clearly defined boundaries between different areas of scholarship.[11]

On the other hand, linguistic studies have been often concerned with particular aspects of language rather than with relating language issues to wider political changes. There appear to be no published historical works dealing with the role of Shetland dialect as a marker of boundaries both as a historical process and in connection to contemporary political and economic change. Furthermore, there appear to be no published studies on the politics of language in Shetland in relation to contemporary language discourses in mainland Scotland. Therefore, apart from the possibility to study the effect of North Sea oil on Shetlanders' self-understanding, a more important reason for the choice of Shetland as the main subject of study was the opportunity to examine Shetland at a time when prevailing discourses in

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[11] A notable exception is a study by the Scottish historian Steve Murdoch, which is concerned with language in contemporary politics and the politics of language in contemporary Scottish contexts. He also uses a questionnaire survey as its method. See S. Murdoch, *Language Politics in Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1996).

Scotland have also changed.

In the present study Shetland is explored from the perspective of both Scottish nationalism and recent change in the islands, by including relevant issues of the Scottish context in each subject matter after which Shetland is discussed within Scottish discourses and in relation to them. The use of Scotland as both a context and comparison to Shetland is motivated also by the fact that issues of culture and national belonging are always comparative ones and dependent on context.

The first aim of the dissertation is to consider Shetland nationalism and the role of language for the emergence of distinct self-understanding among the Shetlanders in comparison to the role of other elements of history and culture. In the second instance the thesis discusses the concepts and arguments used in discourses about language, culture and national belonging during the last decade. Taken together these will seek to explain how recent developments and changes in prevailing discourses have affected Shetlanders' self-understanding in relation to Scotland and being Scottish and the role of language in this process.

Theoretical framework

The subsequent sections of the introduction locate the work within relevant research, introduce theoretical debates on regions and nationalism and discuss the main concepts employed in the dissertation. I also present an overview of primary sources and research methodology.

If Shetland to be considered a region along the same lines as autonomous insular regions such as Åland, it is necessary firstly to explain the ways in which regions are viewed in contemporary research. In recent history writing there has been a visible transition from essentialist views to functional and constructivist (relativist) approaches. The essentialist approach treats concepts and social categories as objective, fixed entities. The perspective of

relativists acknowledges both social and cultural concepts as constructed, fluid and negotiable. Emphasis is on social interaction and ambiguous spatial boundaries and more interactive perspectives. The new interest of the late twentieth century in how nations are created as communities has led to an increasing application of a constructivist definition to regions as well. Contemporary research (e.g. Aronsson), points out that until recently it was unusual to think of regions in these terms probably because the regions were already there when the nation-state project was being established.[12] The regions were also associated with provincialisms and conservative folk culture.[13]

The historians and the growth of history as a university discipline in the nineteenth century played a crucial role in the legitimacy of the nation state. In turn, in the 1990s, the interest in cultural and regional studies has been paralleled by perspectives being borrowed from the study of the nation state, such as those on imagined communities or the invention of tradition.[14] The nation state has been regarded as a project in which symbols and cultural structures play an important role for the self-understanding of the modern nation state. The existing theories of the nation-state can be applied to regions too.[15] Like the nation-states, regions are also constructed, fluid and negotiable. This approach is increasingly applied, because questions about the role of regions are accentuated by the reduced significance of the nation states. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the nation-state as exerciser of power has decreased as the cultural, ideological, and territorial dimensions of authority have become less important.

It is widely recognised that the significance of the nation-states

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[12] P. Aronsson, 'The Desire for Regions. The production of space in Sweden's history and historiography', *Interregionen* (4) (2005), p. 18.

[13] But also as a basis for an invented national culture, as chapter 3 of the present thesis demonstrates.

[14] See E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

[15] Aronsson, 'The Desire for Regions', p. 18.

has been reduced in recent decades and often replaced by decentralisation, but also that some forms of nationalist ideology or nationalist sentiments remain strong. Whereas there might be less actual power in nation states, this is not necessarily a decrease in significance in the minds of the populations. Nationalism coexists with new elements of consciousness and the understanding of Shetlanders' identification with their region and respective nation is not possible without a consideration of the influence of nationalist ideology. The existence of nationalist discourse, however, as in the case of Shetland, does not necessarily imply a presence of national sentiment or vice versa.[16]

To understand the specific character of Shetlanders' sense of belonging within Britain, one should consider on the one hand politics expressed by the existence or absence of parliamentary nationalism within Scotland but on the other hand national identity as linked to an ethnic past manifested in various different ways over time. This sense of national identity, which has been recently applied by Morton (1999) to the case of nineteenth century Scotland, can help to reveal specific for Shetland developments, which in the last chapter of this study are further compared to other examples of insular groups.[17]

Concerning the origins and formation of nations three schools of thought have emerged and developed (with some variations inside each group). All these approaches include views on the relationship between ethnic identities and nations and the existence or absence of a causal link between ethnicity and the formation of nations. The primordialists have presented nations as ancient and perennial. The modernist school of thought (represented by Hobsbawm, Gellner, Hroch and Anderson, among others) consider nationalisms and nations to be a modern phenomenon and a product of modern developments such as capitalism, communication, education and bureaucracy. In the

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[16] Se e.g. K. Glaser, *Minority languages and cultural diversity in Europe: Gaelic and Sorbian Perspectives* (Clevedon, 2007), p. 20.

[17] Unionist Nationalism as discussed by Morton is elaborated in chapter 2.

views of the modernists, nations and nationalism can be dated (with some exceptions) to the latter half of the eighteenth century. The ethno-symbolists support the existence of a certain level of continuity with pre-modern identities and structures. According to the views of the modernists nations and nationalism did not exist in earlier periods of history, because there was no need for them. In pre-modern societies elites and masses had no common ground and were culturally separated. Modern societies, on the other hand, require cultural homogeneity in order to function. If, however, certain groups with special cultural characteristics cannot be absorbed, this is likely to produce two nationalisms and two new nations in result.

For the purposes of this study, the ethno-symbolic theory of Anthony D. Smith and his distinction between *ethnie* and nation have been singled out for attention.[18] Against the background of rejecting of some of the claims of both modernists and perennialists, Smith introduces the concept of *ethnie*. The term *ethnie* can be considered problematic in contemporary usage, but the meaning of the concept created by Smith to signify ethnic continuity has informed my understanding of Shetland throughout the dissertation. In Smith's view nationalism, both as ideology and movement, is an entirely modern phenomenon. Yet the modern nation includes many of the characteristics of pre-modern *ethnie*.

Elements of the *ethnie* and the existence of certain ethnic roots determine, to a large degree, the nature and boundaries of modern nationalisms and nations. Many nations and nationalisms were built on the basis of pre-existing *ethnie*, and in order to form a nation in our times, it is of main importance to create ethnic components.[19] Nations are characterised by territory, public cultures and common laws. While nations must possess their

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[18] See A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986); A.D. Smith, *The Nation in History. Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, 2000).

[19] Smith, *The Nation in History*, p. 65.

homeland, *ethnie* does not necessarily have a territory of its own. The main dimensions of *ethnie* are collective name, common myth of descent, shared history, distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity.

Contemporary nations were created along two different routes to national status: the civic-territorial and ethnic-genealogical.[20] It has been also appropriate to talk about Western and Eastern nationalisms. The first type of nation-formation took its basis from a sense of territory. Apart from a territorial aspect, this form of nation entails a legal aspect. It is a community of laws and legal institutions and its members are bound by a common code of rights and obligations. Other aspects are citizenship and common culture. This path of formation *state-to-nation* only worked in the context of completely shared meanings and values. In the other type of nation-formation nations were created gradually on the basis of pre-existing *ethnie*. Ethnic ties were transformed into national sentiments through mobilization, territorialization and politicization. The two somewhat distinctive forms and concepts of the nation, *civic* and *ethnic* reflect rather the distinct historical processes of nation-formation than the existence of "ideal" types.

The concept of nation usually includes both civic and ethnic elements. Nations are not static objects, but long-term processes, which are reconstructed continuously although within definite limits. They require ethnic cores (and the sense of past, heroes, golden ages, myths and symbols) in order to survive.[21] The nation-state has often been described as the most successful social form produced by modernity. Nationalism can be best understood as "an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation."[22]

Contemporary definitions of nationalism are nevertheless

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[20] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 209.

[21] See for example L. Eriksonas, *National Heroes and National Identites: Scotland, Norway and Lithuania* (Brussels, 2004).

[22] Smith, *The Nation in History*, p. 3.

diverse and whether there could be a single definition remains controversial. Some commentators (such as Tom Nairn and David McCrone) have suggested terms such as neo-nationalism to distinguish contemporary nationalisms from those of the nineteenth century. In any case, territorial and ethno-cultural aspirations have different content in different cases and the ability of territorial communities to maintain their unity depends to a large extent on their possibilities and resources to produce links to a golden age and to create a distinct socio-cultural system of their own. Territory as such is not sufficient as the basis of identification, but a complex group of other elements are needed in order to connect the actors of the territory culturally.[23] In this connection it is of value to examine the role of language varieties, past and present, as territorial symbols of belonging.

Outline of concepts

Since the 1970s demands for regional autonomy have become more common. These were topical in the 1970s and 1980s and built up first in radical and poor regions such as Ulster or the Basque provinces, followed by "a quest for identity on the part of the successful, the rich, and the strong."[24] In the literature considering autonomy issues there are two main models for autonomy; top-down models, which refer to federal and other territorial forms of autonomy, and bottom-up models, which refer to administrative and non-territorial forms of autonomy. Top-down models of autonomy are used where regions exercise a high degree of self-government within an existing state structure.[25] Bottom-up models of autonomy are used when separatist groups or other groups (ethnic, linguistic and cultural) are striving for a

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[23] A. Paasi, *Territories, boundaries and consciousness: the changing geographies of the Finnish-Russian border* (Chichester, 1996), p. 53.

[24] Aronsson, 'The Desire for Regions', p. 1.

[25] M. Ackrén, *Conditions for Different Autonomy Regimes in the World. A Fuzzy-Set Application* (Åbo, 2009), pp. 46-47.

future with sovereignty or independence as their goal, and where self-government is seen as "the first step in the process towards sovereignty, which is the ultimate goal."[26]

The nature of regional demands may vary depending on specific political and economic developments, but tension between regions and nations or nation-states and expressions of separatism are usually strongest when these demands can be articulated with an ethnic dimension. Ethnicity, whether based on real or imaginary past, is expressed through difference and reinforced by the use of history.[27] In this context it is important to distinguish between the use of history and historic culture. History culture, as defined by Peter Aronsson, consists of the artefacts, rituals, customs and assertions with references to the past, which allow us to link the relationship between the past, present and future. The uses of history consist, in turn, of the processes where parts of history culture are activated to form explicit meanings and action-oriented totalities.[28] In contrast to academic historical writing, history culture concerns a much wider social arena and focuses on the ways in which claims about the past are mediated within a field of cultural production, by looking at cultural artefacts such as books, museums, buildings, photographs, festivals and so forth.

Human geographer Anssi Paasi proposes a distinction between a region's identity, and regional identity (regional consciousness). This distinction is essential for understanding the difference between the historical construction of a region and the life histories of its inhabitants. Regional consciousness, as defined by Paasi, is a theoretical, conceptual category that characterises the multidimensional relationship between individuals, groups and society.[29] It refers to the ways in which the inhabitants of a region

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[26] Ackrén, *Conditions for Different Autonomy Regimes in the World*, p. 47.

[27] The systematic use of a division between insiders and outsiders is considered to be the first fact of ethnicity. See T.H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (London, 1993).

[28] P. Aronsson, *Historiebruk – att använda det förflutna* (Lund, 2004), p. 17.

[29] Paasi, *Territories, boundaries and consciousness,* p. 36.

experience the history of the region, its specific features and region's relation to all other areas of society.[30] The identity of a region, on the other hand, is constructed by production and reproduction of regional consciousness and produces images of the region. In literature on nationalism and national identity the role of the individual has been downplayed, and nations are usually dealt with on a collective rather than individual level.[31] A similar situation concerns regions. From this viewpoint, as a widely-used term the concept of identity is ambiguous, because it has had to conceptualise "all affinities and affiliations, all forms of belonging, all experiences of communality, connectedness, and cohesion, all self-understandings and self-identifications in the idiom of identity."[32]

The notion of identity was introduced into social analysis, social sciences and public discourse in the 1960s and has been used in various academic fields ever since. Brubaker and Cooper distinguish between identity as a category of practice (the way in which it is used by ordinary people in everyday settings to make sense of themselves) and as a category of analysis.[33] The discursive approach to identities emphasizes the fact that they are a construction, a process which is never completed, constantly in the process of change and transformation. To avoid the complexity of the term *identity* Brubaker and Cooper suggest the use of the term *identification*, an active, process-describing noun. One may be called upon to identity oneself in any number of different contexts and in modern settings such occasions for identification are particularly abundant. How one identifies oneself and how one is identified by others varies greatly from one context to another and

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[30] A. Paasi, 'Alueiden renessanssi ja identiteettipuhe. Suomalaisen aluekeskustelun erittelyä', in S. Hänninen, *Missä on tässä?* (Jyväskylä, 1998), pp. 172-176.

[31] For a recent discussion see J. Wassholm, *Svenskt, finskt och ryskt. Nationens, språkets och historiens dimensioner hos E.G. Ehrström 1808-1835* (Åbo, 2008).

[32] R. Brubaker and F. Cooper, 'Beyond "identity"', *Theory and Society*, vol. 29 (2000), p. 2.

[33] Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond "identity"', p. 4.

self- and other-identification are situational and contextual.[34]

Stuart Hall has argued that "only through the relation to the other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks" that the "positive"meaning of national identity can be constructed.[35] Nevertheless, not all beliefs and practices are about difference. Some practices are simply bonding mechanisms uniting the actors of a particular territory culturally. Some discourses are created locally (in this case in Shetland) whereas others are non-local meanings regarding boundaries and their reproduction.[36] Various institutions and different factors play an important role in the construction and legitimisation of cultural difference. These include the role of the local government; the impact of local writings; local cultural policy and the accommodation of immigrants and minority groups; the role of individuals (politicians, cultural figures, activists etc.), and, the relationship between region and nation.

Shetland is part of the electoral region of the Highlands and Islands of the Scottish Parliament. Nevertheless, this region has political significance only with regard to the so-called list MSPs' in Parliamentary elections.[37] There are 129 members of the Scottish Parliament, of whom 73 represent individual constituencies, including Shetland. The Northern and Western Isles are over-represented in this mechanism as there are usually about 60,000 people in a constituency, and not 20,000 as in this case. The other 56 MSP are allocated on a regional basis – 8 regions with 7 MSPs each. This means that there are 7 MSPs who have responsibility for all of the Highlands and Islands, including Shetland. The historical background of this division is more complicated, however. Government administrators invented the concept of Highlands and Islands in the late nineteenth century to represent

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[34] Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond "identity"', p. 14.

[35] S. Hall and P. Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, 1996), p. 4.

[36] Paasi, *Territories, boundaries and consciousness*, p. 74.

[37] MSP is the abbreviation for a Member of the Scottish Parliament.

the area to which the Crofters (Scotland) Act of 1886 was applied.[38] This designated certain counties as crofting counties. Nonetheless, from a contemporary point of view, tying in the Gaelic and non-Gaelic parts of the region (including eastern Caithness on the mainland) is problematic in cultural terms, if language-based definitions of culture are applied.

While there is a problem with the concept of Highland and Islands from Shetlanders' viewpoint, because of the different history of the Northern Isles and Hebrides, from the perspective of the Gaelic-speaking areas there is a perceived problem with the term 'Highlands and Islands', because it is translated into Gaelic as 'Ghaidhealtachd agus na h-Eileanan', which might be taken to mean that the Hebrides were not part of the Gaidhealtachd. Historically, Gaidhealtachd meant the Gaelic language/culture region which did not end at the coast. As Gaelic declined in the twentieth century and became increasingly confined to the Hebrides, it became perceived (by Gaels themselves as well as non-Gaels) more and more as 'island language', thereby adding a new dimension to this notion. Yet the Hebrides themselves were always something 'other' than the rest of the Gaidhealtachd.[39] At the same time, Orkney and Shetland (and Orkney and Shetland dialects) have been often treated as if they were one unit whereas natives have regarded themselves and their dialects as different.[40]

Most politically active ethno-cultural groups in present-day Europe lay a claim to a distinct language. Where a distinctive language can be shown to exist, this with a certainty features prominently in contemporary expressions of cultural autonomy. This has led to a situation where, in comparison to regions, a great

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[38] See Hunter, *Last of the Free*, pp. 320-322.

[39] They too were once foreigners from Norway to the people of Scotland, Gaelic-speaking or otherwise. In recent years the Gaelic term for them has become 'Na h-Eileanan Siar', but this has replaced the usual Gaelic name 'Innse Gall' or 'the islands of foreigners'. See Murdoch, *Language Politics in Scotland*, p. 6.

[40] These differences have been confirmed by latest linguistic research. See K. van Leyden, 'Shetlanders speak – Orcadians sing', *The New Shetlander* (226) (2003), p. 4.

deal of attention has been placed on ethnic groups, a term used often as a synonym of minority. Allardt and Starck point out that the word ethnic itself refers to definitions made through a race, language or culture, but that today ethnic classifications and minority situations in Europe are always related in some way to language.[41] Within this framework dialects are seldom treated on equal terms as languages and this raises the question of why. For this reason, another important distinction concerns languages and dialects.[42]

The terms *language* and *dialect* relate to two sets of concepts: first, the concepts prevalent among the educated members of any society; and second, the concepts as used by linguists. Linguists distinguish between languages and dialects on the bases of uses or functions: the fact that the standard languages possess large range of grammar and vocabulary is not a result of their inherent structure, but a result of codification.[43] Any variety can be developed in this way. Ideas about the relevance of language to culture and nation are one of the main legacies of nineteenth century European nationalisms. These are rooted in the views of philologists and philosophers of the Enlightenment and the Romantic period and can be traced back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Beliefs in an inherent causal link between language, culture and nationhood have led to the favoring of language over other group markers and symbols of continuity and to an extent recent discussions surrounding Scottish and Shetland culture have been affected by these ideas.

From a historical perspective non-standard varieties are older than any standard – these developed long before a process of standardization was put in place. Prior to the onset of modern nation-states, similar forms of speech covered large areas.

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[41] E. Allardt and C. Starck, *Vähemmistö, kieli ja yhteiskunta* (Juva, 1981), p. 21.

[42] The term *variety* is considered in sociolinguistics as neutral and can be seen as preferable in comparison to *dialect*.

[43] J. Miller, 'Scots: a sociolinguistic perspective', in L. Niven and R. Jackson (eds.), *The Scots Language. Its place in education* (Dumfies, 1998), p. 49.

Examples of *dialect continuum* can still be found in many areas in Europe, for example between the dialects in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. Certain varieties on a dialect continuum are dialects of one language and others are varieties of another, not because of their relation to one another, but because of their relation to the respective standard languages.[44]

The emergence of standard languages was a new phenomenon. The new use of language as the badge of national identity was very different from its earlier function as a mere vehicle of expression. The old, administrative languages were merely languages used by and for officialdoms for their own needs.[45] Language varieties were primarily seen as a means of communication and attachment to them was usually motivated by pragmatic rather than emotional reasons. The print languages on the other hand were the ones that laid the basis for national consciousness.[46] They created unified fields of communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars. Speakers of a significant number of different varieties were capable to understand one another and were connected to fellow-readers through printed literature.

Benedict Anderson has also argued that if we consider the nature of new nationalisms which, between 1820 and 1920 changed the face of Europe, there are two striking features to

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[44] See, for example, A. Nihtinen 'Language and Politics: An example from the history of the Macedonian standard language', *The Return of North-South* (Aberdeen, 1997), pp. 41-47; A. Nihtinen, 'Language, Cultural Identity and Politics in the Cases of Macedonian and Scots', *Slavonica* (5/1) (1999), pp. 46-58. Several cases of European nations and their languages are considered for example in M. Clyne, *Undoing and Redoing Corpus Planning* (Berlin, 1997); M. Johansson and R. Pyykkö (eds.), *Monikielinen Eurooppa. Kielipolitiikka ja käytäntöä* (Helsinki, 2005); P. Broomans, G. Jensma, H. Vandevoorde and M. Van Ginderachter (eds.), *The Beloved Mothertongue: Ethnolinguistic Nationalism in Small Nations: Inventories and Reflections* (Leuven, 2008).

[45] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006), pp. 37-46.

[46] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 44.

separate them from their ancestors: first, the national print languages (i.e. standard languages) took on central ideological and political importance, and second, the concept of *nation* was, in Anderson's words, "available for pirating".[47] Language can be developed for particular purposes, but it is always based on the existing linguistic material. This includes a process of defining the corpus in such a way that the new standard has a separating and unifying function. The unifying function means that the standard serves as a link between the speakers of different varieties and thus it is a mark of a nation, whereas a separating function means that the standard has to be distinct and not shared with others.[48] The "inventing" of languages was motivated by the existence of a language as a claim to nationhood.[49]

As stated elsewhere, political boundaries do not necessarily coincide with linguistic boundaries, but the development of a new language is linked to sociopolitical change. Languages, like nations, are societal constructs. Languages are often "invented out of raw material from particular language varieties to satisfy political aspirations."[50] In other words, language is not a linguistic term and different linguistic aspects of language varieties are situational and socially determined. Two other parameters used when comparing language and dialect are difference in size and questions of prestige. This ideology suggests that a language variety has to be declared to be a language and given an appropriate status in society in order to be regarded as a language (and not as a dialect) and to function in that way.

A variety is regarded a language usually when it is standardised: the difference from other (non-standard) varieties is in the fact that standard languages possess fixed internal norms such as grammar and vocabulary, have various functions and are

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[47] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 67.
[48] R. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics* (Cambridge and Oxford, 1980), p. 33.
[49] Clyne, *Undoing and Redoing Corpus Planning,* p. 478.
[50] Clyne, *Undoing and Redoing Corpus Planning,* p. 478.

believed to have higher social status and prestige.[51] The autonomy of a language is a consequence of conscious action: with the increasing level of codification, autonomy grows. In effect there are no universally acceptable definitions of languages and dialects. Instead, academic discourses consider both concepts as dynamic and negotiable and dependent on political circumstances and power rather than on linguistic characteristics.

In prevailing societal discourses dialects are nevertheless often regarded as derived from the standard and as inferior, whereas the official standard languages are considered superior to them. In Scottish contexts since the 1980s descriptions of language varieties have become a matter of choice. By focusing on dialects becoming languages the fact that certain varieties remain dialects in spite of similar debates, as in the case of Shetland, has received lesser attention. It is nevertheless equally essential to ask the question of what are the reasons for dialects remaining dialects in spite of the existence of promotion discourse.

Relevant research

Shetland has been exceptionally widely interpreted to the outside world by contemporary professional scholars of various fields.[52] As noted by historian Lynn Abrams, historians, anthropologists, ethnologists, archaeologists, geographers and linguists have all played their part in the construction of Shetland identity as "other" in their dialogue with the wider world.[53] Magazines have published special issues on Shetland distinctiveness and an international conference on this subject was organised in 2009.[54]

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[51] See e.g. Miller, 'Scots: a sociolinguistic perspective', p. 49.

[52] Abrams, *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World*, p. 16.

[53] Abrams, *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World*, p. 16.

[54] The conference 'Taking Shetland out of the Box: Island Cultures and Shetland Identity' was organised by the University of Aberdeen's Elphinstone Institute, the UHI Millennium Institute's Centre for Nordic Studies, and the Shetland Museum and Archives, and held on 7-10 May 2009 in Lerwick.

The present study is part of that tradition and it contributes to the study of Shetlanders' self-understanding in contemporary Scottish contexts. In addition, it also contributes to wider discussions of language, region and nation beyond the boundaries of a single academic discipline. In this section I present some of the relevant research and discuss some of the ways in which the present dissertation contributes not only to the study of Shetland but also to more general discussions.

The thesis shares common ground with three main fields of research: (i) studies on language and ethnocultural boundaries; (ii) island studies; (iii) studies of the use of history in contemporary Scottish contexts, especially the use of language history. Regarded as iconic for Shetland, the late winter festival of Up-Helly-Aa has been a source of interest and inspiration for many. Works on the festival have included newspaper and magazine articles, travel guides and fiction as well as academic research in the fields of ethnography, sociology, history and anthropology.[55]

The origins, meanings and transformations of the festival have been recently covered extensively in the book of Scottish historian Callum Brown *Up-Helly-Aa. Custom, culture and community in Shetland*, published in 1998. Particularly valuable for the present study are the interdisciplinary approach of Brown's book and his discussion of community and boundaries.[56] Brown reflects on the changing scope of professional history and addresses issues of community and boundaries in Shetland by combining history and anthropology.[57] Two doctoral dissertations, both written in the early years of the oil era have been of value for my research. In his thesis B. J. Cohen focuses on the Norse imagery of Shetland and

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[55] L. Riddel, 'Up-Helly-Aa: Stories, Myths and Misconceptions' (paper presented to the conference 'Taking Shetland Out of the Box', 8 May 2009).

[56] C. Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa. Custom, culture and community in Shetland* (Manchester, 1998), p. 47.

[57] For further discussion e.g. J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History. Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history* (London, 2002); P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge and Oxford, 1991).

the use of the past in the construction of Shetland identity by Shetland intellectuals during the period 1800-1914.[58] The subject of Marsha Renwanz's thesis is the social history of a Shetland Island community's self-image throughout a broad period of time, 1872-1978, including also the first years of the oil era.[59] Her work is relevant for my study both from the perspective of its theme and the use of local opinions collected by fieldwork. Another work exploring similar themes is the Ph.D. Thesis of Jonathan Church, who studied political discourses in Shetland in the late 1980s.[60] The relationship between history, heritage and Shetland identity is also the subject of a recent PhD dissertation by Adam Grydehøj, who has published on island studies.[61]

Ongoing PhD dissertations on Shetland include, among others, Silke Reeploeg's research on the links between Shetland and Norway and Emma-Reetta Koivunen's thesis on Shetland tourism and the Internet.[62] Two recent articles by historian Andrew Newby (on nineteenth century Scottish identity and Northern discourses, co-authored with Linda Andersson Burnett, and on the use of Nordic comparisons in contemporary political discourse in Scotland) are relevant for the present study through their themes

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[58] B. J. Cohen, 'Norse imagery in Shetland: an historical study of intellectuals and their use of the past in the construction of Shetland's identity, with particular reference to the period 1800-1914'(University of Manchester Ph.D. Thesis, 1983).

[59] M. Renwanz, 'From crofters to Shetlanders: the social history of a Shetland Island community's self-image, 1872-1978' (Stanford University Ph.D. Thesis, 1980).

[60] J.T. Church, 'Political discourse of Shetland: confabulations and communities' (Temple University Ph.D. Thesis, 1989).

[61] A. Grydehøj, 'Branding From Above: Generic Cultural Branding in Shetland and other Islands', *Island Studies Journal*, vol. 3 (2008), pp. 175-198. More recently, A. Grydehøj 'Post-colonial historiography of Picts, Vikings, Scots, and Fairies and its influence on Shetland's twenty-first century economic development' (University of Aberdeen Ph.D. Thesis, 2010).

[62] At the time of writing the working titles of the dissertations are: S. Reeploeg, 'Nordic Regions of Culture: Norway and Shetland – intercultural links, regionalisation and communities of narrative after 1707', and E.R. Koivunen, 'Contested narratives: Tourism and the Internet in the Shetland Islands'.

and the use of a comparative approach.[63]

Research on Shetland has often focused on the Scandinavian elements of Shetland dialect to the exclusion of connections between Shetland and Scotland. The Norn language and its demise have been considered in several linguistic studies.[64] Most recently, Michael Barnes has published a detailed account of the controversies surrounding the death of Norn.[65] Robert Millar has discussed the politics of language in Scottish contexts in several books and articles. His book *Language, Nation and Power. An Introduction* (2005), albeit titled as an introduction, includes a discussion of the Scots language movement. His recent book *Northern and Insular Scots* (2007) considers language change in Shetland from a sociolinguistic perspective. Other relevant works on the politics of language in Scottish contexts include several articles of Dauvit Horsbroch and the monograph of the Scottish historian Steve Murdoch *Language Politics in Scotland* (1996), which also uses a questionnaire survey as its method. Language features prominently in Murdoch's books on identity issues in early modern Scotland and in his discussions of networks of place, region and nation.[66]

Nissology, or islands studies, is a new discipline which emerged in the 1980s and which has called for a "recentering of focus from mainland to island, away from the discourse of

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[63] A. Newby and L. A. Burnett, 'Between Empire and "the North": Scottish Identity in the Nineteenth Century' ['Mellan Imperiet och "Norr": Skotsk Identitet på 1800-Talet'], in S. Litonius, H. Litonius and T. Pettersson (eds.), *Parting the Mists: Views on Scotland as a Part of Britain and Europe* [Skottland ur ett Britiskt och Europeiskt Perspektiv] (Helsingfors, 2008), pp. 37-56; A.G. Newby, '"In Building a Nation few better examples can be found": Norden and the Scottish Parliament', *Scandinavian Journal of History* (34) (September 2009), pp. 307-329.

[64] For instance M. Barnes, *The Norn language of Orkney and Shetland* (Lerwick, 1998); M. Barnes, 'Towards an edition of the Scandinavian runic inscriptions of the British Isles: some thoughts', *Northern Studies* (29) (1993), pp. 32-42.

[65] M. Barnes, 'The study of Norn', in R. Millar (ed.), *Northern Lights, Northern Words* (Aberdeen, 2010), pp. 26-47.

[66] See e.g. S. Murdoch, *Network North: Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Associations in Northern Europe, 1603–1746* (Leiden, 2006).

conquest of mainlanders, giving voice and platform for the expression of island narratives".[67] Nevertheless, studying islands on their own terms has been fraught with epistemological and methodological problems.[68] On islands the roles of outsiders and insiders are being blurred, both outsiders and insiders produce island narratives and cultural hybridity is the norm rather than exception. Instead of taking the perspective of "rehabilitation of buried reality", it is in my view more valuable to pay attention to both insiders' and outsiders' viewpoints and coexisting, differing interpretations of boundaries.

The comparative chapters have common ground with recent research in the social sciences. Research of Ackrén has demonstrated that there are two different routes leading towards territorial autonomy. The first indicates that ethnic diversity in combination with small size leads to territorial autonomy, while the second indicates that a combination of historical strategic importance, together with long geographical distance, is sufficient for autonomy.[69] However, there are different kinds of autonomy and conditions for autonomy can vary depending on specific historical developments.

The concept of autonomy is defined as related to actions, to beliefs, to reasons for actions, to rules, to the will of other persons, to thoughts, and to principles. As a concept it can be applied to social groups, such as nations, government departments, committees, or for example to language. Most of the autonomies in the world are islands and this can be explained by insularity itself. A recent study belonging to the field of island studies is the book of Pär Olausson *Autonomy and Islands. A Global Study of the Factors that Determine Island Autonomy*. Olausson has studied the relation between islands and autonomy by the use of several

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[67] G. Baldacchino, 'Studying Islands: On Whose Terms? Some epistemological and methodological challenges to the pursuit of Island Studies', *Islands Studies Journal*, vol.3 (2008), p. 37.

[68] Baldacchino, 'Studying Islands', p. 37.

[69] Ackrén, *Conditions for Different Autonomy Regimes in the World*, p. 156.

dimensions applied to autonomous and non-autonomous islands. The main question posed by his study is: what factors contribute to a situation wherein some islands enjoy autonomy, while other remain integrated parts of the motherland?[70]

Cultural difference alone, as Olausson reveals, is neither a necessary nor a sufficient factor to explain autonomy. A combination of factors is required. Cultural difference is identified using three aspects of culture; difference in language, in ethnicity, or in religion and, by definition, whenever "one or more of these criteria are fulfilled, the island is said to display a difference in culture in relation to the mainland."[71] In my view this approach can be challenged, because language is nevertheless seen in this connection as the primary criterion for ethnicity and the two are intertwined. As a result, in the study presented above in the group of the British islands nine of the cases show major cultural difference, while in the cases of Orkney and Shetland no major difference from the mainland is found. In the case of Åland cultural difference is found on the basis of Swedish language and ethnicity. Although the approach of this research is clearly appropriate for its purposes, in my view it tells us very little about relations between particular island groups and mainland from a historical perspective and even less about the everyday perceptions of cultural difference of islanders.

Shetland is considered (in the study mentioned above) to lack difference from mainland Scotland and Britain as a whole, because the population of the islands share English with the mainland. Such an approach to cultural difference is insufficient in my view, because this does not acknowledge the fact that Shetlanders have seen themselves as culturally different also through language. The role of history and analysis of contemporary discourses, which remain outside the scope of study, are nevertheless essential for the understanding of how ethno-cultural difference and belonging

[70] P.M. Olausson, *Autonomy and Islands. A Global Study of the Factors that Determine Island Autonomy* (Åbo, 2007), p. 4.

[71] Olausson, *Autonomy and Islands*, p. 9.

are constructed and understood and why language plays (or is supposed to play) a decisive role.

More importantly, however, studies have shown that there are several common cultural characteristics for geographical islands. For example, one of the main features of islands is their ability to develop an autonomous status in relation to the mainland, both as a *de facto* autonomy, but also as an identity of belonging, affinity and the feeling of being different from the mainland, characteristic for island inhabitants.[72] Therefore, comparisons between Shetland and Åland as geographically insular regions can also help to clarify and challenge some of the myths surrounding the relation between these particular island groups and cultural distinctiveness. For instance, a revealing comment on the atmosphere of oil-related threats to Shetland culture can be found in an article of Grønneberg, relevant to the present study through its comparative component.[73] In the 70s some Shetlanders were saying that there ought to be some statutory restriction on incomers and Grønneberg comments on this stance:

> The only island community that I know of where such restrictions are placed on incomers is the Åland islands. It would seem that these measures, written into the Åland home rule acts, are designed to make it difficult for Finnish speakers to move into this Swedish-speaking district of Finland, and are thus a measure to protect the local language and culture. It would be difficult to claim that Shetland, whatever its origins culturally speaking, is sufficiently different from the rest of the country to justify considering imposing such restrictions on incomers.[74]

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[72] Olausson, *Autonomy and Islands*, p. 2.

[73] R. Grønneberg, 'Into the future', in R. Grønneberg (ed.), *Island Futures. Scottish Devolution and Shetland's Constitutional Alternatives* (Sandwick, 1978), p. 12. Grønneberg was an advocate of greater autonomy for the islands and published on several aspects of Shetland's Nordic past.

[74] Grønneberg, 'Into the future', p. 12.

As this quote shows, it is not uncommon that because of Åland's autonomous status it is assumed that Åland is different from the mainland in a way in which islands like Shetland are not. If the issue of language is taken into consideration, however, the case of Åland is useful in clarifying cultural distinctiveness, because Åland shares language not only with her neighbours in the west but also with her closest neighbours in the east, with Swedish-speakers in Finland. In addition, cultural difference has been overestimated at times while underestimated at others.[75]

An article of Michael Coleman with the thought-provoking title 'You might all be speaking Swedish today: Language change in nineteenth century Finland and Ireland' has recently reassessed language and nationalism in Ireland and Finland and contrasted language change in the two countries.[76] Coleman argues, among other things, that the Irish-Finnish comparison is worth making, because it moves us from a sense of inevitability, which has dominated linguistic debates on language change. For example, David Crystal's *Language Death* (2000) is – in Coleman's view – a gripping and sad book.[77] By comparing Ireland and Finland, Coleman convincingly points to three major conclusions: the importance of contingency, or chance, in historical developments; the importance of individual agency; and the complexity and dynamic nature of the relationship between national identity and language. I shall return to these same themes in later chapters, in particular in chapters 5 and 6.

Similarly, linguistic research on contemporary language movements has focused almost exclusively on dialects becoming languages. One example is a recent article of the well-known linguist Tove Skutnabb-Kangas. She suggests that it is perhaps

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[75] See e.g. L. Karvonen, 'Autonomi, demokrati och Åland', *Radar* (1) (1997), p. 6.

[76] M. Coleman, 'You might all be speaking Swedish today: Language change in nineteenth century Finland and Ireland', *Scandinavian Journal of History, v*ol. 35 (1) (March 2010), pp. 44-64.

[77] D. Crystal, *Language Death* (Cambridge, 2000); Coleman, 'You might all be speaking Swedish today', p. 54.

possible to find similarities between Scots and *Meänkieli* (Tornedalen Finnish) on the grounds that both represent developments 'from dialect to language'.[78]

In a recent article I argued that while there are some similarities between the two cases, there are also significant differences.[79] The differences I found important can be summed up as follows. In comparison to Scots *Meänkieli* is a language with a very low demographic base and associated with a small geographical region unlike Scots, which is considered to be of national rather than regional importance. Furthermore, Scots is connected to the history of Scotland as an independent kingdom and has a literary tradition in contrast to *Meänkieli*, where literature in the language is a new phenomenon. Scots also consists of a number of divergent dialects, some of which can be easily promoted as independent languages, most notably Shetland dialect.[80] It is therefore more appropriate to compare insular groups such as Shetlanders and Tornedalians in order to consider similar in size entities.

She presents also a number of generally valid questions such as: Is a dialect better off if it calls itself a language and is accepted as such? What are the advantages of being a language? Are there status advantages? Could there be pragmatic drawbacks? Is the undertaking a desperate search for a historically imagined identity in a time characterised by growing insecurities? Or is the languageness finally redressing some of the consequences of the historic oppression?[81] Nevertheless, Skutnabb-Kangas does not address another, equally important question in my view, of what

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[78] T. Skutnabb-Kangas, 'Ireland, Scotland, Education and Linguistic Human Rights: Some International Comparisons', in J. M. Kirk and D. P. O'Baoill (eds.), *Language planning in education. Linguistic Issues in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland* (Belfast, 2002), p. 247.

[79] See A. Nihtinen, 'Gaelic and Scots in devolved Scotland', *Studia Celtica Fennica* (5) (2008), pp. 77-8.

[80] See chapter 8 of the thesis.

[81] Skutnabb-Kangas, 'Ireland, Scotland, Education and Linguistic Human Rights', p. 250.

factors are in favour of retaining a dialect and not striving for a language status. By examining distinct cases of insular groups in relation to the mainland nation I attempt to establish and discuss the reasons for different choices.

The comparative method

Jürgen Kocka distinguishes between four purposes of comparison: descriptive, heuristic, analytical and paradigmatic.[82] Heuristically, the comparative approach allows the identification of questions and problems that one might otherwise miss, neglect or simply not construct. Descriptively, historical comparison can clarify characteristics of single cases by contrasting them with others. Analytically the comparative method is essential for asking and answering causal questions. Finally, this approach also helps to distance oneself from the main case of examination. In other words, comparisons have also a paradigmatic task.

The comparative method poses a significant number of additional questions and problems to the scholar. Major principles of the historical discipline, such as proximity to the sources, context, and continuity, are often in tension with the comparative approach. The comparative approach also creates challenges to the structure of the dissertation and it is time-consuming. There are nevertheless numerous advantages. The primary functions of the comparisons used in this dissertation are descriptive and analytical, although these also have heuristic and paradigmatic purposes; their main intention is to clarify the case of Shetland by contrasting it with mainland Scotland. In addition, in the last chapter, Shetland is compared to two Nordic regions (Åland and Tornedalen). Thus, comparisons seek to find reasons for different developments in these different regions.

The comparative method is combined in the present study with

[82] J. Kocka, 'Comparison and beyond ', *History and Theory* (42) (February 2003), p. 39.

histoire croisée, which is not restricted to the comparative chapter (cf. chapter 8). Recently introduced by Werner and Zimmerman, this approach analyzes not only interconnectedness in history, but also how this interconnectedness generates meaning in different contexts.[83] Conceptual transfers are not just about crossing the borders of nation-states. Instead, we can identify transfers between cultures, linguistic communities, political cultures, nation-states, regions, scholarly disciplines, and so on. Intersection involves Shetland and mainland Scotland, and this the existence of this intersection at different levels and in different contexts is intrinsic to the objects of this study. In this case, it is Scotland that offers both a context and comparison to the study of Shetland. For example, Shetland's dialect movement is examined in relation to the language movements in the mainland, and it is possible to observe the similarity of expressed views.[84]

The main characteristic of Shetland is that it has a "clear island identity", which as suggested by historian Hance Smith stems from its distinctive environment of land and sea: it is based upon recognisable local environment; social and economic political and cultural factors which have also had distinctive relationships with the trades and traders. Compared to the changes of history, the islands and the surrounding sea appear unchanging.[85] Insularity can be understood also in metaphorical terms to denote language islands, i.e. groups such as the Tornedalians, which are a distinct ethno-cultural group on the basis of a separate language culture.

[83] M. Werner and B. Zimmerman 'Beyond comparison: Histoire croisée and the challenge of reflexivity', *History and Theory* (45) (February 2006), p. 32; Kocka, 'Comparison and beyond', p. 44.

[84] There are also shared historical discourses for the regions compared in chapter 8. These would include for example nineteenth century Viking images and Scandinavism, and contemporary island cooperation. These discourses are of secondary importance to the main questions I attempt to answer in the comparative chapters. Nevertheless, they provided the opportunity to consider all three regions also as parts of a larger unit of Northern Europe and entangled histories.

[85] H.D. Smith, *Shetland Life and Trade 1550-1914* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 286.

An important angle to ethno-cultural distinctiveness in Shetland provides the role of Gaelic in Scottish context, as the language can be seen to enable a separate ethnic and cultural dimension and could have produced, in theory at least, a separatist movement.

At the beginning of my study, I considered other examples of insular groups as possible comparisons to Shetland. For example, other Scottish islands are an appropriate comparison, but these could have hardly provided me with contrastive angles as all relate to developments in Scotland and Britain. Instead of searching for geographical islands, which are also linguistically different (as the case of the Faeroe Islands), I decided to choose one insular group and one linguistically different group. The main reason for the choice of these particular comparisons was that the groups in question are united by shared history so the influence of nationalism and the interaction between mainland and island discourses are particularly visible in these cases. Personal familiarity with the regions and knowledge of their languages was also an important factor for my choice. Additional reasons were participation in an ongoing project on Swedish in Finland and my familiarity with latest research on these areas.[86]

Presented in more detail in chapter 8, Åland and Tornedalen are selected as contrasting units of comparison for two reasons: first, the geographical insularity of Åland and language-based difference of Tornedalen; and second, the fact that taken together these regions provide a different Nordic perspective. As Shetland is often examined either within a British framework, or within the framework of Norway, Denmark and the Faeroe Islands, it is of value to clarify the case of Shetland from a different perspective.

[86] These projects are *Swedish in Finland, Finnish in Sweden* and *The Swedish in Finland – a long history,* led by prof. Nils Erik Villstrand of the Department of History, Åbo Akademi University, Finland, in collaboration with other researchers and institutions. This thesis belongs to the project *The Swedish in Finland – a long history,* but shares themes with both. Ongoing research on island studies includes E. Axelsson, S. Edquist and J. Holmén, 'Mellan hav och land: historieskrivning och identitet på Bornholm, Dagö, Gotland, Åland och Ösel ca 1800-2000' (Forthcoming, 2011).

The units of comparison are separated from each other on the basis of their contemporary situation; these have their own individual historical contexts and specific features. Shetland, Åland and Tornedalen are brought together analytically by asking for similarities and differences between them. One cannot compare totalities, but certain aspects chosen for the purposes of this particular study. Key questions concern nationalism, cultural distinctiveness and the role of language. Comparisons between insular groups can elaborate similarities and differences in the path *from dialect to language* by offering the opportunity to ask and answer causal questions.

Following this introduction, chapter 2 provides a discussion of Scottish nationalism and the role of language and considers their characteristics in contemporary Scottish contexts through aspects of history, reassessed in recent times. This is necessary for understanding and interpreting the case of Shetland in relation to Scotland. First I offer an outline of aspects of Scottish history reassessed in recent times. Then I continue with a brief presentation of language and nationalism. Next I discuss some of the reassessment of the role of Gaelic and the Highlands in contemporary discourses. Finally, I look at Shetland and the Lowlands / Scotland as a whole as united by new language discourses and a symbol-myth complex, emphasising connections with Scandinavia.

Chapter 3 elaborates instances central for the emergence of Shetlanders' self-understanding as a culturally separate (or somewhat separate) group in relation to Scottishness. The structure of this chapter has as its basis the different overtones carried by Shetland culture prior to the oil era. For most of its content it reveals the growing importance of literary tradition and language history in conceptions of Shetland culture, a process accelerating already after the Second World War, but even more markedly from the 1970s.

In chapter 4, I discuss the desire for constitutional change, which became an important element of consciousness in both

national and regional contexts. The strengthening of Scottish nationalism, in the sense of a movement for devolution and independence, and the strengthening of Shetland consciousness were parallel events. The primary focus of this chapter is on the change in local discourses in the 1990s. Devolution debates in the 1990s suggested the emergence of new attitudes among the Shetlanders, which appeared – in political terms – "more Scottish than before". These attitudes are also discussed at the level of the individual in terms of national belonging. In addition, I consider possible connections between political and cultural nationalism.

Chapter 5 returns to Scottish contexts in order to provide a more specific discussion on recent developments regarding language, and sets the scene for the examination of Shetland discourses in relation to larger-scale contexts. In chapters 6 and 7, I deal first with perceptions of language change, and respectively cultural change and continuity. Next I discuss debates on dialect, language and boundaries both in local settings and in relation to the new national context. In chapter 8 the relation between region and nation is further clarified from a comparative Nordic perspective. The final sections summarize the most significant findings and reflect on Shetlanders' allegedly "more ambivalent" self-understanding in relation to Scotland in comparison to that of earlier decades.

Primary sources

Although the present dissertation is interdisciplinary, it mainly attempts to combine methods and theories of history and sociolinguistics in order to produce an interdisciplinary historical study. The thesis makes use of three types of primary sources: (i) popular printed and manuscript sources; (ii) scholarly publications, (iii) relevant statements of Shetlanders, obtained by questionnaires and consultations of locals. The choice of language as the main focus of examination was motivated by two factors:

firstly, the absence of a study dealing with the politics of language in Shetland; and, secondly, my educational background in sociolinguistics and familiarity with language movements in Scotland. Originating in my involvement in the more general problematic of languages and dialects during years of earlier research on other languages[87], the present study of Shetland was paralleled by a closer examination of language in political discourse in Scotland, the results of which were published separately during the research period.[88]

Considerations on empirical research were influenced by reflection on questions raised in previous studies. For instance, the Shetland-born Scottish historian Lynn Abrams has argued that the strength of narratives in Shetland and in particular of these on Shetland identity is so powerful that "the historian is duty bound to take the personal or the autobiographical as the entry point in any analysis".[89] Although she refers to the strength of women's narratives in Shetland, and stories of a more distant past, the oral tradition has been for both researchers of Shetland and ordinary Shetlanders a valuable source of historical knowledge. Indeed, by taking into account the personal and the autobiographical, the academic debate is refined considerably. Yet taking the personal or the autobiographical as the entry point into any analysis of the past is clearly contentious, because it goes against the general view of historians to strive for dispassionate discourse.

In order to understand Shetlanders' identification with their region and nation and the concept of Shetland dialect, an important first step was to consider in what connections, and how, cultural figures in Shetland and leaders of opinion interpret

[87] Two previous dissertations in sociolinguistics considered issues of languages, dialects and standard languages as connected to nationalism in South-Slavic countries. These themes were also at the centre of my research in sociolinguistics for the project *Contacts and Identities in the Balkans* (1998-99).

[88] See e.g. A. Nihtinen, 'Towards a more complex language identity? An investigation of opinions on Scots in a sample of policy makers and others', *Studia Celtica Fennica* (3) (2006), pp. 34-56.

[89] Abrams, *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World*, p. 25.

Shetland's past and present in terms of linguistic and cultural difference from mainland Scotland. Against this background it is possible to evaluate the roles of dialect and culture and establish the reasons for particular views. Contemporary local debates on dialect / language and self-understanding have been dominated by a number of individuals – some of them were among the participants in the Dialect Convention in 2004 (figure 1 below), while others have expressed their views on the pages of local journals and magazines.

Figure 1: Dialect Convention 2004. Speakers.

Alex Cluness, Writer and Literature Development Officer, Shetland Arts Trust
Brian Smith, Archivist and historian, Joint Editor of *The New Shetlander*
Jóhan Poulsen, University of Faeroe Islands
Laureen Johnson, Writer, Joint Editor of *The New Shetlander*
Robert Sim, Education Development Officer, Shetland Islands Council
John Law, Convenor, Scots Language Society, Editor of *Lallans*
John Magnus Tait, Writer and language activist
Michael Hance, Director, Scots Language Centre
Andrew Watt, Student, Anderson High School
Lindsey Reyner, Student, Anderson High School
Derrick McClure, University of Aberdeen
Douglas Sinclair, President, Shetland Folk Society
Mary Blance, Senior Presenter BBC Radio Shetland
Jane Moncrieff, Freelance writer and broadcaster
Robert Alan Jamieson, Writer and Lecturer, University of Edinburgh

While there was a prevailing narrative at the conference (aimed at discussing ways to secure the continuing use of Shetland dialect in Shetland society), language issues have been widely debated, both

during and outside the conference, and opinions on dialect and language history have been diverse.[90]

The conference included papers of Shetland-based speakers such as Brian Smith, Mary Blance, Jane Moncrieff and Laureen Johnson as well as mainland-based Shetlanders like John Magnus Tait and Robert Allan Jamieson. As the issue of language in the Shetland Isles is an integral part of a larger myth-symbol complex and uses of history regarded defining for Shetland culture and Shetlanders' self-understanding it was necessary to examine the emergence of distinct self-understanding among the Shetlanders and the onset of new political consciousness from a broader perspective. Furthermore, it was important to relate the emergence of a dialect movement to other contemporary projects such as the wider modernisation of images and occasions at which new images of Shetland have been forged.

By examining local articles, relevant statements and viewpoints originating in printed and manuscript sources consideration was first focused on the opinions of representatives of local government and intellectuals producing discourses on language and cultural distinctiveness in Shetland. An important source of investigation was the quarterly magazine *The New Shetlander*, dating from 1947. The magazine contains columns on current issues, historical articles, political opinion pieces, poetry and short stories in both Shetland dialect and English.

Another source was the monthly magazine *Shetland Life,* which has traditionally contained largely historical material, as well as reminiscences by Shetlanders and some current affairs features. The newly re-launched (in 2006) *Shetland Life* includes opinion pieces, political editorials and articles on subjects of local and general interest as well as internet-based discussion forums. Through investigation of local journals and magazines attention was paid to recent political and economic developments and to the views of those Shetlanders who are most closely involved in

[90] See chapters 6 and 7.

the production of contemporary discourses. After examination of articles and documents a wider range of opinions were examined through responses to letters and questionnaires. These opinions were mainly intended to complement my findings and I summarise the results of questionnaires in chapters 4 and 7, respectively.

From the beginning, it was obvious that the production of language discourses is confined to particular individuals, but it is equally important to pay attention to the ways these discourses are further reproduced and maintained in society. As noted in the previous section, in the last few decades the theoretical understanding of identities has undergone a reassessment and more attention has been paid to the ways in which individuals identify themselves in regard to nation, language and history.[91] National identities have tended to be presented as more homogenous than they are in reality and the same situation applies to regions. Conventionally, the source material used for studies of national identities has been homogeneous and uniform and this has often led to simplistic and one-sided interpretations. Thus, my intention was to collect also opinions of local respondents, representing different age groups in order to understand the ways in which local discourses on language and boundaries are further reproduced and understood at the level of the individual.[92] The purpose is to analyse what Paasi has called "local forms of thought in relation to larger social and ideological structures".[93]

The sample was a combination of a judgement and a convenience sample.[94] The group of dialect activists was at the

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[91] Wassholm, *Svenskt, finskt och ryskt,* pp. 248-252.

[92] See McCrone, Morris and Kiely, 'The heritage consumers', pp. 73-88.

[93] Paasi, *Territories, boundaries and consciousness,* p. 74.

[94] Virtually all samples are at least partly convenience samples. This is because with the exception of data obtained by participant observation, all researchers depend on the willingness of people to participate and to respond to their questions. See for example D. Löw-Wiebach, *Language attitudes and language use in*

centre of examination; its members were nevertheless united, at least in part, by a shared agenda.

Bearing this in mind, in order to collect a variety of different views it was essential to include also respondents, who did not participate in group's activities. I was interested to discover respondents' opinions on issues such as the implications of recent changes for the individual in terms of group membership; the values Shetlanders attribute to cultural distinctiveness and the relevance of dialect and the ways in which Shetlanders perceive themselves in terms of national belonging.

Contact information for members of Shetland ForWirds and Shetland writers was received from the Scots Language Centre. Members of Shetland ForWirds circulated the questionnaire further and in this way I was also able to gather information from people outside the group. Thus, some of the persons who contributed to the questionnaire project were dialects activists and their viewpoints were examined also on the basis of local articles, papers, discussions and personal correspondence. Through additional questions it was possible to explore possible correspondence between views on language and definitions of boundaries. Questionnaire respondents and /or providers of further information belonged to one or several of the following categories:

SIC; Economic department, Education
Teachers (history, modern languages) and other staff of schools
Civil servants and administrators
Fiddle music instructors and musicians
Museum and archive staff
Writers and poets
Members of Shetland ForWirds
Other (various)

The total number of contributors was thirty-one. An important

Pitmedden (Aberdeenshire) (Frankfurt am Main, 2005), pp. 38-40.

issue to consider involved the advantages and disadvantages of different interviewing methods. Replies to letters with questionnaires were chosen for two reasons: first, the time for fieldwork I had at disposal was limited; second, written responses enabled the inclusion of a larger number of informants and the possibility to avoid fast, superficial answers. Most replies were collected during periods of fieldwork in Shetland in March 2008 and additional discussions were carried out with several members of the community.[95]

With the exclusion of participants in discussions, nearly all respondents chose to reply anonymously. There are obvious dilemmas with the use of individual narratives regardless of whether these were collected by interviewing or examination of articles. I have had to select elements from Shetlanders' opinions and isolate their statements in order to find answers to the questions I have chosen to examine. This has entailed a number of interpretations and selection of individuals and topics on my part in order to explain those trends and characteristics, which I have found noteworthy in my search for answers. Similar considerations apply to historiographical research.[96]

Another difficulty comes from individual differences between those respondents who participated in the questionnaire – those Shetlanders who were directly involved in cultural production contributed to the project with long and detailed responses while those respondents whose professional background was different commented briefly or only on part of the questions. Respondents' views were often similar to the extent that these did not provide any additional information on local viewpoints but were useful in

[95] Providers of further information are listed at the end of the dissertation. In addition, personal correspondence included the following Shetlanders: Alex Cluness, 21 April – 24 August 2006; Christine DeLuca, 21-27 April 2006; John M. Tait, 30 April – 19 May 2006; Malachy Tallack, 1-5 June 2007; Laureen Johnson, Mark Smith, Mary Blance, Neil Henderson, William Moore and Brian Smith.

[96] See e.g. T. Øien, 'The Northern Isles – Between Two Nations', *Northern Studies*, vol. 39 (2005), p. 82.

confirming the information given by others. On the other hand, questionnaire replies were valuable in recording opinions that otherwise would have been missed or went unnoticed.

Several studies have demonstrated that different individuals are involved in the definition of boundaries in different ways.[97] Bearing this in mind it was not my intention to receive representative answers, but rather to find coexisting differing interpretations. Whereas both individuals and groups are socialised through the same institutional and symbolic practices, personal identification can have various different dimensions. One aspect of identification is not superior over all the others and identification may vary in different circumstances. On the other hand, individual's experiences, perceptions and stories exist within the culturally available repertoire of narratives.[98] It is from this perspective that it is possible to examine aspects of collective consciousness through individual stories.

Shetlanders' reflections were not considered as evidence about the past and the present but as an insight into the ways in which boundaries are constructed and discussed. Brubaker and Cooper point out that narratives not only represent, they also "constitute social actors and the social world in which they act."[99] Narratives will make visible the extent to which common discourses in Shetland nurture subjective identity, but also how common discourses are constructed and maintained through individual narratives. Two articles on contemporary language discourses in Scotland published during the period of the present study were initially included in the dissertation. Nonetheless, these were later excluded as to incorporate them in their entirety would have shifted the focus of the dissertation from islands to mainland.[100]

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[97] See e.g. Glaser, *Minority languages and cultural diversity in Europe*; Wassholm, *Svenskt, finskt och ryskt*, pp. 248-252.

[98] Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond identity', p. 12.

[99] Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond identity', p. 12.

[100] See Nihtinen, 'Towards a more complex language identity?', pp. 34-56. For the purposes of this article the opinions of nineteen Scottish politicians and twenty-two

Nonetheless, opinions presented in chapters on mainland Scotland are informed also by my earlier studies and refer occasionally to analysis of primary sources and observations, which I have presented in recent articles. In this way it is possible to examine the existing insular discourses in relation to these in mainland Scotland.

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other informants were collected and analysed.

II. The Scottish contexts

The two predominant modes for understanding Scotland and Shetland have been the historical and the cultural, both focusing on Scotland and Shetland as "past". Historical work often saw Scotland as "over", because it had lost its formal political independence in 1707.[101] The other approach for studying Scotland has been the cultural, focused on language, literature and folklore. Culture, however, has seemed "cut off from political, economic and social developments in contemporary Scotland."[102] This chapter discusses Scottish nationalism and the role of language and considers their characteristics in contemporary Scottish contexts through aspects of history, reassessed in recent times. It also sets the scene for an examination of Shetland otherness and belonging through the concept of Unionist nationalism, which has received wide attention and prominence in contemporary historical and sociological writing.

Revision of nationalism

One of the most visible changes, which affected Scottish identity and culture in the late 1980s and 1990s, was the demand for constitutional reform. Richard Finlay remarks that it is difficult to evaluate whether changes in culture and identity inspired the desire for devolution and independence, or whether political change affected culture and identity.[103] Scottish identity became more distinctive in terms of expressing itself as a national entity

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[101] D. McCrone, *Understanding Scotland. The Sociology of a nation* (London and New York, 2001), p. 31.
[102] McCrone, *Understanding Scotland*, p. 31.
[103] Finlay, *Modern Scotland* , p. 373.

while, at the same time, there was a visible decline in what was seen as constituting Britishness. Within Britishness different aspects of national culture were affected by ambivalence about the Scottish/English balance within personal self-understanding and within the culture as a whole.[104]

In the late 1980s and 1990s the idea of civic nationalism was promoted in Scottish political life and media and it distanced itself from notions of ethnic nationalism.[105] It was claimed that the political culture of Scotland was different from that of England. The British identity with its three most important symbols for most of the twentieth century (monarchy, military and Parliament) was at the same time undermined by the context of wider social and political changes. Strengthening ideas of Scottishness apparently paralleled the diminishing importance of Britishness. As a result of the failed 1979 referendum on devolution, cultural expressions of Scottish identity experienced a significant boost, thus replacing the failure of political change at that time.[106] In recent decades the existing diversity within Scottish culture and self-understanding also received new meanings.

Contemporary historical writing has helped to address central issues of Scottish history, such as the duality of Scottish national identity and the difference between nineteenth-century Scottish nationalism and its European counterparts. The case of Scotland has presented a problem for theorists of nationalism as described in Morton (1999). His concept of *Unionist nationalism* has received widespread attention and has challenged earlier accounts of nineteenth century Scottish nationalism. Explaining Scottish nationalism within Britain by the existing theories of nationalism has been challenging, because of the problem of Britishness.

As argued by Morton, the theories of the modernist school of nationalism are difficult to apply to Scotland, because what they

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[104] B. Kay, *Scots. The Mither Tongue* (Ayrshire, 1993), p. 177.

[105] These notions are explained in the next section.

[106] Finlay, *Modern Scotland* , p. 373.

perceive as political unit or political community is based on correspondence between national territory and power to govern. Morton singles out the main definitions presented by Gellner and Anderson and argues that these are "an essential counterpoint to any study of Scottish nationalism".[107] Gellner and Anderson argue, among others, that during the eighteenth and nineteenth century it became possible for individuals to identify with a wider community termed the *nation* and the use of history gave credibility to that concept.[108] Secondly, they argue that nationalism became a necessary feature of the nation – through nationalist ideology political and national were unified.

The most important dimension of nineteenth century Scottish nationalism, however, was that of civil society. Although Scotland and England came together in 1707, this did not result a *British* civil society. After the Treaty of Union in 1707 Parliament was moved to London, but Scotland continued to exist as a separate civil society and retained many of the institutions of self-government, particularly its own church, educational and legal systems. The ethno-symbolic school of thought and Anthony Smith, on the other hand, provide us with a useful tool of analysis by introducing the concept of pre-modern *ethnie* and paying attention to the mobilisation of the symbols of the past.[109]

In recent analyses of Scottish nationalism it has been seen as important to examine the ethnic material that has defined the concept of *Scotland* within that of Britain. From the perspective of the present study it is essential to note that nationalism in Scotland was very different from most European nineteenth-century nationalism. Conventionally, Scottish nationalism has been described as having failed for most of the nineteenth century. This influential discourse can be summarized thus. After the Union between Scotland and England in 1707, Scotland, as argued

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[107] G. Morton, *Unionist Nationalism. Governing Urban Scotland 1830-1860* (East Linton, 1999), pp. 52-53.

[108] See E. Gellner, *Nations and nationalisms* (London, 1983).

[109] Morton, *Unionist Nationalism*, p. 60.

for example in the well-known book *Britons*, by Linda Colley, ceased to have a meaningful identity of its own.[110] Others researchers, in turn, have regarded Scottish identity as sub-national and repressed within a dominant Britishness.[111]

Scottish writer and broadcaster Billy Kay has considered that language has played a considerable role in the conception of sub-national and repressed Scottishness. Being educated as an Englishman, yet having folk-pride in being Scottish "without knowing exactly why" was described in the mid 1980s as a typical Scottish experience, which has interesting social consequences. Many Scots were willing to assert that they belonged to a nation rather than to a region or a province. But when asked whether the national history, literature and language should be integrated into the educational system one may have received "a very different, possibly uncomfortable response."[112]

At the core of all this, Kay argues, is the complex question of language. Many Scots were conditioned to react with expressions such as 'parochial' or 'tartan' to their culture.[113] The main images and meanings of Scottish culture seem to have provided Scottishness with mostly pessimistic interpretations of the past. One could argue that there is too much history in Scotland rather than too little, "or perhaps too much of the wrong sort."[114] The 'Scottish story' seemed to consist of fragmented narratives. It is these essentially pessimistic views of absent or fragmented Scottish identity that Morton and others have challenged in recent years. This was necessary, because in the case of nineteenth century, these views do not reflect the complex and diverse character of national belonging existing within civil society in

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[110] See L. Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London), 1992.

[111] For example T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London, 1977).

[112] Kay, *Scots. The Mither Tongue*, p. 177.

[113] Kay, *Scots. The Mither Tongue*, p. 176.

[114] McCrone, *Understanding Scotland*, p. 128.

Scotland. Morton argues that in the mid nineteenth century, the nation was governed by civil society.[115] Perceptions of the weakness of Scottish national identity during the nineteenth century have been influenced by the fact that Scotland the nation did not become Scotland the nation-state, and the perception of nation-statehood, in Morton's words, has often disguised contradictions within British national identity.[116] The nineteenth century in Scotland was a period of political assimilation but at the same time, Scottish national identity did not fade away, but adapted itself to new circumstances.[117]

Another question of significant importance is the role of the Empire. Its growth made a difference to Scotland's relationship with England and, because of that, to Scottish attitudes towards the Union. The Empire became an vast English-Scottish joint project in which Scotland played a considerable part.[118] Industry was largely directed to an imperial market and the Empire became for the Scots an alternative source of pride, during the period between the 1780s and 1945. The British imperial project enabled Scots to feel equal to the English in a way "still denied them in an island kingdom."[119] Nevertheless, this ultimately also affected Shetlanders' attitudes and Shetland's position within the Union, as Shetlanders had to define themselves in relation to both Scotland and Britain as a whole.

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[115] Morton, *Unionist Nationalism*, p. 9.

[116] Morton, *Unionist Nationalism*, p. 9.

[117] T.M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2007* (London, 2006), p. 287.

[118] See A. Mackillop and S. Murdoch (eds.), *Military Governors and Imperial Frontiers c. 1600-1800. A study of Scotland and Empires* (Leiden, 2003).

[119] Colley, *Britons*, p. 130; M. Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London, 1991), p. XIV; P.H. Scott, *Still In Bed With an Elephant* (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 90.

Language and nationalism

In contemporary discourses Scotland is sometimes described as a country with three main languages: English, Gaelic and Scots. On the other hand, in Scottish national and regional government, broadcasting, print media and education, Scottish Standard English continues to be the language appropriate for formal use in speech and writing. Historically it is impossible to establish a period when Scotland was a monolingual country: apart from Scots, Gaelic was spoken once over most of the country; Norse was spoken in Norse settlements; a form of Welsh was spoken at one time in Strathclyde and the Picts spoke their own language before adopting Gaelic.[120]

Three languages, Gaelic, Scots and English have been dominant at given historical periods, while at the same time others have been spoken by a large percentage of the population. What distinguishes Scotland in linguistic terms, apart from the existence of Gaelic, is the fact that a Scots standard was developing 400 years ago.[121] Although language never played a central role in the formation of Scottish national identity two languages have been present in contemporary national and nationalist discourses. In contrast to many lesser-used languages Scots has a literary tradition, but exists also in divergent largely unwritten varieties. In a complex and by no means straightforward way, Scots has been acting as a powerful marker of Scottishness, being not only associated with strong regional pride, but existing also in a long, albeit inconsistent written heritage.[122] Its position is somewhat contradictory: on the one hand, it came very close to standardisation and was politically dominant in pre-union Scotland. On the other hand, its status collapsed and use and prestige diminished during the last 200

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[120] Miller, 'Scots: a sociolinguistic perspective', p. 47.

[121] Millar, *Language, Nation and Power*, p. 190.

[122] Millar, *Language, Nation and Power*, p. 190.

years or so.

Scottish nationalism gained its political organizational identity with the formation of the Scottish Home Rule Association (SHRA) in 1918, the National Party of Scotland in 1928 and the Scottish National Party (SNP) in 1934.[123] The SNP has always done proportionately well among all social classes but at no time there has been a direct correspondence between support for Scottish independence and support for the SNP. Three parties have actively supported Scottish Independence: The Scottish National Party, the Scottish Socialist Party and the Scottish Green Party. All the others, The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, the Scottish Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Labour Party are unionist in that they wish to maintain the Union. Of these, the Scottish Liberal Democrats are in favour of renegotiating a Federal settlement.[124]

The issue of language as a symbol of national authenticity had some significance in nationalist politics during the inter-war period, but the politics of language failed to attract public sympathy. Christopher Murray Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid) is the best-known figure of the Scottish literary renaissance movement that began in the 1920s.[125] Scots had featured in literature in the nineteenth century but it was mainly associated with home environment and sentimental subjects. In this respect MacDiarmid was among the first who was willing to demonstrate that Scots, which by the 1920s was generally seen to represent a lack of education and social failure, could be used for serious purposes. The writers of the Scottish literary renaissance attempted to demonstrate the wider potential of Scots and their views were political in the sense that debates about language were connected

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[123] See R. Finlay, *Independent and Free: Scottish Politics and the origins of the Scottish National Party, 1918-1945* (Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 126-161.

[124] Nihtinen, 'Scotland's Linguistic Past and Present', p. 131.

[125] W. McLeod and J. Smith, 'Resistance to monolinguality: the languages of Scotland since 1918', in I. Brown, et al. (eds.), *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature III* (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 25.

to discussions about national identity, and political and economic issues. MacDiarmid regarded language in the same manner as European nationalists as the basis of national identity. The role of language was central to his philosophy of cultural nationalism.

At that time Scots was widely present in Scottish society and although existing in diverse regional forms there was arguably a sufficient base for its reconstruction into a national language. Yet, the vision of a nation which could be reborn or revived through adoption and use of Scots was close to the classic European nineteenth-century nationalism and therefore had little chance of success in Scotland at that time.

An elitist project of this kind could have had better chances to be successful in the nineteenth century than the inter-war period. McDiarmid's vision of nationalism was close to the nineteenth century bourgeous nationalism with its emphasis "on race, national myths, cultural and linguistic purity".[126] Finlay has commented that it probably had more chance to be successful in the Scotland of 1848 than in the 1920s and 1930s when politics meant appealing to the masses rather than the middle-class elite.[127] It had very little impact on popular consciousness at a time when class had become a dominant issue.

When nationalism strengthened in the late 1960s and mid-1970s the SNP's campaign for independence was based on economic grounds. The link between support for Scots and for nationalism in terms of a desire for independence for Scotland has been relatively weak, whereas on the other hand nationalist support has been strong among the Scots language activists. In a similar fashion, the connection between support for Gaelic and Scottish nationalism — in the more strict sense of support for the establishment of a Scottish state independent of the United

[126] See R. Finlay, 'Gaelic, Scots and English: the politics of language in inter-war Scotland', in W.Kelly and J.Young, *Ulster and Scotland, 1600-2000* (Dublin, 2004), p. 141; Finlay, *Modern Scotland*, 106-108.

[127] Finlay, 'Gaelic, Scots and English: the politics of language in inter-war Scotland', p. 141.

Kingdom — has been weak.[128] Support for Scottish independence by no means signalled a commitment to the Gaelic language, and speaking the Gaelic language by no means corresponded to support for Scottish independence. Language revitalisation efforts in Scotland have had little connection, overt or implicit, to the nationalist cause.[129] On the other hand, also in this case nationalist support has been relatively strong among Gaelic language activists. Several studies on Scots and national identity were carried out in Scotland in the 1990s and these showed connections between the two. Correspondence between support for Scots and political views was also found.[130]

Furthermore, contemporary research has often demonstrated that Scots has a covert prestige and value for its speakers and it is a marker of local and social identities, but this does not necessarily translate into a demand for greater institutional support. Nearly all MSPs and all non-MSP respondents in a survey carried out by the author of the present study in 2005 held the view that institutional and financial support to Gaelic should be given while opinions on Scots were divided.[131] These appeared to be mainly influenced by respondents' views on whether Scots is a language or a dialect. Concerning the relation between language and Scottish identity the opinions expressed represented a relatively unified front. Most respondents claimed that Scottish identity is not based on language or not, at least, on one particular

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[128] W. McLeod, 'Gaelic in the New Scotland: Politics, Rhetoric and Public Discourse', *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (July 2001), p. 8.
[129] McLeod, 'Gaelic in the New Scotland', p. 8.
[130] See e.g. F. Iacuaniello, 'Linguistic Awareness and attitudes in a sample of Scottish speakers', *Scottish Language* (11/12) (1992/1993), pp. 62-71; S. Murdoch and R. Gordon, *Language in Politics database* (Aberdeen, 1995); K. Hardie, 'Scots: matters of identity and nationalism', *Scottish Language* (14/15) (1995/1996), pp. 141-147; D. Horsburgh and S. Murdoch, *Daena Haud Yer Wheisht Haud Yer Ain: Transcreives o the General Register Office (Scotland) Cognitive Research Programme anent the Scots leid* (Aberdeen, 1997).
[131] Nihtinen, 'Towards a more complex language identity?', pp. 42-43.

language.[132] With regard to politics the most striking example of the links between politics and the language issue was that in 2000 all the Unionist parties voted against inclusion of a question on Scots language ability in the census while those parties, which were in favour of Scottish independence supported the inclusion.[133] Despite this, while the desire for political autonomy in Scotland has been growing steadily for the last twenty years or so, the idea of linguistic autonomy has not received greater popularity. The beginning of nationalist politics in Scotland found the population already politically mobilised as an electorate and enjoying the normal standard of literacy for a developed country – in Standard English. Therefore the part played by Scots and Gaelic was in this respect insignificant.[134]

The Scottish nation is understood in prevailing contemporary discourses as a civic nation and Scottish identity is usually (or increasingly) defined through residence and commitment. Shetland's situation is more complicated, however. Narratives of Shetland's traditional non-Scottishness, different history and current political concerns challenge the idea of Shetland identity as simply one of the regional manifestations of Scottish identity. The other question, which must be addressed is, if there is no greater connection between language and Scottish party-political nationalism, why two languages are present in contemporary national discourse? It is from this perspective that the next sections consider dominant discourses of Scottish culture and language history. These are essential for the understanding of regional and cultural differences within Scotland and Shetland's position within Scottish discourses.

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[132] Nihtinen, 'Towards a more complex language identity?', p. 46.

[133] D. Horsbroch, 'The Scots language: An historical and political assessment', *Studia Indogermanica Lodziensia*, vol. IV (2002), p. 37.

[134] C. Macafee, 'Nationalism and the Scots Renaissance now', in M. Görlach (ed.), *Focus on Scotland* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1985), p. 9.

The Highlands as core image

Present-day Scotland has been faced with a problem: a language not understood by 98 % of the Scottish people should now be regarded as being at the heart of Scottish culture. Yet, it is a language with a modern literary tradition that only begins to assume importance in the late eighteenth century, still very small and "spoken by a people who have been regarded for centuries by their southern neighbours as barbarians."[135]

Much of the recent discussions in Scottish academic research have been devoted to the importance of local and regional identities to various parts of the country during different historical periods.[136] Some authors have argued that the idea that Scotland has two distinct races or "nations" can be shown to date back to at least the late fourteenth century and it has been claimed that since then the Highlands on the one hand and the Lowlands on the other were growing apart economically and culturally.[137] Furthermore, it has been argued that seventeenth century Gaelic poets acknowledged the language boundary in their descriptions of Lowlanders, but deeds rather than language and ancestry played a defining role in their understanding of Gaelic culture. In the romantic image depicted by the poets, Gaelic society embodied "the traditional virtues and honour code of the ancient Irish warrior heroes."[138]

Conforming to these particular patterns of behaviour was obviously more important than simply conversing in the same language. While the secondary importance of language as a marker of identity prior to nationalism is not in question, the historiographers of Gaelic Scotland have tended to depict the

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[135] M. Chapman, *The Gaelic Vision of Scottish culture* (London, 1978), p. 12.

[136] Murdoch, *Network North*, p. 51.

[137] Glaser, *Minority languages and cultural diversity in Europe*, p. 79.

[138] J. Dawson, 'The Gaidhealtachd and emergence of the Scottish Highlands', in B. Bradshaw and P. Roberts (eds.), *British Consciousness and Identity. The Making of Britain* 1533-1707(Cambridge, 1998), p. 260.

linguistic populations of Scotland as tied to specific locations rather than widely spread and integrated and this approach has been questioned by modern scholarship.[139]

Another question raised in contemporary history writing is the extent to which Highlanders themselves distinguished between Lowlanders and Englishmen. While some authors have suggested that the term Sasannach was applied to both, John MacInnes has demonstrated that Gaelic sources were characterised by a careful distinction between Lowlanders and Englishmen and between Scots and English languages.[140] According to MacInnes, the Scottish nation was understood to consist of Gaels and Lowlanders and the integrity of the Scottish kingdom was never questioned. At the same time it is worthy of note that the linguistic distinction between Highland and Lowland was perceived as inferior and bilingualism was common.[141]

Recent research by Steve Murdoch has demonstrated that, undoubtedly, the idea of region played an important part in the Scottish psyche.[142] Yet long after the Union of English and Scottish Parliaments of 1707, Highland and Lowland identities were frequently assumed to be mutually exclusive. These two regional identities have traditionally dominated the historical debate but this had masked the existence of several diverse regions and strong local associations. Most obviously, a Highlander from the mainland did not necessarily feel more affinity to another Highlander from the isles simply because both spoke Gaelic. Nor did someone from Aberdeen identify with someone from Ayrshire but instead may have felt a closer affinity to a Gaelic-speaking

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[139] Murdoch, *Language Politics in Scotland*, p. 8.

[140] J. MacInnes, 'The Gaelic perception of the Lowlands', in W. Gilles (ed.), *Gaelic and Scotland. Alba agus A'Ghaidhlig* (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 93.

[141] See D. Horsbroch, *Gaelic and Scots in Grampian* (Aberdeen, 1994), p. 19; A. Maccoinnich, '"His spirit was given only to warre": Conflict and Identity in the Scottish Gàidhealtachd, c. 1580- c. 1630', in S. Murdoch and A. Mackillop (eds.), *Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experience, c. 1550-1900* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 133-162.

[142] Murdoch, *Network North*, p. 51.

Highlander.[143]

By the end of the eleventh century Gaelic was known and spoken as far as the present day border with England but it was not used by all or in all situations. Since the Vikings had encroached on the Western Highlands and Isles, Gaelic was firmly identified with the eastern half of Scotland, which is clearly different from the situation existing today.[144]

Scots (morphing slowly into English after 1603) was in the period between 1400 and 1700 the business language of the kingdom and this seems to have been the case in Gaelic Scotland too.[145] Moreover, literacy in Scots may well have been more widespread than was thought amongst the clan aristocracy in the Highlands in the decades before the Reformation. In certain cases this may have been the case many generations earlier, in combination with their competence in Latin. This was necessitated by engagement with the organs of government.[146]

The binary distinction between Highland and Lowland, while replaced by more accurate representations, remains nevertheless essential for the examination and understanding of dominant discourses of Scottish culture. The event that had a major influence on Scotland's image abroad was the rise of eighteenth century Romantic movement, which embraced Gaelic culture in a positive spirit and this was reinvented as the ancient heritage of the nation. The concept of the Celts, real or imagined, had been forgotten after the breakdown of the Roman world in the West, for more than thousand years.[147] It was at the end of seventeenth and

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[143] Murdoch, *Network North*, p. 51.

[144] Horsbroch, *Gaelic and Scots in Grampian*, p. 9.

[145] A. Maccoinnich, 'Where and How was Gaelic written in Late Medieval and Early Modern Scotland ? Orthographic Practices and Cultural Identities', in C. Ó. Baoill and N. R. McGuire (eds.), *Caindel Alban. Fèill-Sgrìobhainn do Dhòmhnall E. Meek. Scottish Gaelic Studies* (24) (2008), p. 356.

[146] Maccoinnich, 'Where and How was Gaelic written in Late Medieval and Early Modern Scotland?', p. 356.

[147] B. Cunliffe, *The Celts: a very short introduction* (Oxford, 2003), p. 111; Nihtinen, 'Scotland's Linguistic Past and Present', p. 122.

beginning of the eighteenth century that the Celts were brought back to the histories of France and Britain.

The Romantic movement of eighteenth century intellectuals reinvented the Gael as Scotland's Celt. The period of Celtic romanticism created an atmosphere of great fascination. The images created by Scottish writers reinforced curiosity about this idea of Scotland, and as a result, the whole country came to be regarded as a place of particular interest and special value.[148]

In 1762 James Macpherson published what he claimed to be translations from ancient Gaelic poetry, a series of poems ascribed to Ossian, son of Fingal. His work was entitled *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Gaelic or Erse language* followed by two long poetical epics. *Ossian* was received with enthusiasm, widely read and endorsed as a source of inspiration for freedom movements in Europe.[149] In spite of later criticism concerning the authenticity of *Ossian*, some of the elite were reluctant to reject its genuineness and for much of the nineteenth century Gaelic poets continued to reproduce its style and to use similar motifs.[150] Highland societies celebrated Gaelic songs and the wearing of tartan, which had now become an external symbol of Scotland as a whole, while at the same time the gap between nation and state produced conflicting and contradictory identities.[151]

The rise of Highlandism has been explained as follows. As Scotland was becoming industrialised in the late eighteenth century and less distinctive, Lowland Scots, and in particular Walter Scott, appropriated the symbols and myths of the Highlands in the search for distinctiveness. The contradiction in

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[148] P.H. Scott, 'The Image of Scotland in Literature', in M. Fladmark (ed.), *Cultural Tourism* (Aberdeen, 1994), p. 365.
[149] See H. Gaskill (ed.), *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (London, 2004).
[150] D. Meek, 'The sublime Gael: The impact of Macpherson's Ossian on literary creativity and cultural perception in Gaelic Scotland', in H. Gaskill (ed.), *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (London, 2004), p. 63.
[151] Morton, *Unionist Nationalism*, p. 20.

this was that part of the country, considered as barbarian and backward but different was now regarded as the "true" Scotland. In other words, the Highlands acquired the role of representing Scotland "for the English".[152] Although, from the 1760s, the Scottish Ossianic tradition tended to depict a sympathetic picture of sensitive Gaels which appealed to the current fashion for the sentimental, this was interpreted in terms of the uncomplicated feelings of the primitive, and "reinforced rather than disturbed the association of Gaeldom with backwardness."[153] Furthermore, the Gaelic identity emerging in the nineteenth century was an accessory of British unionism, and did nothing to restore to Scots a powerful ethno-cultural identity.[154] The lack of such identity has been seen, for example by Kidd, as a serious constraint on the development of a full-blown Scottish nationalism.

The centrality of the Gaelic-speaking Highlands is reflected in the amount of research devoted to the region. In his descriptions of dominant narratives of Scottish culture McCrone notes that somewhat paradoxically, on the one hand, the Highlands became synonymous to peripheral and underdeveloped. On the other, in the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, these continue to provide many of the images and meanings of Scotland as a whole.[155] As later chapters elaborate, this is not the case with Gaelic however. The language itself has assumed greater importance in terms of national culture only since the 1960s. While there have been different stories of Scottishness, the imagery of the Highlands remains dominating. According to Adams, key concepts in selling Scotland to tourists are "uncrowded, beautiful

[152] McCrone, *Understanding Scotland.*, p. 67.

[153] See C. Kidd, 'Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland', *English Historical Review* (434) (1994), pp. 1197-1214.

[154] Kidd, 'Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland', p. 1214.

[155] For a discussion of the role of Gaelic culture as manifested in material items such as the kilt and the bagpipe see H. Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 15-41.

scenery, interesting history, not England".[156] For overseas visitors the image presented can be traced down to Sir Walter Scott and Queen Victoria – meaning either romance and mystery or haggis and shortbread boxes. For domestic consumers the aim has been to *undo* some of the Scott and Victoria image.

The Lowland and the North

From a language-based cultural perception the Lowland and the Northern Isles are culturally connected through shared aspects of language history and the existence of literary tradition in local varieties, but contemporary Shetland and Scotland as a whole are united also through a wider symbol-myth combination emphasising Scotland's Nordic ties and contacts and affiliations with Scandinavia.[157] Instead, the historic link of the Gaelic heartland to Scandinavia has been somewhat neglected. The effort to create a new national dimension through Scots has long seen Shetland as linguistically and culturally part of Scotland, which as later chapters will show has been also part of new language discourses.[158]

Before moving on to an examination of cultural difference in Shetland, and the role of language in those differences, it is important to note the appearance of new consciousness of the past in eighteenth and nineteenth century Scotland. The eighteenth century saw the rise of Antiquarianism in Scotland, which culminated in the foundation of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1780. Literary tradition in Scots was encouraged among others by republishing of older literature.[159] The poetry of

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[156] G. Adams, 'Access to a Nation's Assets', in M. Fladmark (ed.), *Sharing the Earth. Local Identity in Global Culture* (Aberdeen, 1995), p. 193; Quoted also in Nihtinen, 'Scotland's Linguistic Past and Present', p. 118.

[157] Newby, 'In building a nation few better examples can be found', pp. 308-309.

[158] The issue of language is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

[159] This included the literary work of the so-called Makars, such as *Robert Henryson*, *Gavin Douglas* and *William Dunbar*.

Allan Ramsay, Robert Fergusson and most famously, Robert Burns, initiated the literary movement, known as the Vernacular revival.[160] With the shift of focus of admiration to the North it was possible to connect linguistic and cultural arguments in new ways.

Interest in the Vikings became important during the Victorian period, within the wider British context. Victorian Britons on both sides of the border drew parallels between them and the Vikings. Such an interest was to some extent a response to the Icelandic material from a growing number of European scholars. The dissemination of the Icelandic material through Europe stimulated reassessment of the merits of Classical and Gothic culture. The material was used as an insight into Teutonic racial history and culture, but also focused attention upon the Norse.[161]

An interest in the Norse past of the Northern Isles developed since the late eighteenth century. The image of this past was shaped by cultural ideas prevalent at subsequent periods of time, first by romanticism and later nationalism. Walter Scott's well-known novel *The Pirate*, set on Orkney and Shetland in the late seventeenth century was a central work in the construction of Norse past. Whereas Scott admired both Celtic and Norse cultures, one of the most vocal proponents of Scottish Norse ancestry was John Pinkerton (1758-1826). He had initially celebrated *Ossian*, but had later become a Celtophobe, perceiving Highland Scotland as a threat to dominant Lowland culture.[162]

Pinkerton's claim was based partly on a linguistic argument. In 1786 Pinkerton produced a book called *Ancient Scottish Poems, never before in print*, in which he states that none can more sincerely wish a total extinction of the Scottish *colloquial* dialect than he does, because for him there were few *modern* Scoticisms

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[160] The term 'revival', if widely used, in connection to Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns has been held to be somewhat misleading, as there already was a long tradition of Scots literature, including medieval Makars like Dunbar and poets like Macpherson.

[161] Cohen, 'Norse imagery in Shetland', p. 491.

[162] Newby and Andersson Burnett, 'Between Empire and 'the North', p. 46.

which were not "barbarisms". Yet, he believed that no man of either kingdom would wish an extinction of the Scottish dialect in poetry. While regarding tales in the pure *Buchan* dialect (North-East dialect of Scots) as very acceptable, at the same time he nonetheless advised his contemporaries to "beware of the common fault of taking cant phrases for old speech."[163] He also believed that the Picts had spoken a Gothic (i.e. Germanic) language, which later gave rise to Scots. Present-day scholar McClure describes contemporary attitudes to language in Scotland as 'The Pinkerton syndrome'; "the practice of paying lip-service, and sometimes much more than this, to the Scottish culture of the past while denigrating the Scots language of the present."[164]

It is worth noting that many Englishmen had regarded English and Scots on an equal footing and there were English arguments from as early as 1604 that English and Scots were dialects of the same tongue.[165] That year the Englishman Henry Saville, in presenting a case for political Union between Scotland and England, made the point about Scots and English both being dialects of German:

> Both nations using the one and almost the same dialect, to wit the Saxon language. And the Scots and north people of England speak more incorruptly than the south, which by reason of the Conquest and greater Commerce with foreign nations, is become more mingled and degenerate from the ancient tongue, as will easily appear to him that shall compare the two dialects with the Germane, mother of them both.[166]

Saville regarded Scots as the "purer" language.[167] At that point, the

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[163] J.D. McClure, *Scots and its Literature* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1995), p. 57.
[164] McClure, *Scots and its Literature*, p. 58.
[165] D. Horsburgh / D. Horsbroch, '*Nostra Vulgari Lingua*: Scots as a European Language 1500-1700', *Scottish Language* (18) (1999), p. 3.
[166] B.R. Galloway and B.P. Levack (eds.), *The Jacobean Union Six Tracts of 1604* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 213.
[167] Horsburgh, '*Nostra Vulgari Lingua*: Scots as a European Language 1500-1700', p.

speech of the Scots and Englishmen from northern England was perceived as preferable to that of the south. The same line of thought is represented in Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* published in 1808, which was an expression of new consciousness of the past. Scots was regarded by Jamieson as a successor of ancient Gothic and by no means as inferior to English.

In a recent article, Newby and Burnett have shown that British fascination with the Vikings was not only cultural. It was in fact accompanied with interest in Scandinavian politics and during the second half of the nineteenth century this subject was surrounded by vivid discussions. Such rhetoric did not flourish only in the cultural-literary arena. Both Unionist nationalism and Northern discourses contributed to contemporary political debate. British interest in Scandinavian politics during the second half of the nineteenth century was also a result of attention being given to the 'blood relationship' between Britain and Scandinavia. As Scotland's relationship with England was different from that of Sweden-Norway it became obvious for scholars such as P. A. Munch that Scandinavism would be "disastrous" for a re-developing Norwegian nationality.[168]

Nevertheless, Munch's work simultaneously contributed to Scotland's northern discourses. In spite of the discourse which is common for both England and Scotland, the promotion of 'Scandinavian' Britishness was in fact able to incorporate distinct 'Norwegian' and 'Danish' strands for Scotland and England respectively. Norse Lowland ancestry was one that Scotland shared with England, but did not put Scotland in an inferior position. For this reason, by the final third of the century, it was rather useful to accentuate the Norse element to Scotland's past.[169] On the one hand, it was possible to emphasise Scotland's Norseness in contrast to country's Celtic image. On the other,

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[168] Newby and Andersson Burnett, 'Between Empire and 'the North', p. 44.

[169] Newby and Andersson Burnett, 'Between Empire and 'the North', p. 49.

Lowland Norse ancestry was useful in expressing Scottish difference notwithstanding the shared political project. Nonetheless, the celebration of Norse antiquity was to a large extent about claiming the focus of Scotland's cultural identity for the Lowlands.

The imperial element was also important: the 'Norse' idea was all about explaining the imperial strenght of Scotland. Researchers such as Newby have shown that in the nineteenth century there was a significant gap between external and internal images of Scotland. Furthermore, during the nineteenth century Celts came to be associated with emotionalism and feminine weakness, an obvious contrast to the virile Teutonic race. The Norse element of Scottish identity was therefore not only an explanation for their role as Empire builders, but it also enabled Scotland's coexistence with England within the Union.[170]

Whereas in the nineteenth century traits connecting Victorian Britons to the Goths, Teutons and "Northern Tribes" were increasingly seen as politically desirable and genetically transmittable, for many writers Shetland history and folklore were only interesting within this wider context.[171] It is worth of note, however, that there were different strands within the northern discourses (such as Teutonic/Germanic and Norse). Nonetheless, circles of cultures such as Latin, Celtic, Teutonic/ Germanic and Norse are overlapping within the British context and defining for the British Isles as a whole.[172]

An issue of major importance for the understanding of contemporary discourses is that these circles of culture are principally language-based. With the new emphasis on Scottish culture and self-understanding and Shetland culture and self-understanding in the late twentieth century the issue of language

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[170] See A.G. Newby, 'A Mere Geographical Expression'? Scotland and Scottish Identity, c. 1890-1914' (Forthcoming, 2011), p. 6.

[171] Cohen, 'Norse imagery in Shetland', p. 491.

[172] See A. Massie, 'A distinctive culture?', in R. Grønneberg (ed.), *Island Futures. Scottish Devolution and Shetland's Constitutional Alternatives* (Sandwick, 1978), p. 27.

assumed greater significance. Through language (and history) Shetland culture extended beyond the Scottish because it was perceived as particularly Norse.[173] Therefore, as the next chapters will show, although Shetland retained a dialect and not a language, it was possible for Shetlanders to express a separate collective consciousness also through the development of language-based cultural discourses of their own.

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[173] Massie, 'A distinctive culture?', p. 27. Massie does not comment on the role of language, but elaborates that the culture indigenous to the British Isles partakes in cultural circles such as Latin, Teutonic, Norse and Celtic. In his interpretation Shetland culture extends beyond the Scottish circle by reason of its strong Norse component. Similarly, in Finlay's view much of the culture of the Northern Isles is oriented more towards Scandinavia than to Scotland. See Finlay, *Modern Scotland*, p. 312.

III. Shetland as a separate entity

This chapter discusses Shetland nationalism and the role of language in the emergence of separate self-understanding among the Shetlanders. The first two sections provide a discussion of Shetland's otherness, late nineteenth century discourses and the use of Norse history. This is necessary for understanding and interpreting Shetlanders' perceived non-Scottishness and the uses of the past analysed in later chapters. The next section elaborates the story of Norn, several accounts of which have emerged since the 1980s and sets the scene for examination of the use of language history in local contexts. In turn, the last two sections consider the cultural revival of the post-war period evolving into the new revival of the oil age.

While nineteenth century discourses are based on examination and interpretation of scholarly literature, the presentation of the new cultural revival, initiated already during the Second World War, makes use also of local printed and manuscript sources. This chapter attempts to examine and illustrate the range of activities and ideas of Shetland intellectuals, which have led to the signification of history and culture in present identity discourses. Its main focus is on the role of language in relation to other elements of history and culture.

Shetland's otherness

Even in the twenty-first century it is still not uncommon for Shetland to be conflated with the Highlands and prior to oil many mainlanders were ignorant of Shetland's geographical position.[174]

[174] Abrams, *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World*, p. 3.

The Northern Isles did not play an important role neither in the creation of Scottish identity nor in the development of the state. Incorporated into the Scottish kingdom in 1468-69, the islands took on a modest role within the country as a whole.[175] This peripheral role was reflected in history writing – until recent times Scottish historians of the mainland regarded Shetland as remote and of less concern than the Highlands in the West.[176]

The cultural attributes of Shetlanders as a separate group of people developed during the age of nationalism but this took place within both Scottish and British contexts. Furthermore, the fact that Shetlanders shared constitutional monarchy with other groups did not mean that Shetlanders felt simply British. Shetland's remoteness and distinct aspects of history enabled the development of separate discourses, albeit within an Imperial framework.[177] In the process of economic and cultural change in the late nineteenth century the differentiation from mainland Scotland became a main element of Shetlanders' self-understanding. Furthermore, the reluctance to be known as Scottish has been transmitted selectively through images of it as recollected in social memory and folklore.

The turning point in Shetland's history was a strategic arriage arranged in the mid-fifteenth century by King Christian I of Denmark and Norway as a substitute of paying debts. In 1468 a marriage treaty was drawn up. The dowry required for Margaret, daughter of King Christian I, to marry the young Prince James (later King James III of Scotland) cancelled the debt. This was a defining moment in Shetland's history as the islands were never

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[175] For a recent discussion of the writings of Scottish and Norwegian historians and in particular their views of the Viking settlements in the islands and the transfer of the Northern Isles to the Scottish Crown in 1468/69 see Øien, 'The Northern Isles – Between Two Nations', *Northern Studies*, vol. 39 (2005), pp. 80-104; T. Øien, 'Orknøyene og Shetland i norsk og skotsk historieforskning' (University of Oslo Ph.D. Thesis, 2002).

[176] Øien, 'The Northern Isles – Between Two Nations', p. 80.

[177] Hunter, *Last of the Free,* 334. See also H.D. Smith, *The Making of Modern Shetland* (Lerwick, 1977).

redeemed and became part of Scotland. Although during the Middle Ages Shetland was under the sovereignty of Norway, the isles were also closely connected to the Scottish kingdom.[178] In this way Shetland received different cultural influences from both directions. Norwegian interest in the Northern Isles gradually weakened and during the Scottish rule contacts with Scandinavia diminished further while those with mainland Scotland grew in importance.

Scottish officials began to arrive in Shetland and brought their language with them. The ethno-demographic make up of the islands started to change. The arrival of significant numbers of Scots during the sixteenth century, after the transfer of the islands from Norway to Scotland in 1469, brought about the establishment of the landlord - tenant crofting system.[179] Both Orkney and Shetland were mortgaged to the Scottish crown. Although Shetland is geographically closer to Norway, it was Orkney (and Kirkwall) that were the main center of power during the period of Scandinavian expansion. Shetland is mentioned only occasionally in the *Orkneyingasaga*, which is a thirteenth century Icelandic description of the Orkney Earldom.[180]

Yet, for Shetland the year 1469 was truly the beginning of a new era, because Shetland was still essentially Norse at that time – in language and in institutions.[181] Shetland had not only been under direct rule from Norway, but Norwegians also owned lands in Shetland. In fact, the interests of many individuals and families

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[178] Øien, 'The Northern Isles – Between Two Nations', p. 80.

[179] Small-scale farming. In the late nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century a typical Shetland croft included livestock and was mainly self-sufficient. Change in productivity was a slow process with some changes appearing first in the inter-war period, but old methods also remained.

[180] *Orkneyingasaga* was written by an Icelander c. 1200. The saga is regarded as a valuable, but in many aspects historically unreliable source. See e.g. Øien, 'The Northern Isles – Between Two Nations', p. 81.

[181] G. Donaldson, 'The Scots Settlement in Shetland', in D. Withrington (ed.), *Shetland and the outside world 1469-1969* (Oxford, 1983), p. 8.

were fairly divided between Shetland and Norway.[182] Orkney, on the other hand, due to its closeness to the mainland, was already largely Scotticised.

In 1611, an act of the Scottish Privy Council banned the use of Norse laws and only the newly revised Scottish laws were used after that. The shift from Udal to Feudal law subjected Shetlanders to oppressions and injustices, which were common to all Scotland at the time. Particularly well known as cruel and feared, especially in Shetland folklore, is Earl Patrick Stewart.[183] The dislike for Scottish landlords has been the influence most frequently commented upon by Shetlanders.[184] Shetland was affected by the injustices of the centuries old problematic relationship between landlords and tenants well until the passing of the Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act of 1886.

The Crofters' Act brought the main change to crofting in Shetland and gave crofters security of tenancy of their property, and regulated rents. The Act protected crofters to the extent that they could fight their landlords in court without fear of eviction. Common opposition to the landlords led to crofter solidarity and a newfound class-consciousness. Religious rhetoric was also used – crofters were "right with God". More importantly, however, ethnicity was a central element of differentiation from the landowners, most of whom were Scots.[185] A counter-culture was needed in response and this was found in Norse Romanticism.

Norse Romanticism

Growing interest in Shetland's Norse past came to characterise the local scene in the late nineteenth century around the time when

[182] Donaldson, 'The Scots Settlement in Shetland', p. 9.

[183] Earl Patrick Stewart is explored in P.D. Anderson, *Black Patie: the Life and Times of Patrick Stuart, Earl of Orkney, Lord of Shetland* (Edinburgh, 1992).

[184] J. Graham, 'Social changes during the quinquennium', in D. Withrington (ed.), *Shetland and the outside world 1469-1969* (Oxford, 1983), p. 216.

[185] Renwanz, 'From crofters to Shetlanders', p. 334.

the Crofters' Act was passed. A number of Shetland intellectuals initiated a cultural movement, which was seeking to inspire in popular consciousness an appreciation of Shetland's Norse heritage, including the history, culture and language of the Norse.[186]

For the first time the conceptual framework of Shetland distinctiveness and difference from mainland Scotland began to establish itself through the writings of Shetland intellectuals. Until then nobody in Shetland was considering Norse history or Norn in any great detail. The fascination with the Norse was a racially-based Norse romanticism, or nationalism, "which took the form of counterculture, without having a serious impact on political life".[187] Although this took the form of an appreciation of history and language, the increasing emphasis upon Norse heritage was above all a comment upon what was seen as oppressive nature of Scottish rule, and "a tendency to ignore, regret or reject the Scottish contribution to Shetland society."[188]

Shetland was now being defined in terms of difference within a context of general atmosphere of freedom from earlier practices and community changes. The end of the nineteenth century was in many ways a period of significant social and economic change. In 1889 the Local Government (Scotland) Act established Zetland County Council as representative body, which is to be elected by the Shetland population itself. The Shetland cultural movement rediscovered the Norse culture and it was possible to transmit a variety of new ideas through history books, guides, novels, dialect poems and press writings.

The focus of movement's ideas was on distinct history, race and cultural distinctiveness. In terms of 'Norseness' Shetland was perceived to have preserved its Norseness better than Orkney, although historically, Orkney was the center of Norse influences.

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[186] Abrams, *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World*, p. 9.

[187] Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 58.

[188] Cohen, *Norse imagery in Shetland*, p. 491.

In the *Shetland Times* of 28 February 1885, J.B. Lawrence (editor of *Shetland News*) called among other things for a Shetland Archeology Society and compared the Norseness of Shetland to that of Orkney as follows:

> An Orcadian, for instance, would be surprised to hear that he is not a Scotsman; a Shetlander would rather be surprised to be told that he is a Scotsman. --- I have sometimes thought that it would be good if some Shetlanders should introduce amongst us the national peasant poetry and music of Scandinavia; for the poetry and music of our dear Old Fatherland long lost to us, but still part of us, could alone in the truest sense trill the depths of the soul.
>
> Doubtless it is grand to see the enthusiasm of Scotchmen for their rugged and sterile country. But we are not Celtic, but Oriental and Teutonic; and grander far to us might be the wild sea and gentle skies of Norway--- It seems indeed to me that we Shetlanders are shamefully neglectful of our past history.[189]

As shown above, Lawrence believed Shetlanders to be less Celtic and more Teutonic than a Scot and his views fell into the mythology of the Celtic Romantic movement while ignoring linguistic evidence such as that mentioned in the previous section. By making a claim about the people of Orkney as more Scottish and less Norse Lawrence attempted to strengthen a point about Shetland identity.[190]

At the same time, Norse history was used to distinguish both Shetlanders and Orcadians from other groups. For example, a short-lived newspaper titled *The Orkney and Shetland American* was published between 1871 and 1881. On its pages emigrants often discussed their feelings of national belonging. One of the contributors argued that he and his compatriots were Orcadians

[189] Quoted in Cohen, *Norse imagery in Shetland*, p. 330.

[190] The contemporary construction of Orkney and Shetland as mutual 'others' is discussed in chapter 4.

and Shetlanders first and Scandinavians second, but "never let us consider ourselves Scots...The amount of Scotch blood in Orkney is very little, and in Shetland it is not more than a drop in a bucket."[191] It was claimed that Orcadians and Shetlanders were by no means Scots. Moreover, the Swedes and some of the Norwegians in America were not the descendants of the "hardy Norsemen that ruled the stormy wave, as we are" – Orcadians and Shetlanders were more Norse than the Norwegians.[192]

Writers, journalists and teachers such as Haldane Burgess, J.B. Laurence, Arthur Laurenson and Laurence Williamson played an important role in the development of the framework of a distinct Shetland identity through symbols and ideologies connected with Shetland's Scandinavian past as opposed to its Scottish and British past and present. Norse imagery often found its expressions in the language used: Shetlanders were depicted as 'tough, virile race' and sea-faring abilities as inherited tradition.[193] Two centuries earlier Shetland was described differently. An interesting quote from Sweden in 1640 suggests that Shetlanders were open to the outside world and spoke mostly Norwegian, but, according to this commentator, seemed unable to fish for themselves:

> The Chancellor (Axel Oxenstierna) said: Shetland is always on my mind as an issue worthy of our consideration. I have carefully sought and found that the aforementioned island is reasonably happy to allow Spain to promote its doings in full

[191] See G. Gibson, 'The Orkney and Shetland American and the Construction of Community' (University of Glasgow M.Sc. Thesis, 2004), quoted in G. Gibson and M. Tallack, 'The Orkney and Shetland American', *Shetland Life* (July 1997), p. 18.

[192] Gibson and Tallack, 'The Orkney and Shetland American', p. 18. It is interesting to note that Gibson and Tallack have constructed Orcadians and Shetlanders as conscious of their distinct heritage, yet as Scottish. They show that whereas the conceptions of otherness discussed by the emigrants were diverse, they neither joined with Scandinavians in their societies nor celebrated Scandinavian festivals. Some had joined Scottish societies instead of their island societies and participated in Scottish celebrations. See Gibson and Tallack, 'The Orkney and Shetland American', p. 19.

[193] Cohen, *Norse imagery in Shetland,* p. 490.

> view of the surrounding lands. Bemälte insul (Shetland) ....
> lies beside islands called Orkney, has five good harbours and outlets; the people there speak mostly Norwegian and are lazy and unused to work; they only feed themselves on what they earn from foreigners who fish off their land, whose nets they mend and dry.[194]

In the late nineteenth century, however, Norse imagery often found its expressions in descriptions of Shetland and its people and from the 1880s Norse names were given also to new streets and housing estates in Lerwick.[195] It is worthy of note that the spread of ideas had become easier at that time, because the interests, work and activities of Lerwick intellectuals received extensive coverage in the local press and their attempts to secure symbolic representation and appreciation of Shetland's Norse past were also supported in their own columns.[196]

From a European point of view, the nineteenth century was a golden age for philologists, grammarians and lexicographers.[197] In Shetland, fieldwork visits and linguistic work of the Faeroese scholar Jakob Jakobsen were an example of the same phenomenon and these attracted much local attention.[198]

The cultural movement in the nineteenth century took place within the context of significant social and economic change. The local press played a vital enabling role at a time of major change of Shetland society. Shetland's first newspaper *Shetland Journal* was published in London and appeared in 1862 for 15 months. Ten years later, in 1872, the *Shetland Times* appeared and this soon took

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[194] See *Svenska Riksrådets Protokoll*, vol. VIII, 1640-1 (Stockholm, 1898), p. 85. Council minute, 4 July 1640.

[195] Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 26.

[196] Cohen, *Norse imagery in Shetland.*, p. 331.

[197] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 71.

[198] Jakobsen's *Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland* was reprinted by the Shetland Folk Society in 1985 and is generally considered to be an important language resource. For a biography of Jakobsen see R. Grønneberg, *Jakobsen and Shetland* (Lerwick, 1981).

up a strong stance on the need for Land Reform.

Another weekly paper, the *Shetland News* started in 1886, the year of the Crofters' Act. Growing numbers of merchants and professionals acquired social and political importance and their aspirations were visible among others in the demand for improved communications and the establishment of schools and libraries. Intellectual and cultural activities were promoted in a variety of ways and this was made possible through the expansion of literacy and awareness of scholarship elsewhere. Local societies and newspapers encouraged the celebration of Shetland's cultural difference and Shetland's writers collected examples of dialect and folklore and examined Shetland history.

These developments were enabled through books, newspapers, correspondence, contacts and networks with a growing number of British and European scholars with similar areas of interest.[199] For Shetland intellectuals the local papers became an important forum for publicity of their work and ideas. Shetlanders received a printed written culture, in terms of own values and distinctiveness, for a first time.[200] Some of the most important ideological implications of the cultural movement in the late nineteenth century were the following:

- The Shetland islands were seen as distinctly Norse in blood and origin and this was considered to be an issue of primary cultural importance;

- The lack of Celtic cultural elements was emphasised and the lack of Celtic 'type' of people;[201]

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[199] Cohen, *Norse imagery in Shetland*, p. 488.

[200] Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa,* p. 140. See also B. Smith, 'The development of literature in Shetland', *The New Shetlander* (174) (1990), p. 29.

[201] Racial arguments were presented for example in the Napier Commission. For a discussion of Shetland crofters and the Napier Commision see B. Smith, 'Shetland and the Napier Commition 1883-1983', *The New Shetlander* (145) (1983), pp. 6-10; L. Graham (ed.), *Shetland Crofters: A Hundred Years of Shetland Crofting* (Lerwick, 1984); Hunter, *Last of the Free*, pp. 314-318.

- Traditions connected to those of the 'Old Fatherland' were seen as something worth introducing wider in Shetland society as part of maintaining links with Scandinavia;

- The Norse past was described as Norse civilisation in terms of medieval parliamentary democracy, heroic deeds and separate identity; and

- All things Scottish were denigrated.

The growing interest in the Norse in the nineteenth century both relied on and sometimes contributed to the more general interest and scholarship on this subject in Britain and Europe. Yet it was also connected to economic and social developments within the islands, and, as pointed out by Cohen, has to be related also "to the developing cultural organisation that was one of the products of such developments."[202]

Although late nineteenth century fascination with the Norse was used in Shetland as a counter to Scottish culture, the shared emphasis on a Norse cultural and racial past was in fact an important strand of Scottish, and British identity as a whole. Colin Kidd has demonstrated recently that nineteenth-century Lowland Scots blatantly projected a Teutonic racial identity and racialism was diverse rather than monolith.[203]

While Scotland became mostly defined, and marketed, as a Celtic country, the Northern discourse provided Shetlanders with a culture of their own. At the same time as the Norse element of Scotland's past was seen as useful in creating a distinction between Scotland and England, although within an Imperial framework, in Shetland the Norse past developed into an important characteristic differentiating Shetlanders from (other) Scots. Racial arguments worked at times both to support and to

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[202] Cohen, *Norse imagery in Shetland*, p. 488.

[203] See C. Kidd, 'Race, Empire and the limits of nineteenth-century Scottish nationhood', *The Historical Journal* (46) (2003), pp. 873-892.

overturn Scottish involvement in Empire. Thus, the late nineteenth century saw the emergence of both Scottish home rule movement as well as the *Udal League* in Orkney and Shetland.[204]

An important figure in the reconstruction of Shetland as culturally Norse was Unst-born writer Jessie M. Saxby (1842-1940), who explored and reconstructed Scandinavian Shetland in almost fifty books and hundreds of articles. Jessie Saxby and her brother the Rev. B. Edmondston presented a picture of a romantic Shetland with a distinct culture traceable to the Norse era. As other mythic images, the image they painted was a fictional restoration of the past and a legitimisation of the present.[205] Nonetheless, the Shetland Saxby was exploring was Scandinavian *and* British. The values of Empire were values she saw as being embodied in the Norsemen of Shetland and her construction of Shetland as Scandinavian was a way of incorporating Shetland into the British Empire.[206]

Saxby's construction of Shetland as culturally Norse has been particularly influential in Shetland, yet no other author was more in favour of Empire than Saxby was. Callum Brown has argued that, apart from a brief period in the late nineteenth century, Shetland's Norse heritage never became an ideological dimension to the definition of the community.[207] Nonetheless, a growing interest in the isles' Norse history appeared intertwined with Shetland's oil era and I shall return to these issues later in my study. The 1970s and 1980s were a new transition time and the Norse heritage of the isles seemed to some commentators entangled with anti-Scottish feelings. Issues of politics will be considered in the next chapter, but it is now of value to explore the

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[204] Founded in the context of the national Home Rule debates, the League developed into the 'Viking Society'. See Kidd, 'Race, Empire and the limits of nineteenth-century Scottish nationhood', pp. 873-892.
[205] Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, pp. 17-19.
[206] M. Smith, 'Shetland Literature and Identity', *Identity Essays* (Shetland, 2009), p. 25.
[207] Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 195.

role of language and the emergence of contemporised discourses of cultural distinctiveness and cultural links.

Prestigious culture

> They (the Shetlanders) don't escape the Scottish cringe but they have an alternative identity which, while it's more prestigious in some ways, lacks genuineness and authenticity.

The above quote of an anonymous Scottish informant to this study describes a paradox; at the same time as this informant questions the authenticity of Shetland culture, Shetland discourses often question the genuineness and authenticity of Scottish culture while Shetland distinctiveness is considered authentic and homegrown. Both sets of images have to be understood within the wider British framework rather than outside of wider scale issues. Also in terms of language Shetlanders had developed discourses of their own and during the oil era Shetland dialect became even more clearly connected to what was seen as prestigious values. Modern bureaucrats and intellectuals quoted Shetland dialect as the most important legacy of Shetland's Scandinavian history and used dialect in speeches to the public.[208]

Before considering the most recent reassessment of language history in local contexts it is necessary to briefly introduce the story of Norn, much on which has been written in recent years. Among the most recent academic accounts of the story of Norn are these of Barnes, Millar and Knooihuizen. Records of later Norn suggest close connection both with the dialects of western and south-western Norway and the dialects of the Faeroes and Iceland.[209] Studying the loss of Norn from a contemporary perspective has been somewhat easier in the case of Shetland (in

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[208] Renwantz, *From crofters to Shetlanders*, p. 272.

[209] Barnes, *The Norn language of Orkney and Shetland*, pp. 13-16; Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots*, p. 166.

comparison to Orkney), because language shift occurred in many places in the eighteenth century at a time when there was a broader local interest in language.[210] Because of their geographical position, the more distant islands retained Norn for much longer. Shetland Norn had declined as result of the transfer of rule to, and growing influence from mainland Scotland and increasing use of Scots in all areas of Shetland life as a result of trade and immigration. Nonetheless, there is no reliable linguistic data for the period of shift as many of the documents written in a variety of Scandinavian are of unclear provenance.

First-hand evidence on language shift is missing and any description of this process has been dependent on a limited number of short comments, written mainly in the eighteenth century.[211] While it has been possible to interpret the existing sources in a variety of way, evidence suggests that Scots was used in writing consistently from c. 1520 onwards.[212] Speaking Scots and later English was connected to wider societal changes in the isles and became desirable and associated with advancement. In times of low literacy the spoken language would have been of more importance than the written one and this language variety was Scots.

By the late seventeenth century people in Shetland spoke Norn among themselves, but they all were able to speak a variety of Scots. A document written in the 1680s reveals that the people of Cunningsburgh "… seldom speak other [than Norn] among themselves, yet all of them speak the Scots tongue more promptly

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[210] Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots*, p. 166.

[211] R. Knooihuizen, 'The Norn-to-Scots language shift: another look at socio-historical evidence', *Northern Studies* (39) (2005), p. 106. For a complete list of the existing sources see R. Knooihuizen, 'The death of Norn: a study into the decline of the Scandinavian vernacular of Orkney and Shetland' (University of Edinburgh M.Sc. Dissertation, 2005), pp. 112-123.

[212] See J. Ballantyne and B. Smith (eds.), *Shetland documents 1580-1611* (Lerwick, 1994); J. Ballantyne and B. Smith (eds.), *Shetland documents 1195-1579* (Lerwick, 1999); Knooihuizen, 'The Norn-to-Scots language shift', p. 108.

[fluently] and more properly than they do in Scotland"[213] Change was caused by the strengthening contacts with Scotland and simultaneous loss of contacts with Scandinavia. During the early modern period connections to both mainland Scotland and to other countries were substantial and important.

Merchants from Hamburg and Bremen were sailing directly to Shetland for trade and distance from centers of power encouraged the development of fishing, whaling and commerce. In 1742 the lexicographer Johann Heinrich Zedler described the conditions he found in Shetland and the characteristics of its inhabitants, by stating that "the first inhabitants of Shetland seem to have been Germans which can be seen from the mixture of the German and the old Gothic languages as well as in their measures, their way of counting and of weighing."[214] Some German Hansa merchants had spent at earlier times as much as a third of their sea-faring life in Shetland.[215] In the seventeenth century there were also strong Dutch influences.[216] In any case, contemporary history writing agrees on the fact that during Shetland's long history as a center of both legal and illegal trade different influences and languages affected the local population and communication was usually conducted without greater difficulties.

The language varieties spoken in the islands were close linguistically: a Norn speaker could have made him- or herself understood in a shop run by a Scots speaker by saying what he/she wanted in her own language. If there were not many

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[213] Quoted in J. Graham, *The Shetland dictionary* (Lerwick, 1999), p. XI.

[214] K. Friedland, 'Hanseatic merchants and their trade with Shetland', in D. Withrington (ed.), *Shetland and the outside world 1469-1969* (Oxford, 1983), p. 95. For a detailed and most recent discussion see K. Zickermann, 'Across the German sea : Scottish commodity exchange, network building and communities in the wider Elbe-Weser region in the early modern period' (University of St. Andrews Ph.D. Thesis, 2009).

[215] Friedland, 'Hanseatic merchants and their trade with Shetland', p. 95.

[216] See e.g. H. Boelmans Kranenburg, 'The Netherland fisheries and the Shetland Islands', in D. Withrington (ed.), *Shetland and the outside world 1469-1969* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 96-106.

common words, the merchant would soon have learned them. There is considerable evidence for this kind of mutual comprehension around the North Sea in the timber trade.[217]

Like in other parts of Europe languages were used as means of communication, while their meaning of identity was largely unknown to their speakers. This was enabled also by the fact that, unlike in Gaelic Scotland, there were no significant linguistic differences to hinder communication. By the eighteenth century, Norn was beginning to lose ground and in the end of the century only poems or fragments of Norn were to be found. Fragments of Norn were recorded in 1774 by the Rev. George Low, a young minister from Orkney who visited Shetland in 1774, and by Jakob Jakobsen during his fieldwork in Shetland in the 1890s.

At that time the spoken language variety was Shetland dialect, but it was still possible to witness or record the 'half-life' of Norn in the form of half-understood but well-remembered phrases.[218] Norn words and phrases continued to be remembered in Shetland due to the fact that these had now become an important expression of Shetlanders' self-understanding and distinctiveness. These were proudly presented to curious outsiders and it cannot be excluded that even in the eighteenth century some Shetlanders had learned to package their culture and turn it into a heritage item.[219]

Within Scottish contexts the production of backward-looking and sentimental literature, known as the *kailyard* tradition, had become a dominant trend. Nevertheless, the recent discovery of discursive prose written entirely in Scots during the second half of the nineteenth century has been shown to clearly contradict the earlier view that the vernacular was not used in prose after the

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[217] See M. Lorvik, 'Mutual intelligibility of timber trade terminology in the North Sea countries during the time of the "Scottish Trade", *Nordic Journal of English Studies* (2) (2003), pp. 223-244.

[218] Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots,* p. 177.

[219] Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots*, p. 178.

early seventeenth century.[220] This has challenged the view that Scots varieties were only used for parochial, and therefore not serious contemporary or political, purposes. Discursive articles in Scots published in the columns of the Victorian press not only did exist but also existed in various journals and each department of these publications. As Scottish enterprises these journals were both owned and written by Scots and circulated within Scotland and as such these played an important role in sustaining Scottish and regional identities alongside the British. Both journalists and readers often came from similar social and linguistic backgrounds.[221]

Many of the journals circulated within homogeneous speech communities where Scots varieties were "a fundamental social bond".[222] Shetland journals had a considerable value as the medium of expression of Shetland affiliations, and these in turn were produced for Shetland audience.[223] An article published in *Shetland Times* commented on Scottish schoolmasters trying to eliminate the local tongue. The schoolmaster concerned spoke not English, but broad Aberdeenshire dialect. Donaldson describes this to be an example of intolerance between dialects, not a case of "anglicisation", but "a speech community perceiving itself under threat from other Scots speakers":

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[220] See W. Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1986); W. Donaldson, *The language of the People. Scots Prose from the Victorian Revival* (Aberdeen, 1989).

[221] Donaldson, *The language of the People*, p. 4. In some places, particularly in outlying areas, 'local' papers were produced outside the community. The *Orkney and Shetland Chronicle*, for example, was published in Edinburgh. But this was perceived as unsatisfactory in several ways. It was felt that the local community ought to be able to have a direct influence on its papers. When *the Orcadian* started up in Kirkwall in 1854, the fact that it was the first paper to be produced on the island was seen as a major advantage. See Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland*, p. 4.

[222] Donaldson, *The language of the People*, p. 4.

[223] For a study of the (possibly) earliest poems, written in the Shetland dialect see M.R. Smith, 'Minstrel of the Mossy Isle: the poetry of Thomas Irvine of Midbrake', *The New Shetlander* (244) (2008), pp. 29-34.

> Da Skülmaisters hae nae bishiness tae interfere wi' wir guid midder tongue. We pey dem for laernin bairns English, no fur unlearnin wir Shetlan' speech.
>
> The schoolmasters have no business to interfere with our good mother tongue. We are paying them to teach children English, not to unlearn our Shetland speech.[224]

The spoken dialect may not have been a dialect of Norn, but it was perceived a different variety from those spoken on the mainland. From a contemporary perspective, however, this quote can be taken to mean two different things depending on the viewpoint: first, this could be taken to have meant resistance to the language of Scottish schoolmasters and in this case it has an obvious ethnic meaning, second, however, from a point of view of discourses in contemporary Scotland it can be taken to be an expression of resistance to the expansion of English, thereby speakers consciously preserving their form of Scots.

As it will be observed in chapters focusing on language and dialect these two competing interpretations are both meaningful depending on the viewpoint one would wish to adopt. The use of Norn remained important alongside discourses of Shetland dialect. One example of the use of language history was the publication of a book of William Sandison in 1953 called *Shetland Verse: fragments of the Norn*. In the language sphere, Norn language elements continue to be employed by contemporary Shetland writers as a symbol of difference or perhaps as a symbol of antiquity – a way of creating a tradition reaching back to Scandinavian, and therefore not Scottish, times. For instance, Robert Alan Jamieson's *Thin Wealth* (1986) and the late John Graham's *Strife in the Valley* (1992) use Norn explicitly in this way.[225] In recent years, Scots language activists have also been

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[224] Donaldson, *The language of the People*, p. 177. My translation.

[225] I owe this information to Mark Ryan Smith, currently preparing a PhD thesis on

inspired by Scandinavian orthography, one example of which is the spelling of Stirling (1994).[226]

Shetland affiliations

Apart from nineteenth century Norse romanticism, another influence on cultural and language discussions in Shetland was the Scottish Literary Renaissance, associated with the so-called linguistic turn. By the 1920s Shetlanders' thoughts were far from the past as social problems and moral politics dominated the scene.[227] At the same time, as noted in the previous chapter, Scotland was experiencing a significant Literary Revival in the 1920s known as the Scottish Literary Renaissance and led by Hugh MacDiarmid.

There was a significant degree of dislocation between the literati and the majority of Scottish population focused on more immediate issues of material well-being and enjoying the English language of the cinema, radio and popular fiction.[228] Parallel to the national movement were the activities of the local writers and collectors of dialect and also in these cases before the 1960s language was mainly considered in terms of cultural-literary tradition without the new language-based focus which language movements received only in the later twentieth century.

In Shetland, Shetland's distinctive culture remained a source of inspiration for Shetland intellectuals, but this time those active in

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Shetland Literature. Themes of identity and intergation are central to both texts. See e.g. D. Moncrieff, 'John J. Graham's Strife in the Valley', *The New Shetlander* (205) (1998), pp. 28-29.

[226] To exemplify this point, the Scottish linguist Millar offers an excerpt from Burns 'To a Mouse' modified by the use of Scandinavian orthography. One of the problems with the apparently Scandinavian-looking text was that it did not recognise the differences in phonemic systems between Scots and the Scandinavian languages and may have seemeed "Martian". Millar, *Language, Nation and Power*, p. 191.

[227] See Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, pp. 169-171.

[228] See Finlay, *Modern Scotland 1914-2000*, pp. 106-109.

cultural activism were left-wingers and culture began to carry different overtones from the ones of earlier periods. Apart from the end of the nineteenth century when distinctiveness was connected to right-wing ideas of racial and ethnic separation, the emphasis on Shetland culture was above all cultural, and not ethnic or racial, but Shetland intellectuals continued to perceive Shetland as culturally distinct entity. This point will become apparent further in this section. As one of the main arguments of research produced in the early years of the oil era was the emergence of a North Sea Oil ethnicity, my intention was to examine individual instances of separate discourses existing prior to the oil era.

One of the figures that had an important role for the beginning of this new cultural revival in Shetland was Peter Jamieson.[229] He is one of the figures constantly recalled and referred to in the oil era on the pages of the *New Shetlander* and also for this reason worth of closer examination. Peter Jamieson was born in 1898 in Lerwick. He began to write short articles in the twenties, mostly about Shetland. In 1933 he published the book *The Viking Isles*, which was criticised for romanticism. Jamieson continued to write stories and poetry, sometimes in Shetland dialect. In order to elaborate the change in local discourses I studied handwritten proposals by Jamieson and dialect discussions in the local press produced during the Second World War.

During the war Jamieson was planning the founding of a Shetland League, the inspiration for which was the Gaelic League, founded in July 1893 in Ireland. Jamieson mentions *explicitly* the Gaelic League, whereas references to Shetland's Udal League of the 1890s are absent. The fact that the Gaelic League is his main source of inspiration is visible also in the ways in which his notes are titled. What fascinated Jamison in the Gaelic League was that "the language was learned and taught by men and women who

[229] Biographical notes on Peter Jamieson are included in several articles of Shetland archivist Brian Smith, for example B. Smith, 'The New Shetlander, 1947-1997', *The New Shetlander* (200) (1997), p. 4.

traveled all over Ireland without pay" and "the epics and songs of the Gael were retrieved from oblivion, music collected, dances and games revived."[230] Similarly to the Gaelic League, the Shetland League proposed by Jamieson was nonsectarian and apolitical, but its focus was on Shetland's distinctiveness, on history and culture, and on Nordic ties:

> This League would be open to all Shetlanders or friends of Shetland, who recognize that the Shetland people have a heritage and tradition in the historical and cultural sphere peculiarly their own and therefore worthy of being kept alive.[231]

Furthermore, Jamieson emphasised as one of the aims of the movement to "bring still closer the already strong ties with the Scandinavian lands, especially the old Motherland, Norway, and Iceland, Faeroe and Orkney" and to "seek affiliations with similar progressive movements in those countries."[232]

The Shetland League (or Northern League, an alternative name given by Jamieson) would have been a movement aiming at encouraging the traditional Shetland dialect and popularization of Shetland literature, music, handicrafts and history in every possible way. Jamieson also proposed for the League to "strive to get lessons in Norwegian and other northern languages and literature into the curriculum of all Shetland schools"[233] together with lessons in the Shetland dialect, history and literature. Other proposals included a suitable emblem, flag and song for Shetland and the observation of important Northern events such as St. Olaf's Day, Norway's National day etc.

A Shetland day and an appropriate ceremony were also on the agenda. From the point of view of this study it is worthy of note

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[230] Shetland Archives: D9/291/1/4 Notes by Peter Jamieson anent Ireland and the Gaelic League, with draft principles and programme of a Shetland League, 21-22 May 1942.

[231] D9/291/1/4 Notes by Peter Jamieson.

[232] D9/291/1/4 Notes by Peter Jamieson.

[233] D9/291/1/4 Notes by Peter Jamieson.

that Jamieson also mentions the development of a literary language. Although Jamieson's idea of a Shetland League remains a list of handwritten proposals, there is evidence that, for example, the issue of the Shetland dialect was debated in length in the local press around the same time; sometimes also the teaching of Norwegian in schools is being mentioned.[234] During the Second World War ties between Shetland and Norway were strengthened significantly due to the so-called 'Shetland Bus' operation.[235] Around the same time, there was also an extensive correspondence in the *Shetland News* about Shetland culture. My examination of articles and letters in Shetland News demonstrated that the themes associated with Shetland culture and distinctiveness were widely considered before the oil era; for instance, one discussion proposes:

> The suggestion made by Mr Robertson about an hour a week being set aside as "Shetland hour" in Shetland schools seems good; but it is probable that little will be done in this direction while the schools are under the centralising, deadening direction of a *Scottish* administration and curriculum. So it looks as if things will muddle along in the same old way—Shetland bairns knowing the height of Ben Nevis to a foot but struck dumb when asked the height of Ronies Hill.[236]

> Why should we tend to neglect the work of our writers, however "crude" and unpolished minds? The same thing applies to the writings of Scottish and English authors and poets. Would anyone suggest that because Scott, Dickens, Stevenson, Hardy, are long dead, and "we live in a different world," that their

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[234] 'Bilingualism and all that', *Shetland News*, 27 March 1941; 'Our dialect speech', *Shetland News*, 03 April 1941. Several issues of *Shetland News* published in May 1941 include letters and discussions on Shetland dialect.

[235] The Shetland Bus was the nickname of an organisation, which created a permanent connection between Shetland and the occupied Norway from 1941 until the German occupation ended on the 8th of May 1945. The group also brought out Norwegians who were under threat to be arrested by the Germans.

[236] 'The Shetland dialect', *Shetland News*, 24 April 1941.

> writings should be neglected? Their writings are still used in most schools, as forming part of our "English literary heritage." Why then should not the writings of Anderson, Burgess, Stewart, Angus, take an equally important part in the curriculum in Shetland schools, as forming part of our "Shetland literary heritage?"[237]

Another article of the same period elaborates the idea of proposed Shetland organisation. The author admits that the forming of an organisation to foster distinctive Shetland interests is "perhaps not a very feasible one with an increasingly serious war on our hands, but one which should be certainly kept in mind for the future".[238] The arguments go further including a list of Shetland items, such as 100 fiddle tunes "of native or northern origin", Shetland songs, Shetland farces, serious historical Shetland plays, dances such as the Papa Stour Sword Dance, native poetry, and books about Shetland to be reprinted. In addition to Jakobsen's Shetland Norn dictionary, there was "a sprinkling of knowledge of northern languages among the present younger generation, including some school-teachers" and "unprecedented archaeological activity, especially in connection with important finds at Jarlshof".[239] The author concluded that:

> As a postscript I would add that following the war, and largely under the impulse of the Norwegian "complication," there will probably be a considerable swing of interest to the north, including the extension of air routes, which will assist the practical development of these islands, and save a local movement such as is envisaged from being merely literary and historical.[240]

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[237] 'The Shetland dialect', *Shetland News*, 24 April 1941.
[238] 'Da Helly Röd', *Shetland News*, 10 April 1941.
[239] The name Jarlshof, as often remarked in contemporary tourist material, was invented by Walter Scott, who set part of his novel *The Pirate* (1822) in seventeenth century Shetland.
[240] 'Da Helly Röd', *Shetland News*, 10 April 1941.

Indeed, the following years saw the emergence of a more contemporised Shetland culture, parallel with which Norse symbolism continued to play a role. Affiliations with Norway and contemporary Scandinavia became an essential focus for local discourses.[241] During the oil era Norway and the Faeroe Islands offered popular topics of local discussion, as later chapters will show. For many contemporary Shetlanders ties with Scandinavia, and Norway in particular, continue to form an important component of personal identities and histories.

Cultural promotion

During the oil era new finances and new opportunities strengthened the trends of promotion of local culture that were initiated prior to oil. Both in local settings and in emigration from the isles education patterns were changing, and this was visible once again in numbers of teachers, expansion of schools and especially in the creation of new, modern amenities. I will examine the changes brought by oil in terms of culture later in this section. But a cultural revival in Shetland had already been initiated a prior to the oil era and it is appropriate to examine this cultural revival in terms of continuity. This is necessary, because its actors and its themes are prominent in contemporary discourses.

Since 1945, apart from a change towards more secular society, two national trends have been particularly notable in the isles.[242] The first trend has been the considerable attention paid to education and increased awareness of intellectual life. The second has been the preoccupation with the economy. These characteristics were by no means peculiar to Shetland, but

[241] For instance James W. Irvine (one of the leaders of the Shetland movement) reviewed Shetland's links with Norway in the 1980s. See J.W.Irvine, 'Blood Ties', *The New Shetlander* (161) (1987), pp. 7-9.
[242] H.D. Smith, 'The Making of Modern Shetland. Part 9', *The New Shetlander* (121) (1977), p. 7.

common for Britain as a whole.[243] Prior to the Second World War those who continued to secondary education were relatively few, and even fewer attended universities or colleges. From the mid-nineteenth until the mid-twentieth centuries the main means for advancement by emigrating from Shetland was going to sea. In contrast, following the war education became an essential factor in emigration. But it was not only through emigration from the isles that education patterns were changing – locally, more teachers were needed, schools expanded in facilities and became more centralised.

Changes were also a reflection of a number of national changes in education, including greater prominence being given to local studies, particularly in the fields of history and geography, and the introduction of new subjects such as modern and environmental studies.[244] A significant factor for Shetlanders' sense of cultural separateness has been also the emergence of local institutions concerned with distinctiveness. Some organisations had existed already at earlier times, for example Christina Jamieson initiated a folklore society in the beginning of the century before ultimately emigrating to New Zealand. After the war Shetland culture was given focus by two related developments, the formation of Shetland folk society and the launch of *The New Shetlander* in 1947.[245] Both events are still considered in local contexts fundamental from the point of view of both the post-war cultural revival and present-day discourses.[246]

For the original price of 6 pence Shetlanders were offered

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[243] Smith, 'The Making of Modern Shetland. Part 9', p. 7.

[244] Smith, 'The Making of Modern Shetland. Part 9', p. 8.

[245] J. Hunter, 'Regenerations', *The New Shetlander* (235) (2006), p. 9. Hunter points out that the 1940s and 1950s were a period of intense cultural activity in Shetland in a way that differentiated Shetland from the rest of the post-war Highlands and Islands.

[246] The vitality of a lively and widely-read local press is mentioned in a variety of sources. See e.g. T. Nairn, 'The Shetland Problem', in R. Grønneberg (ed.), *Island Futures. Scottish Devolution and Shetland's Constitutional Alternatives* (Sandwick, 1978), p. 21.

historical articles, political opinions and literary works. *The New Shetlander* was claimed to be explicitly a non-party political and literary paper, yet it was political in the sense that it offered alternatives for the present and visions for the future. Founded by Jamieson, according to its manifesto the magazine was intended to offer "space for the ideas of all progressive trends at disposal of those interested".[247] Its founders believed that "Shetlanders should take a more intelligent interest in Shetland" and writers, poets, critics and others interested in northern tradition and letters, and "with respect for Shetland heritage" were invited to contribute.[248]

The magazine supported schemes for the improvement of conditions in the islands, and the development of new industries. Jamieson and his co-workers saw cooperation as a solution to the problems facing Shetland. As a consequence of the views and ideas of the persons involved the magazine became a focal point of literary revival, but also carried political functions. In 1957 a number of islanders formed the Shetland Development Council and the cultural and economic agendas as expressed on the pages of the journal became central for the activities of the Zetland County Council, and embraced by its convener, Prophet Smith.[249] Local cultural changes during the post-war period included the encouragement of Shetland poetry and prose, Shetland music, and Shetland arts and crafts.

One of the iconic elements of contemporary Shetland, which is visibly present in contemporary promotional materials on Shetland, is its fiddle music and informants to the present study drew parallels between Shetland dialect and Shetland music.[250] The arrival of Scottish music and dances in the twenties has been later acknowledged as nearly detrimental to local musical

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[247] Peter Jamieson's manifesto in the first issue of the journal. Reprinted in *The New Shetlander* (200) (1997), p. 4.

[248] Peter Jamieson's manifesto, p. 4.

[249] Hunter, 'Regenerations', p. 10.

[250] Discussion with Maurice Henderson, 5 March 2008; Eunice Henderson, 7 March 2008.

tradition. Nevertheless, their spread and popularity were by no means a matter of imposition but a matter of fashion. Contemporary Shetland author Davy Gardner describes this as follows:

> The Scottish fishing industry descended on the islands, bringing with it not only the smell of herring guts and money, but new "noisy" instruments such as the accordion, not to mention new "fired-up" music and dances as well. Forget the croft house; let's build halls and go for it big time…Change things did, with many no longer favouring the old style of playing. Shetland's once proud and unique fiddle tradition risked being swept aside with a blast from "the box" and a hooch from an uncaring Highlander, impervious to Shetland's stand-alone musical distinctions.[251]

Dialect, a distinct musical tradition and other aspects of local culture began to be fostered by groups such as the Shetland Folk Society, the Education Committee of the County Council, local drama groups, and encouraged in local schools.[252] Elaborating the first phases of the Shetland Folk Society, its current chair Douglas Sinclair explains in his speech presented at the Shetland dialect convention in 2004:

> The reviewer in the *Shetland News* was the editor T M Y Manson, who conceded the songs as songs were 'mostly excellent', but condemned them for being 'Scotch songs, in the Scots dialect, with a non-Shetlandic sentiment and in one or two cases a distinctive Hebridean cadence in the tunes'. He concluded with the observation that it was 'inconsistent of Mr Matheson to found and preside over a Shetland Folk Society for the express purpose of fostering distinctive Shetland culture and then on the opening night present an expectant audience with pure Scots songs'[253]

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[251] D. Gardner, 'Mair bloody fiddles', *Shetland Life* (321) (July 2007), p. 33.
[252] Smith, 'The Making of Modern Shetland. Part 9', p. 8.
[253] D. Sinclair, 'Shetland Folk Society: A shining example', *Dialect. Two days conference & public debate on the developments of the Shetland dialect* (Lerwick, 2004), p. 49.

As the above quote shows Shetland culture, Shetland music and Shetland dialect were seen as rather different from their Scottish counterparts. The event in question was a Shetland Night held in 1945 to mark the founding of a Shetland Folk Society, which became a central organisation in the spread and promotion of Shetland distinctiveness.[254]

Including a number of well-known Shetland authors, musicians, teachers and folklorists, the Society aimed from the very beginning at bringing to the attention of Shetland public "examples of Shetland's traditional culture through concerts, lectures, and publications."[255] In some of the discourses, there was a desire to break from nostalgically historical and antiquarian approaches to tradition, while at the same the revival of a distinct Shetland culture was an important part of wider societal change. In contrast to more recent and specific organisations, and in resonance to its time, the Folk Society was designed as "a comprehensive folk movement", intended "to collect and preserve what remained of Shetland's folklore, folk songs, fiddle tunes, traditions, customs, place-names and dialect."[256] Well-known local people, who were committed to the enhancement of Shetland culture, led the organisation and many of its members during the post-war period were still active and influential during the oil era. In the language sphere, already in 1952 John Graham and T.A. Robertson had published *Grammar and Usage of the Shetland Dialect* at a time when there was no grammar of Scots.[257]

Active in both the *New Shetlander* and Shetland Folk Society, during the oil era John Graham became one of the key figures who most actively promoted Shetland dialect on the pages of the New Shetlander and authored a Shetland Dictionary. Towards the late twentieth century the name of John Graham became closely

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[254] Hunter, *Last of the Free*, pp. 359-360.

[255] Sinclair, 'Shetland Folk Society', p. 49.

[256] Sinclair, 'Shetland Folk Society', p. 49.

[257] See J. Graham and T.A. Robertson *Grammar and usage of the Shetland dialect* (Lerwick, 1952).

associated with Shetland studies. In recent years various new groups have been formed such as Sing Shetland, Shetland Folk Dance, the Story Telling Group and a number of heritage centres. The Folk Society has become part of the Shetland Heritage Association, initiated in 2001, with Douglas Sinclair as its present Chairman.

Its purpose has been to offer to the small museums, heritage centres and history groups throughout Shetland the opportunity to be closely connected. The work undertaken by the Folk Society has continued, particularly in the field of collecting and recording oral history.[258] The Association has organised among others a widely popular Shetland Oral History Workshop. Within this new political and public discourse, already since the 1950s Shetland dialect had began to be seen as important for children's development and this was in part a consequence of post-war reports on education in Scotland, which emphasised the need for close connection between local environment and education.[259] In the 1970s Radio Shetland initiated programmes in Shetland dialect. Already prior to the oil era *The New Shetlander* had given particular focus to publications in Shetland dialect, and opportunities to write in dialect were further enhanced when in the early 1980s a new magazine, *Shetland Life*, also containing local writing, appeared.[260]

Before the 1990s, teachers in Shetland – as throughout Scotland – had considerable freedom to determine lesson content, as there were no national guidelines; and therefore those with an enthusiasm for local varieties and literature were able to dedicate considerable amounts of time to them.[261] The oil era saw an increase in attention being given to local culture. Shetland speakers have been invited to read stories and poems in

[258] Sinclair, 'Shetland Folk Society', p. 49.

[259] J. Graham, *The Shetland dictionary* (Lerwick, 1999), p. XVII.

[260] Hunter, 'Regenerations', p. 10.

[261] J. McPake and J. Arthur, 'Scots in Contemporary Social and Educational Context' *Language, Culture and curriculum*, vol. 19 (2) (2006), p. 163.

Shetlandic, and children have been encouraged in creative writing. In secondary school, Shetland speakers have participated in reading and conversation, and similarly to elsewhere in Scotland children have been offered the possibility to submit material in dialect for assessment. Scottish schools have used an anthology of writing in Scots from all parts of Scotland, also accompanied by a set of suggested teaching activities, and material in Shetland dialect contributed to the national project.[262]

At the same time, however, under the sponsorship of the Shetland Islands Council Education Department and in response to national developments in the mid-90s Shetland schools received local Dialect Packs as a consequence of an ambitious local project. These packs consisted of sizeable anthologies of work in Shetland dialect in all genres. Each of them was accompanied by a selection of taped material and these were provided by the Education Department to all Shetland schools in 1996.[263] Bearing in mind the relatively small size of Shetland, the Education Department of the local authority has been active in recent years in employment of persons working specifically on Shetland dialect and its place in local society and securing sponsorship for school initiatives, such as a system of organised visits by dialect speakers to schools.

To summarise, the present chapter pointed to two major conclusions: the growing importance of language history and Shetland dialect towards the end of the twentieth century and the emergence of institutions involved in cultural production, which preceded the oil era (1970-present). In the next chapter the focus of analysis moves on to the oil era and connections between political and cultural nationalism.

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[262] R. Sim, 'Dialect in Shetland schools. Recent strategies and future provision', *Dialect. Two days conference & public debate on the developments of the Shetland dialect* (Lerwick, 2004), p. 23. See also A. Gear, 'A brighter forecast', *The New Shetlander* (198) (1996), p. 27.

[263] Sim, 'Dialect in Shetland schools', p. 23.

IV. Separatism or protection?

In the 1970s the desire for constitutional change became an important element of consciousness in both national and regional contexts. The strengthening of Scottish nationalism, in the sense of a movement for devolution and independence, and the strengthening of Shetland consciousness were parallel events. The focus of this chapter is on the change in local discourses in the 1990s. Devolution debates in the 1990s suggested the emergence of new attitudes among the Shetlanders, which appeared in political terms "more Scottish than before". Nevertheless, in order to explore the point of change it is necessary to consider the economic and social changes brought by oil-related developments and connections between political and cultural nationalism. The chapter is based on examination of local printed and manuscript sources and scholarly literature. The last section explores possible connections between political and cultural nationalism also through individual responses, collected by fieldwork.

Economic transformation

In purely economic terms, developments in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a combination of periods of famine and poverty and periods of progress and transformation. By 1939 Shetland had become "a quiet and virtually forgotten backwater in the United Kingdom".[264] The islands relied too heavily on the

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[264] S.B. Donald, 'Economic Changes since 1946', in D. Withrington (ed.), *Shetland and the outside world 1469-1969.* (Oxford, 1983), p. 199. On the basis of its content Donalds' article appears to be a retrospective account written after the oil boom had brought "good times". In reality, however, the collection including Donald's article consisted of papers, delivered in 1969 at the Shetland Historical Congress. The aim of the Congress had been to commemorate the five hundred years'

herring fishing as the foundation of their economy. The standard of living "was a humbling and shaming reflection on mid-twentieth century Britain."[265] The inter-war period of both Shetland and Scotland was characterised by deep economic depression.

At a local level, economic difficulties produced continuous tension within the island populations – crofters fought crofters and rivalry, disputes and disagreements among the locals were common.[266] In 1939 the Second World War broke out and Shetland once again came to be seen as nationally important. When the war was declared Shetland was rediscovered because of the strategic importance of the islands. The government spent money on the infrastructure and the standard of living rose dramatically. When the war was over, however, national interest in Shetland diminished and it turned out that Shetland had been only a temporarily valuable base.

The number of unemployed Shetlanders was high and the only assets in the economy were knitwear and tweed industry in addition to the seasonal herring industry. There no longer existed a balanced economy in Shetland to which the islanders could return.[267] The problem of economic adjusting after wartime was by no means unique to the islands. Nevertheless, unemployment was high and responsibility for the disastrous state of affairs rested with both the local and central authorities. More general awareness of the problems rose during the period 1951-58, when critical notes on the general apathy appeared in the local press. More people emigrated from Shetland in the years between 1951 and 1961 than in the previous twenty years. 1958 witnessed some change for the better with the formation of the Shetland

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anniversary of the pledging of the isles to Scotland. See Withrington's introduction in D. Withrington (ed.), *Shetland and the outside world 1469-1969* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 1-7.

[265] Donald, 'Economic Changes since 1946', p. 199.

[266] Renwanz, *From crofters to Shetlanders*, p. 225.

[267] Donald, 'Economic Changes since 1946', p. 200.

Development Council – a body specifically charged with the responsiblility for analysing Shetland' position and potential.[268]

In 1965 the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB) was formed and Shetland's economic situation looked relatively bright as a result of its formation.[269] Shetland in 1969 appeared to be a community confident about its own future, instanced "by the evident willingness to put faith and money into the future of the community."[270] Things had changed dramatically in comparison to the situation twenty years earlier: the community was now prepared to back individuals and individual projects with own resources and investment from outside had also become possible.[271]

According to Donald, while this period was relatively prosperous by earlier Shetland standards, at the same time there were increasing concerns as to how Shetlanders can keep their administration in their own hands. Several sources confirm Donald's claim that Shetland in the 1960s was comparatively prosperous in comparison to earlier decades. By the end of the 1960 Shetland economy had almost full employment and the isles were able to retain and even encourage return-migration to the isles.[272] Shetland began to import labour from the Scottish mainland to fill positions in fish factories and on crofts. This was reflected also in the more stable population figures, 17, 812 in 1961

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[268] Donald, 'Economic Changes since 1946', p. 203.

[269] It is interesting in itself that Shetland was included as part of the administrative remit of HIDB. As remarked in the introduction, the concept of Highlands and Islands was invented in the late nineteenth century to represent the area to which the Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act of 1886 was applied. At the same time, the place of the Northern Isles in the imagination of the Scottish public has been influenced by its place in the Scottish administrative framework.

[270] Donald, 'Economic Changes since 1946', p. 213.

[271] Donald, 'Economic Changes since 1946', p. 213.

[272] B.A. Black, 'The Impact of External Shocks Upon a Peripheral Economy: War and Oil in Twentieth Century Shetland' (University of Glasgow Ph.D. Thesis, 1995), p. 207.

and 17, 327 in 1971.[273] Lerwick continued to be important to Shetland, acting as an administration, distribution and service centre. Unlike the inter-war years, between 1951 and 1971 the population of Lerwick grew by 589, reaching a total of 6, 127.[274] Residents of Lerwick represented somewhat more than one in three of those living in Shetland in 1971. Improved employment opportunities permitted people to stay in rural areas and improvements in roads and growing numbers of private cars meant that Lerwick was increasingly accessible.[275]

Telephone networks, which had replaced telegraphs after the Second World War, enabled closer contacts with the outside world, as did the advent of television in 1964. As a result, even the most remote rural locations were exposed to, and connected with, national and international forums. On the other hand, from the perspective of the 1980s and the 1990s, Shetland of the 1960s was described as very different: there was no oil industry and the local population could trace its ancestry throughout the generations.[276]

The event that changed Shetland in the 1970s was the discovery of oil. When the North Sea was first being explored for oil, Shetland reacted quickly to the new possibilities and the islands avoided amalgamation into a wider Highland and Islands authority. The Zetland County Council Act was passed by parliament in 1974, handing over to the local council full control over all developments around the isles, and also enabling the development of substantial oil funds over the following years.[277] The Reserve Fund was for a time the main repository of Shetland

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[273] Black, 'The Impact of External Shocks Upon a Peripheral Economy', p. 207.

[274] Black, 'The Impact of External Shocks Upon a Peripheral Economy', p. 208.

[275] The number of cars in Shetland rose from 1,146 in 1938 to 4,741 by 1966, of which 2,540 were private cars. See Black, 'The Impact of External Shocks Upon a Peripheral Economy', p. 208.

[276] See for example the recollections of Sandy Cluness as the Chairman of Shetland Council of Social Service in S. Cluness, 'A man who loved islands', *The New Shetlander* (205) (1998), p. 11. On North Sea Oil and the local community see also S. Cluness, 'North Sea Oil', *The New Shetlander* (99) (1972), p. 6-8 & p. 32.

[277] Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', pp. 12-13.

funds for the future. The Charitable Trust was created and launched in April 1978 with powers to invest in, or run virtually every aspect of Shetland's life and economy.[278] As the previous chapter noted, the oil wealth advanced the development of heritage work, which was initiated in the previous period.

Oil-related income (the creation of the Charitable Trust and various subsidiary trusts) enabled wide financial and institutional support for Shetland dialect, traditional music, folklore, handicraft, archaeological and history projects.[279] The new multimillion Shetland Museum and Archives is also a product of the Charitable Trust. Tom Simchak, who has recently researched the impact of oil on Shetland has noted that recent history of oil development in other areas has provided plenty of examples of the disruption that can result from petroleum development activities. In contrast, in Shetland, the likely distruptions of oil were identified early on.[280] It was also very soon realised that Shetland culture "needs protection", as put by a local author:

> There is a new interest in every aspect of life in Shetland – a new awareness of the environment, and an admiration for the history of the islands and their traditions...There is no room for complacency, since oil related developments could destroy much of the essential charm of these islands. On the other hand, oil could produce the jolt necessary to make us realise

[278] Editorial, 'The oil fund saga', *The New Shetlander* (130) (1979), pp. 5-6; *Shetland in Statistics* (Lerwick, 2005).

[279] See e.g. T. Simchak, 'Oil and Identity', *Identity Essays Shetland* (2009), pp. 5-9; T. Simchak, 'Shetland's oil, culture and identity', *Shetland Life* (July 2007), pp. 30-31. See also T. Simchak 'Changing cultures and identities in Shetland's oil era' (Oxford University M.Litt. Thesis, 2008). For a survey of oil-related change and current economic picture see N. Henderson, 'Place Branding: Linking the Shetland Brand to a Marketing Strategy for Shetland Tourism' (Robert Gordon University Thesis, 2005). Projects included among others the establishment of Shetland Archives in 1976. The growth of heritage was largely a feature of the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, half of Scotland's 400 museums have been opened since the late 1970s. See Morris, McCrone and Kiely, 'The heritage consumers', p. 73.

[280] Simchak, 'Oil and Identity', p. 6.

> the importance of our heritage and how much there is that is worth saving.[281]

The above view was shared by many but few Shetlanders in the 1970s felt that their concern with culture was triggered by the development of North Sea Oil.[282] In contrast with the revival of Shetland's Norse past in the late nineteenth century, this time the emphasis on Shetland culture and consciousness was conceived as a defensive project.[283] While it was not immediately obvious that oil developments could enhance the preserving or reviving a particular culture, the Shetland Island Council began a program of publicity that emphasised Shetland's distinctiveness. This was particularly clearly expressed in conjunction with devolution debates in the 1970s.[284]

The exploration phase for oil and gas offshore Shetland began in 1970 and in 1975 the construction work on the Sullom Voe Oil Terminal started. The terminal soon became the largest in Europe, and although production has decreased since that time, the terminal is expected to last until at least 2020. After decades of decline population rose by 35 % between 1971 and 1981 as a direct result of oil related developments. It had fallen to nearly 17,000 in the mid 1960s.[285] Various activities of the local council and major investments in local infrastructure were directed towards stemming and even reversing rural depopulation and these led to successful results.[286] Employment in the Islands became much

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[281] J. Nicolson, *Traditional Life in Shetland* (London, 1978), p. 194.

[282] Renwanz, 'From crofters to Shetlanders', p. 250.

[283] Abrams, *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World*, p. 11.

[284] Renwanz, 'From crofters to Shetlanders', p. 269.

[285] *Shetland in Statistics* (Lerwick, 2005), p. 10.

[286] Shetland's economic and demographic resurgence distinguished the isles from other parts of Scotland where economic and demographic decline (the collapse of traditional heavy industries and the crisis of community) was a more common theme. The Scottish east coast had witnessed a gradual decline in the fishing industry. Remoter areas in the Highlands and the Western Isles had been affected by migration to urban centres and in the south-west there were problems affecting

more varied and greater numbers of Shetlanders have been employed for example as civil servants and in a variety of new fields.[287]

In the early 1980s Shetland's population fell as a consequence of migration after the end of oil construction activity. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s the population level was relatively stable, and although there was a significant decrease in the 2001 Census figures, the 2004 mid-year estimates showed a slight reverse in trend, as table 1 demonstrates. The population has continued to be relatively stable during the current decade and unemployment in Shetland has been low, particularly during recent years (table 2).

Table 1: Shetland's population 1971-2004.

Year	1971	1981	1991	2004
Total	17325	22766	22522	21940

Source: Shetland Island Council (2005, 10)

Table 2: Unemployment in the isles 1971-2004.

Year	1971	1981	1991	1996	2004
Shetland %	3,8	5,3	3,6	3,8	1,8

Source: Shetland Island Council (2005, 14)

An economic survey conducted in 1998 calculated the overall

farming. See Abrams, *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World*, p. 10.

[287] See J.R. Coull, *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland: The County of Shetland*, (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 214.

value of the Shetland economy to be £ 761, 261, 000. Table 3 below shows the key sectors of the Shetland Economy:

Table 3: Value of Key Sectors of the Shetland Economy 1996-2006 (£ M).

Sector	1996	2001	2003	2006
Oil production operations	50,4	116,1	57,7	70
Combined fisheries output	97,8	223,9	243,1	225,7
Agriculture	14,3	12,4	13,1	16,7
Knitwear	4	2,5	2,5	3
Tourism	11,3	12,75	12,6	12
Shetland Islands Council	111,1	150,5	127	184,9
Total	288,9	518,1	456	512,3

Source: Shetland Island Council (2007, 12)

Within Shetland, people started moving from the outer isles to the town of Lerwick or elsewhere on the main island. An estimated 25-30% of the people living in the Northern Isles in 2001 were newcomers, about half of them from England. In 1971 approximately 87% of islanders had been born locally, while 8% had been born in mainland Scotland and 2% in England.[288] New facilities were constructed, including a great number of leisure centres serving small areas, care and health centres, schools and community halls and Shetlanders began to enjoy a high standard

[288] The above estimation of incomers is based on Scottish Census figures for 2001 and Van Leyden, *Prosodic Characteristics of Orkney and Shetland Dialects*, p. 18 (footnote). On Lerwick see J.W. Irvine, *Lerwick: the Birth and Growth of an Island Town* (Lerwick, 1985).

of living. While the amount of resources devoted to local culture were growing, as the previous chapter revealed, yet on the other hand, the process of promoting a distinct culture was partly a continuation of earlier trends.[289] I shall return to issues of culture after considering the political dimension.

The political dimension

The character of pro-devolution rhetoric and related changes in discourses will be examined in later sections. But now it is necessary to take a brief look at the beginning of interest in constitutional change and give some consideration to oil-related change. Growing interest in constitutional change for Shetland had emerged already in the 1960s.[290] Shetlanders had enjoyed a certain degree of own administration since the late nineteenth century; by means of the Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1889 a county council was set up in the islands and educational authority established in each county in 1918. The notion that Shetland might become again Scandinavian did not attract much support in the late nineteenth century. As noted in chapter 3, during the 1880s a so-called *Udal League* flourished momentarily. While not interested in independence for Shetland, Shetlanders became increasingly involved in a search for their historical roots.[291]

Unlike Shetland and Orkney, the Western Isles were not given a council of their own in 1889, but were divided between two mainland counties.[292] The tendency to centralise in Shetland was increased by the Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1929. As the

[289] For example, Up-Helly-Aa had become during the oil era more extravagant than ever, yet the festival had spread to rural areas much before the arrival of the oil industry and it had grown in the 1960s.
[290] T.M.Y. Manson 'The urge for autonomy', in R. Grønneberg (ed.), *Island Futures. Scottish Devolution and Shetland's Constitutional Alternatives* (Sandwick, 1978), p. 13.
[291] Hunter, *Last of the Free*, p. 334.
[292] Manson, 'The urge for autonomy', p. 13.

islands were remote from the British mainland, most events of local importance took place within Shetland's boundaries. Along with the new growth of the economy in the 1960s Shetland witnessed a gradually increasing political awareness, especially in terms of the relationship between Shetland and the rest of Britain.[293] Islanders could point to various existing or proposed amalgamations to the Highlands and Islands – the fire authority, the police, the Development Board, and the most inappropriate, the merging of the water authorities.[294] The later 1960s saw the publication of the Wheatley Report on local government reform, which recommended that Orkney and Shetland should be submerged into a Highland Region.[295] This could have meant the end of separate Shetland administration and was resisted both by the Council and in local public demonstrations.

The most crucial problem was now whether and how the needs of Shetland communities could ever be understood by central government. Persons believed to have limited knowledge or understanding of the Shetland situation took decisions affecting every aspect of islands' economic and social life. These decisions in turn were seen as a threat to Shetland and Shetland's future – the islands were poorly known or understood by the central authorities and islanders themselves had restricted possibilities to influence the decision process. The main threat to Shetland in the late 60s was Shetland being "totally swallowed up", silenced and administered from a great distance with no say over its own affairs.[296]

In the 1960s Shetland was readily looking at examples of island communities, which had been successful in receiving autonomous status. The preoccupation with Scandinavia had a long history in

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[293] Manson, 'The urge for autonomy', p. 14.

[294] H.D. Smith, 'The Making of modern Shetland – Part 10', *The New Shetlander* (122) (1977), p. 9.

[295] Smith, 'The Making of modern Shetland – Part 10', p. 9; Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', pp. 9-11.

[296] Donald, 'Economic Changes since 1946', p. 214.

Shetland, and this had been particularly visible as interest in things Norwegian, but in the field of local government inspiration was coming from the Faeroe Islands. The Faeroes were and remained for a long time the most popular comparison; seen as a model Shetland may wish to follow.[297]

In 1962 the Zetland County Council (which preceded the present Shetland Islands Council) sent a delegation to the Faeroes and issued a report on practices in which the Faeroes could work as a model for Shetland. As common features were named Viking ancestry (only partial in the case of Shetland), dependency on fishing and similarities in relation to the Danish Crown and Parliament (until the end of World War II) as Shetland to the British.[298] As important differences emerged the following: even greater geographical remoteness in the case of the Faeroes; the Faeroese population was double Shetland's at that time (the isles had population of more than 40,000 inhabitants); the absence of oil discoveries in Faeroese waters and finally the question of language. For the Faeroese the national movement had begun as a struggle for their language. It was the Faeroese language that made the island population different from the Danes.

Another difference was also seen as essential: the development of political parties in the Faeroes, which played a major role in the attainment of the Home Rule Act in 1948 and the existence of a political consciousness as a result of long periods of political battles and divisions. Similar political consciousness did not exist in Shetland.[299] The first signs of such awakening only appeared in the late 1970s as the devolution arguments gathered momentum in the UK. Even so, Shetlanders saw the model of Faeroe as a useful comparison and, although the recommendations of the report of the 1960s were never applied to practice, Shetlanders' interest in special status only strengthened in the years to come.[300]

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[297] *The Shetland Report: A constitutional study* (Edinburgh, 1978), p. 150.

[298] *The Shetland Report*, p. 150.

[299] Smith, 'The Making of modern Shetland – Part 10', p. 10.

[300] Massie, 'A distinctive culture?', p. 27.

The second major extension of Council's influence was connected to oil and the Zetland County Council Act of 1974 was promoted by the Council to control oil developments for the benefit of the Shetland community. Simultaneously, in Scotland the nationalist movement was growing in strength in the 1970s and although there were many reasons for this, the discovery of oil was one of the most significant. Oil gave new strength to Scottish nationalism as Scotland found itself possessing an economic resource capable to compensate for the disadvantage from being distant from international markets.[301] The oil industry was seen as an economic saviour and it was a main feature of the SNP's electoral campaign: the slogans 'It's Scotland's Oil' and 'Rich Scots or Poor Britons?' were effectively used.[302]

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, while the Scottish nationalists were saying it is "our oil" and using this as an argument in favour of Scottish independence, Shetlanders felt that it was Shetland's and not Scotland's. A new question was raised in the devolution debate: if Scotland does not need England, does Shetland need Scotland?[303] As one of the councillors remarked, few members of the Shetland Island Council accepted that "what was good for Scotland as a whole was good for Shetland."[304] If North Sea oil could be regarded as Scottish rather than British, because of its proximity to the Scottish coast, then two thirds of it, lying in Shetland waters, could be considered as belonging to Shetland.

To commentators in the 1970s Shetland appeared to enter a new phase of politics. When Shetland decided to organise herself by obtaining special powers from Westminster, during meetings in England it was assumed that Shetland wanted to become part of England, that Shetlanders were laying claim to the whole oil wealth, and that the inhabitants were "Scandinavians with no

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[301] R. Mitchison, *A history of Scotland* (London and New York, 1982), p. 418.

[302] Finlay, *Modern Scotland 1914-2000*, p. 329.

[303] Editorial, 'Does Shetland need Scotland?', *The New Shetlander* (116) (1976), p. 5.

[304] Editorial, 'Does Shetland need Scotland?', p. 5.

cultural links with Scotland at all."[305] Furthermore, it was assumed that the SNP wished to strip Shetland of the oil rights and that without 'Shetland's oil' there could not be an economic case for Scottish self-rule.

These arguments found their place in historical writing. For example, in her history of Scotland, Rosalind Mitchison remarks that misgovernment of various kinds by the Scots over several centuries had given them a bad name in Shetland. Shetlanders simply saw no reason to co-operate in the movement for a more direct association "with their oppressors in Scotland."[306] Fieldwork researchers also considered Shetland in terms of entering a new phase of politics. One example can be found in the fieldwork analysis of the Swedish linguist Gunnel Melchers, who researched language attitudes in Shetland during the spring of 1983. On the strength of separatist feelings in the early 80s, Melchers has concluded that these feelings were "no doubt more pronounced in Shetland than in any other part of Britain (possibly excluding Wales) and [are] expressed politically in the militant Shetland Movement."[307]

The fieldwork study of Marsha Renwanz, carried out in the late 1970s, also reported growing divisions between ethnic and new Shetlanders, as well as dislike for all things Scottish. Attitudes in the isles, Renwanz argues, had evolved from being centred on distinct culture to being centred on ethnic separatism.[308] Attitudes towards oil workers from the south reflected, according to Renwanz, a new change in local life and change in focus of protest. By comparing the expressions of protest in the late

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[305] N. Ascherson, 'Up the down escalator', in R. Grønneberg (ed.), *Island Futures. Scottish Devolution and Shetland's Constitutional Alternatives* (Sandwick, 1978), p. 78.

[306] Mitchison, *A history of Scotland*, p. 418. For her views on Scottish nationalism see R. Mitchison, 'Nineteenth Century Scottish Nationalism: The Cultural Background', in R. Mitchison (ed.), *The Roots of Nationalism: Studies in Northern Europe* (Edinburgh, 1980), pp. 131-142.

[307] See Melchers, 'Language attitudes in Shetland', p. 89. It is somewhat puzzling that Melchers uses the word 'militant' in this connection.

[308] Renwanz, *From crofters to Shetlanders*, pp. 334-336.

nineteenth century, when crofters fought landlords; the inter-war period and war years, when crofters fought other crofters, and ongoing developments she remarks that in the late 1970s there were a number of new concerns.

These were a consequence of the oil industry and the presence of oil workers. The Shetland way of life became central for representations of Shetland culture and there was a political interest in propagating distinctive culture. Renwanz argued that because the language of the ideology of 'the good of Shetland' prevented Shetlanders from seeing their local government body as a business, they could not translate their grumbles into political action.[309] Popular beliefs were shared with the elites, but, on the other hand, the ideology of a unique Shetland way of life was working for the benefit of oil companies. It was also possible to ignore the consequences of oil development in other parts of Scotland. As recalled by Renwanz, the Shetland Island Council (SIC) held a pro-Shetland stance, which encouraged reactions against 'soothmoothers'.[310]

On the other hand, SIC was also responsible for their employment and for providing them with jobs and houses. The oil boom had first started with crime looming large. Natives primarily blamed the construction workers for the crime wave and media presentations and publications of SIC had portrayed the absence of crime as a feature of the pre-oil era. The notion of Shetlanders as rugged individuals was in her view also linked to the rise of North Sea oil ethnicity.[311] At the turn at the century Shetlanders had relied upon their Norse heritage to differentiate

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[309] Renwanz, *From crofters to Shetlanders*, p. 268.

[310] The word 'Soothmoother' has usually referred to 'someone who has entered through the Sooth Mooth' of Lerwick Habour, while most now see it as referring to somebody who does not talk Shetland dialect, or who has recently moved to the isles. Opinions are divided on whether this term is neutral or negative. It is seen as racist by some while harmless by others. See C. Robertson, 'Shetlink.com', *Shetland Life* (March 2008), p. 7.

[311] Renwanz, *From crofters to Shetlanders*, p. 249.

themselves from other groups within Britain and now there was again interest in Norse language, law, festivals and seafaring practices. Some locals called Up-Helly-Aa the national anthem of Shetland. There was a renaissance in studying Viking influences on Shetlanders' heritage and informants cited studies published on this subject. SIC councillors spoke Shetland dialect at public meetings on devolution. Discussions of Shetland life also revolved around nostalgia for crofting. But Shetlanders also came to define themselves increasingly in contrast to the Scots. Scots, living in Shetland, in turn, became more inflexible, questioning Shetlanders' claim to uniqueness, saying that Shetlanders had inherited a great deal of Scottish culture.[312]

The difference from mainland Scotland became a key element of the official pro-Shetland rhetoric and popular beliefs were shared with the elites. Nevertheless, while in the beginning of the oil era commentators and fieldwork researchers such as Melchers and Renwanz tended to connect commitment to distinct culture and political consciousness, two different strands of thought about the issue of Island government emerged: the first was the 'Northern Isles separatism' interpretation, while the other line of thought has stressed the institutional (protection of the already existing local government) rather than political aspects.[313] Both fieldwork studies quoted above were carried out in the beginning of the oil era when further developments were yet unknown. It is from this perspective that it is valuable to reconsider the rise of separatist feelings and the subsequent evolution of political arguments.

The autonomist movement

The initial phase of oil-related developments created an atmosphere of perceived threat to local communities and local

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[312] Renwanz, *From crofters to Shetlanders*, p. 290.

[313] Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', p. 8.

culture and Shetlanders attributed many of the new problems (such as rise in crime) to the rising numbers of incomers from the mainland. One had to hope that "Shetland culture is virile enough to absorb newcomers and maintain its own ways in face of imminent North Sea oil." [314] In an issue of *The New Shetlander* in 1972 a writer with the pseudonym of 'Northmoother' asked the rhetorical question: "History – have we got any?" Shetland's native culture, the author claimed, would be threatened, unless Shetlanders made a conscious effort to practise as well as preserve:

> Our native culture will be in grave danger, unless Shetlanders make a conscious effort to practise as well as preserve, what we have left after being brainwashed by our educational system. I even find myself using the word "culture" with some embarrassment, such is the aftermath of the aforesaid brainwashing. Because of it I can foresee even some Shetland lips curl into a sneer when Shetlandic culture is mentioned. I had a verbal passage of arms with just such a lip curler the other day. He emphatically and blasphemously denied that Shetlanders ever had anything that could be described as a culture. Poor fellow his arguments were logical but his terms were poorly defined and would have left England as well as Shetland bereft and cultureless. To him culture was synonymous with bag pipes and kilts. [315]

The well-known scholar of the isles, Barbara Crawford, had just given a lecture, a few weeks earlier, to the Shetland Archaeological and Natural History Society on Shetland's medieval history. Highlighting the theme of Crawford's lecture, the author expressed his enthusiasm about Shetland's proud medieval history and markedly one which confirmed the old, handed down traditions, rather than Scotticised versions on which Shetlanders

[314] 'Da Wadder Eye', *The New Shetlander* (102) (1972), p. 29.

[315] 'Da Wadder Eye', *The New Shetlander* (100) (1972), p. 35.

had been brought up.[316] The theme of the lecture concerned the transfer of the isles over to Scotland. It had demonstrated that Shetland was held directly under the Norwegian government and was not part of the Earldom of Orkney and for part of this time Shetland and the Faeroe islands were administrated or, taxed as one province and shared leading officials. A Shetlander acted as ambassador for the Norwegian King at the English court and for a long time after the transferral to Scotland Norwegian influence was still dominant in Shetland and some taxes were still handed to Norway.

The author regreted that Shetland pupils have been brought up on a diet of Scottish culture and history while at the same time they were ignorant of the fact that their home islands had an interesting and honourable past. During this past Shetland by no means played an insignificant part in the history of Northern Europe. By emphasising Shetland's difference from Scotland and Scottish culture, this local commentator claimed that Shetlanders needed a more accurate history of Shetland, by which young Shetlanders could orientate themselves.[317]

In many respects the arguments of this commentator mirror national thinking in general – as other myth systems, the narratives of Shetland's difference have tended to exclude as much as include. Similarly to Lawrence and others, who in the nineteenth century believed Shetlanders to be less Celtic and more Teutonic than the Scots, the views of this commentator seem to fall into the mythology of the Celtic Romantic movement and based on a stereotype of Scottish identity and Scottish culture.

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[316] By commenting on the use of "Scotticised" versions of Shetland history in education this commentator suggests a focus on Shetland's Norse history at the expense of Scottish history. The issue of resistance to the perceived hegemonic power becomes particularly apparent in this article. For Crawford's work on Shetland see e.g. B. Crawford (ed.), *Essays in Shetland History* (Lerwick, 1984); B. Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester, 1987); B. Crawford (ed.), *Scandinavian Settlement in Northern Britain* (Leicester, 1995).

[317] 'Da Wadder Eye', *The New Shetlander* (100) (1972), p. 35.

With regard to this commentator, it is also valuable to note that the claim by Denmark-Norway was given up in the 1640s by Christian IV in exchange with his nephew (the half-Dane, half-Scot) Charles I for the city of Newcastle in pawn.[318] The national press and Shetland journalists shared common arguments, thereby outside groups and outside scholars also contributed to strengthening perceptions of cultural separateness. By that time it had become common to back the case for autonomy by repeted references to Scandinavia,[319] but these discourses were reproduced also in scholarly literature. For example, Melchers wrote that:

> Shetland is of course felt to be a part of Britain and a part of Scotland. Yet only a few hundred years ago, it was part of Norway-Denmark, and can now be described as an amalgamation of two cultures, but uniquely distant from both.[320]

As the above quote shows, Melchers described the pledging of Shetland as "only" a few hundred years ago and considered Shetland culture to be an amalgam of Norwegian and Scottish/ British cultures. Here one can see particularly clearly that it was language that was at the core of her definitions of cultures. Undoubtedly, such an approach could be questioned; one cannot talk about "pure" Norwegian or "pure" Scottish/ British cultures; even within Scottish culture there are many cultures and the British context multiplies this still further. But the appeal of such an approach can be found not only in Melchers' considerations of language as the fundamental basis of culture, but also in the prevailing discourses of the 1980s. The question of difference was described as an old concept, for instance:

> The Shetlanders have always felt separate from Scotland,

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[318] See S. Murdoch, 'Newcastle in Pawn', *Northern Review*, vol. 9 & 10 (2001), pp. 18-24.

[319] Hunter, *Last of the Free*, p. 364; Smith, *The Making of Modern Shetland*, p. 74.

[320] Melchers, 'Language attitudes in Shetland', p. 89.

> mindful of their mixed Norse heritage, fond of telling you that their nearest railhead is Bergen in Norway, and that their fishermen prefer Norwegian forecasts to the BBC variety. What is new is the political intensity – and the powerful political leverage that oil has suddenly thrust into their hands.[321]

Indeed, writings in the press concerning the preservation and encouragement of Shetland culture had existed long before the oil era. None of the arguments and concerns about history and culture were new, but the new situation made them appear political. With every *Shetland Times* and *New Shetlander* island-patriotic rhetoric gained vigour – the notions of threats, ravages and "alien ways of life" became for a while common vocabulary.[322] For the majority of Shetland's population, the main question was: what would happen when the number of people living in Shetland rises dramatically, and what will be different then? It was assumed that a large influx of "outlanders" would make it more difficult for Shetlanders to be in charge of local affairs.[323]

In the beginning of the oil era, on a social level, there was less mobility in the isles than in most British places, and there was a larger home-born population. Therefore, for people born and brought up in Shetland, family ties and local friendships and acquaintances were very important. Over the years, due to isolation, it was argued that Shetland had developed and maintained "things specifically Shetland".[324] It was nonetheless feared that oil-related developments could destroy Shetland's traditions and perceived way of life. The islands' prosperity had grown already from the mid-1960s and there had been resurgence in traditional industries such as fishing, knitwear and crofting. A

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[321] Magnusson, M., 'Foreword', in R. Grønneberg (ed.), *Island Futures. Scottish Devolution and Shetland's Constitutional Alternatives* (Sandwick, 1978), p. 5.

[322] J. Button, 'How to survive when the oil men come', *The New Shetlander* (107) (1974), p. 28.

[323] See e.g. 'Da Wadder Eye', *The New Shetlander* (102) (1972), p. 29.

[324] A. Bradley, 'Oil comes of age in Shetland', *The New Shetlander* (191) (1995), p. 34.

number of concerns arose among the Shetlanders in the 1970s, such as the effect of high salaries and temporary employment on the local economy.

With the arrival of oil the existing industries could not match the wages paid by the oil industry. There were also environmental concerns. Already before the emergence of the Shetland group, in 1977, transformed into the Shetland Movement as a party in 1979 there had been radical suggestions such as a Shetland Socialist Movement proposed by Shetland journalist Dr Jonathan Wills.[325] This new movement, described on the pages of the *New Shetlander* would have had the following main programme and for the following reasons:

> Home Rule: Maximum Self-Government within the UK
> Without self-government any move towards socialism within Shetland will be thwarted by the large companies and corporations that increasingly control our economy from outside.
>
> Socialism: Maximum Public Ownership of Economic Resources of Shetland
> Small private businesses should be encouraged as long as control remains within Shetland, and as long as effective steps are taken to give workers their rightful share in the management and proceeds of their labour.[326]
>
> Self Reliance: Maximum Self Reliance in Basic Food Stuffs and Materials
> A great deal of Shetland's food, clothing and such commodities as soap could be produced locally. Shetland is far more dependent than necessary on imported goods. This reduces

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[325] See J. Wills, 'Where to now, comrades?', *The New Shetlander* (111) (1975), pp. 21-24; J. Wills 'Socialism in one county', *The New Shetlander* (113) (1975), pp. 23-24.

[326] John McGrath's play 'The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil' (1974), which had as its theme the oil boom and questioned the motives of the oil industry attracted considerable attention in the Highlands and Islands and apparently was well-received in Shetland. See Hunter, *Last of the Free*, p. 362.

> potential employment in Shetland and makes the economy highly vulnerable to unconnected outside events.
>
> The Right to Regulate Imports and Exports:
> Without this an autonomous Shetland will remain dependent and capitalist, a victim of neo-colonialism.[327]

The author was immediately criticized for such radical suggestions and the harshest critics of all were among his Labour Party colleagues.[328] The problem did not lie in the political theory neither in the particular case, but in the means for achieving the end. Wills suggested home rule as a way of achieving a Socialist Shetland.[329] Labour colleagues disapproved of the idea of socialism in one county, seeing this as being against the principles of the unionist/internationalist Labour movement as a whole. A Shetland movement did emerge, only clearly without the *socialist* label.

In 1977 a small Shetland group was established with the task to "get the people of Shetland to think about the future".[330] As a first step it was simply decided to call a public meeting, in order to ascertain whether or not Shetlanders at large are concerned about future developments. The meeting was held in February 1977, and over sixty people attended. The subjects of discussion included issues such as the different kinds of special status enjoyed by Faeroe, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Suggestions were made to attempt to seek some form of special status for Shetland and the meeting led to the formation of the Shetland Group, consisting of 14 members. From its very inception the organisation included supporters of all political parties.

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[327] Wills, 'Where to now, comrades?', p. 23.

[328] 'Da Wadder Eye. The Shetland Movement', *The New Shetlander* (146) (1983), p. 21.

[329] 'Da Wadder Eye. The Shetland Movement', *The New Shetlander* (146) (1983), p. 22. On Shetland, oil and the economy, see J. Wills, *A Place in the Sun: Shetland and Oil* (Edinburgh, 1991).

[330] J. W. Irvine, 'The Shetland Group', in R. Grønneberg (ed.), *Island Futures. Scottish Devolution and Shetland's Constitutional Alternatives* (Sandwick, 1978), p. 58.

One of its leaders of the Shetland group was James Irvine, author of several books on local history.[331] According to Irvine, their attitude to Shetland Island Council was formed on the basis of the Council's policy statement on devolution issued in November 1976.[332] This statement re-emphasised in conclusion Council's determination that Shetland should have special recognition and their belief that Shetland has a right to its own choice if Scotland seeks separation.[333]

While the Council and the Shetland Group had very similar visions, the Council's desire for special recognition for Shetland was nonetheless dependent on whether Scotland will seek separation or not. Instead, the Group's target was to achieve more say for the people of Shetland, regardless of whether central government were to be situated in Edinburgh or in London. In 1978, in a locally-organised poll with over 70% turnout, nine out of ten voters opted for a special commission to be appointed to consider the future constitutional status of Shetland.[334] This large number of votes was seen to express local dissatisfaction with the contemporary situation. The vast majority of the Shetlanders obviously felt that centralised government, either in London or in Edinburgh, was – in the views of the locals – not handling Shetland affairs in the long-term interests of Shetland.

The referendum result had left no doubt that it was through the recommendations of a government commission "based on evidence from the Shetland people and then presented to a U.K. government" that change could be accomplished.[335] In local contexts it was recognised that such a change would not be easy, and the idea of a commission was accepted by the then Scottish

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[331] These include, among others, J. W. Irvine, *Lerwick: The Birth and Growth of an Island Town* (Lerwick, 1985); J.W. Irvine, *Up-Helly-Aa: A Century of Festival* (Lerwick, 1982).

[332] Irvine, 'The Shetland Group', p. 58.

[333] Irvine, 'The Shetland Group', p. 58.

[334] 'Editorial, The Shetland Movement', *The New Shetlander* (125) (1978), p. 5.

[335] 'Editorial. The Shetland Movement', p. 5.

Secretary Bruce Millan only after much negotiating by the Island Council.[336] The only way ahead for the future was to create an organisation to express the considerations of the majority of the local people, and which would be able to mobilise public opinion, set up a policy and ensure its implementation. Dissatisfaction with the Shetland situation concerned issues such as fishing limits, freights, finance and structure of government.

Such aims demanded the launch of a Shetland movement as a political party. This came into existence out of the small Shetland group, but became a party, successfully gathering as many as 800 members.[337] The Shetland movement wrote letters to the Secretary of State and to others on matters such as oil pollution and on a Commission for Shetland. Letters appeared on several occasions in the *Scotsman* and in the local press, members appeared on TV programmes, national radio and Radio Shetland.[338] The movement was successful in attracting support for the idea of Shetland autonomy and perceived itself as a protector of Shetland interests.

The Movement was also pressing for a separate Parliament to be set up in the islands. One of the suggestions concerned an elected Shetland Assembly with responsibility for all existing local authority and health board functions, for local control of the fishing industry, and for local development of traditional and new industries. Yet the movement did not adopt a position for or against Scottish devolution and was mainly concerned with the protections of immediate Shetland interests.[339]

Personality and personal charm were central in movement's popularity – the fact that its members were respected local people

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[336] Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', p. 14.

[337] Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', p. 16. It is worthy of note that Macartney was a prominent SNP politician.

[338] *The Scotsman* is a Scottish national newspaper, published in Edinburgh.

[339] See Irvine, 'The Shetland Group', pp. 57-59. The aims of the movement are considered also in R. Goodlad, 'The Shetland Movement', *The New Shetlander* (130) (1979), pp. 10-12; J.W. Irvine, 'The movement replies', *The New Shetlander* (130) (1979), pp. 13-14.

played arguably a more important role than its ideological aims. Nevertheless, the movement achieved considerable success within the local Council. In 1982 Edward Thomason, leading member of the movement was elected a Vice-Convener of SIC.[340]

Some years earlier the Shetland Movement had published an outline of its aims and objectives. On its front cover there was a map of the North Atlantic with Shetland positioned right at its center.[341] In 1983 oil related developments were already seen as a gain in economic, cultural and social terms, an opportunity to capitalize on. An article in the *New Shetlander* of winter 1983 considered the Shetland Movement and the criticism towards it.[342] Whereas there were community members who supported the Movement there were also people in the community who opposed Shetlanders' assertions of political individuality. The author, supporter of Movement's ideas and defending its aims, wrote that the reactionary opposition to change is incomprehensible, because in fact change should have happened long ago. There was nothing wrong with Shetland "reaching out to its neighbours, eager to learn from them, but in the fact that we have failed to do so before now."[343]

For too long, in author's view, Shetland had been isolated, on the periphery of society, being remote. The author emphasised that Shetland's position out on the fringe of the UK, "ignored and often ill-treated by a far distant power", had always been the single most attractive reason for emigration.[344] The statement was perhaps an exaggeration, as it would have been difficult to argue

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[340] The political autobiography of Thomason was published in 1997. See E. Thomason, *Island Challenge* (Lerwick, 1997). Brian Smith considers the book a key document explaining the development of modern, liberal Shetland. See B. Smith, 'Island Challenge by Edward Thomason', *The New Shetlander* (202) (1997), pp. 35-36.

[341] 'Da Wadder Eye. The Shetland Movement', *The New Shetlander* (146) (1983), p. 20.

[342] For critical remarks see L. Williamson, 'Troubled Waters, part 4: The Shetland Movement', *The New Shetlander* (140) (1982), p. 16.

[343] 'Da Wadder Eye. The Shetland Movement ', p. 20.

[344] 'Da Wadder Eye. The Shetland Movement ', p. 20.

that Shetland had been treated any worse than several other places in Britain; undoubtedly, however, its perceived distance from the seat of power had long played a role. In order to defeat the opponents of the movement, the author suggested that it must attract more incomers. Because Shetland community is a mixed community of locals and newcomers the Movement had to represent the entire community. Furthermore, it needed to attract youth and enable young people to understand its nature.

The author also noted that criticism had been based on the belief that it was unity rather than separation, and fragmentation could mean strength. For those thinking along these lines, the Shetland movement's desire for some degree of autonomy, no matter how slight, was believed to represent a step backwards. Within the context of Shetland community its critics assumed that the Movement was 'insular', 'parochial' or 'xenophobic', simply because it was committed to devolution and decentralization of power.[345] Instead, its supporters on the other hand emphasised the right of self-determination, freedom and individuality, instead of the spread of inflexible, stiff policies, which ignored these basic liberties. The author of the article concluded that:

> Let us believe in a world of small, naturally defined states, living together in harmony, component parts of a whole world society, which *is* caring, which *is* fair, whether you call it 'socialist' or not. A vast political unit, built from small blocks, covering the whole world. There is no need to break political moulds, to fight wars. The people, wherever they live, must claim the power and the wealth which is theirs. They must claim these rights democratically. No government can represent them forever. And the process of change, the working towards such goals, begins right here, in our own community, while simultaneously other people in other places are fighting for the same changes, the same basic rights. It's called 'synchronicity'. When the time is ripe, ideas arise. There is nothing xenophobic or parochial about it. It's simply a matter of doing what has to be done, of setting

[345] 'Da Wadder Eye. The Shetland Movement ', p. 21.

> realistic goals, of tackling the problems of society on a scale which we can overcome.[346]

By 1993 the movement had six of the twenty-five seats on the Island Council, alongside sixteen Independents, and two Labour seats.[347] Ultimately, however, in order to achieve political change it was necessary to take political action and seek allies; as time went by it was believed more useful to seek to build island autonomy into the Scottish Home Rule movement.[348] In the 1990s – as later sections will show – the Movement's views on devolution were already different.

The emergence of the Shetland movement in Shetland has often been interpreted as a political reaction to oil, yet Shetlanders were already interested in constitutional change during the 1960s.[349] The examination of more recent developments also suggests that the growth of such a movement was mainly concerned with the protection of Shetland's interests. After all, it followed the battle over local government reform and the achievement of an all-purpose local authority. Oil had fuelled the political debate but at times also disguised other, non-oil issues. It was possible to see oil resources "as sparkling off radical, separatist ambitions", yet on the other hand it was equally reasonable to argue that the issue was mainly concerned with the powers already exercised under the Zetland County Council Act. These in turn were protected for a number of good reasons.[350]

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[346] 'Da Wadder Eye. The Shetland Movement ', p. 22.

[347] Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 176.

[348] Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', p. 8.

[349] See e.g. R. Grønneberg, *Island Governments: the experience of autonomous island groups in Northern Europe in relation to Shetland's political future* (Sandwick, 1976); R. Grønneberg (ed.), *Island Futures. Scottish Devolution and Shetland's Constitutional Alternatives* (Sandwick, 1978).

[350] Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', p. 8.

Pro-devolution discourses

When the idea of a Scottish parliament returned to the political agenda in the 1970s, there was a vigorous debate in Shetland.[351] Most Shetlanders were opposed to the idea of Scottish devolution and this was confirmed in a referendum in which Shetland's vote was the highest 'No' vote within Scotland, closely followed by neighbouring Orkney. In 1974, 73 % of the Shetlanders voted against staying in the European Economic Community.[352]

Five years later, in 1979 Shetlanders voted overwhelmingly 'No' in the devolution referendum. The percentage of voters rejecting the proposal (72 %) was much higher than that in Scotland itself. It has been later on acknowledged that Shetland's debate on Scottish devolution during the 1970s was somewhat paradoxical and self-contradictory.[353]

While Scottish devolution was unpopular and people in Shetland were largely opposed to it, at the same time many were arguing that Shetlanders should have more say over their own affairs. SIC played a very important role in this debate. They were also active in securing the Grimond amendment, including a proposal that a Royal Commission is being set up to investigate Shetland's constitutional position in case a Scottish Parliament is being re-established. The Nevis Research institute was paid to clarify in a report nine different possible constitutional statuses for Shetland, together with their implications.[354]

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[351] The idea of a Scottish parliament is often described as entering the political agenda in the 1970s. However, there was debate around a Scottish Parliament in the 1880s and 1890s.

[352] H. Smith, *Shetland Life and Trade 1550-1914*, p. 283.

[353] J. Goodlad, 'Reflections on Shetland and a Scottish Parliament', *The New Shetlander* (199) (1997), p. 23.

[354] *The Shetland report: a constitutional study;* T.M.Y. Manson 'The Nevis Report. What future for Shetland?', *The New Shetlander* (124) (1978), pp. 7-9; R. Grønneberg, 'Nevis and beyond', in R. Grønneberg (ed.), *Island Futures. Scottish Devolution and*

These options included: Status quo; the rest of Scotland devolved but not Shetland; Shetland in a devolved Scotland; Shetland as part of an independent Scotland; Shetland devolved separately from Scotland; Shetland as Part of a UK Federation; Shetland as a Condominium of England and Scotland; Shetland with Special Status; Shetland fully Independent. In terms of consequences of Scottish devolution for the preservation of distinct identity and culture in Shetland the report considered the question of "how far Shetland is part of Scotland – in its sympathies and culture, and in its 'affairs of state' – the political, administrative, legal, educational, etc., activities of modern government."[355]

On the one hand, it was pointed out that many Shetlanders felt somewhat detached from Scotland, and were distinctive in many aspects of their culture. On the other, Shetland was closely linked with Scotland for most of her 'affairs of state':

> Whether these links serve them well is another matter, and in the face of Scottish devolution, some people in Shetland have sought to break them, presumably because they fear the consequences of a decision-making process which is more Scottish than the present process. These people consider that the present control exercised by the UK Parliament over all Scottish decisions is the best guarantee of Shetland's interests, and that devolution would weaken, if not destroy, that control.[356]

The fact that many desired more influence for Shetland but were reluctant to see Scotland devolved was, nevertheless, contradictory. Shetlanders actually had to vote 'no' to Scottish constitutional change – the paradox was that in order to achieve autonomy for Shetland, Shetlanders had to be against devolution in Scotland.[357] As devolution was not achieved at that time,

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Shetland's Constitutional Alternatives (Sandwick, 1978), pp. 62-69.

[355] *The Shetland Report*, p. 96.

[356] *The Shetland Report*, p. 96.

[357] Goodlad, 'Reflections on Shetland and a Scottish Parliament', p. 23.

however, all other considerations were also forgotten as they became irrelevant. Twenty years later times had changed and there was much more support for devolution.

Several issues of *Shetland Times* published between March and September 1997 provided the reader with clear indications of the change in political atmosphere.[358] The Shetland movement organized joint political party talks, meetings with local MP Jim Wallace and SIC convener Lewis Smith. As a direct result of the cross-party meeting, a letter was sent to the Secretary of State for Scotland, Donald Dewar, and this was considered a historic document. Representatives of local branches of all the political parties signed the document. The letter requested that Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles are given special consideration because of their historical and geographical circumstances. In addition, it requested that the structure of islands' government be embedded in the Scotland Act subject to Parliaments' approval. An article in the *Shetland Times* with the title 'Movement's 'historical document' backed' stated:

> Not everyone in Shetland will agree that a Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh is a positive step. However, it may well be the first step in a process of island devolution and as such cannot be ignored. The majority of people in Shetland are irritated and annoyed by basic services being handed over to anonymous voices, hundreds of miles away. Imagine any other community having to phone across 200 miles for emergency services. A greater level of local control is surely desirable and a Scottish Parliament may be our only chance to grasp it.[359]

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[358] See e.g. 'Support for own parliament. Althing debate', *The Shetland Times*, 14 March 1997;; D. Thompson, 'Paper Plans for future'; 'Plea for opinions – not apathy', *The Shetland Times*, 1 August, 1997; D. Thompson, 'Double Yes' says council as White Paper on devolution welcomed', *The Shetland Times*, 8 August 1997; 'Nailing colours to the mast', *The Shetland Times*, 8 August 1997; D. Thompson, 'Opinion split down the middle as devolution debate gathers pace', *The Shetland Times*, 22 August 1997; 'Your questions answered', *The Shetland Times*, 5 September 1997.

[359] 'Movement's 'historic document' backed', *The Shetland Times*, 27 June 1997.

The question now was, if Shetlanders were going to vote, and if so, how would they respond to the two questions asked: Should there be a separate Scottish Parliament and, if so, should it have tax-raising powers? The Shetland movement was hoping to mount a vigorous 'Yes/Yes' campaign in the run-up to the referendum. The article concluded that Shetland was probably the only community in Scotland which had achieved such a high level of political agreement over the Scottish parliament and its relationship to Shetland, and emphasised that everyone should take action and "make the most of this historic opportunity".[360] There was, nevertheless, much less debate around these issues in 1990s Shetland in comparison to Shetland of the 1970s, and yet the proposed powers of a Scottish Parliament were now much greater.

Another article published in *the Shetland Times* indicated that several voters supported the idea of a Scottish Parliament, albeit to a varying degree.[361] There were arguments both in favour and against devolution. Those in favour claimed that voting 'yes' is necessary in order to secure democracy and to give power back to the people. Those who were against argued that there will be more bureaucracy and no advantages for Shetland, and that being British is preferable to being Scottish. Some interviewees thought that feelings in Shetland had probably changed since the last referendum. It was claimed that whereas many Shetlanders would like Shetland to be independent, most Shetlanders realised it unrealistic and felt that "a slightly devolved form will bring them slightly nearer to the seat of Government."[362]

A brief survey carried out among the population in July 1997 showed that 69% were in favour of a Scottish Parliament. The survey included an additional question relating to identity, which showed a very varied response. While 40 per cent thought they

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[360] 'Movement's 'historic document' backed', *The Shetland Times*, 27 June 1997.

[361] D. Thompson, 'Voters exchange support for Union Jack with union flak', *The Shetland Times*, 25 July 1997.

[362] Local informants quoted in the above.

were either "Scottish not British" or "more Scottish than British", the highest percentage of respondents (25 %) preferred to be regarded as "other" category. Of these, 83 per cent regarded themselves as Shetlanders.[363] In Shetland itself there was a consensus with regard to why Shetland needed a Scottish Parliament.[364] In September 1997, public opinion in Shetland had already moved clearly towards the average Scottish opinion. In that year, 62.4% voted 'Yes' in the devolution referendum (table 4 below).[365]

Table 4: Scottish Referendum results in Shetland and Scotland, 1997.

Scottish Referendum 1997	Shetland (percentage of votes cast)	Scotland (percentage of votes cast)
I agree that there should be a Scottish Parliament	62.3%	74.3%
I do not agree that there should be a Scottish Parliament	37.6%	25.7%
I agree that a Scottish Parliament should have tax varying powers	51.6%	63.5%
I do not agree that a Scottish Parliament should have tax varying powers	48.3%	36.5%

Source: Author, based on Shetland Island Council (2005)

As it can be noted from the table, the percentage of votes cast in Shetland was still notably lower than the average of 74% and the second 'Yes' was only narrowly accepted. Yet, while Shetland was still less enthusiastic about the Scottish parliament in comparison to most places in Scotland, things had changed in comparison to

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363 'Devolution thumbs-up in survey', *The Shetland Times*, 4 July 1997.

364 A. Yard, 'Politicians united over devolution', *The Shetland Times*, 29 August 1997.

365 D. Thompson, 'Voters give double yes to devolution', *The Shetland Times*, 19 September 1997.

the 1970s. The Shetland vote was locally seen to represent "a sea of change in opinion" since 1979, when about 72 % of voters in the islands were against the idea.[366] This represented a swing of about 30 %. The results of the vote were close to those found out in the survey carried out in Shetland in July 1997.[367]

Because the re-establishment of the parliament in Edinburgh did not meet widespread approval in Shetland at first as discussed in this section, it is also necessary to ask what were the reasons behind the apparent shift in voting between 1979 and 1997. In the aftermath of the Second World War British politics had been dominated by the development of a welfare state, the structure of which was identifiably unionist. As noted in a recent article of Andrew Newby, although the eventual results of the referendum in 1979 maintained the constitutional *status quo*, a great deal of debate and analysis was undertaken in Scotland and this focused on issues such as self-government, nationalist strategies and Scottish identity.[368] Margaret Tatcher's eleven years in Downing Street accentuated perceptions of Scottish distinctiveness further.[369] The era of Tatcher saw the development of a 'democratic deficit' – the Scottish nation was voting solidly for Labour while inevitably ruled by Conservatives because of English voting behaviour.[370]

As put by a Shetland commentator, the Tories seemed "to destroy our health service, our education system, our social security, our employment, our housing, our very dignity and sense of responsibility to each other, even our imagination."[371] The need for a Scottish parliament became clearly pronounced in Scottish academic and polemic writing. In 1997, Tony Blair's

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[366] D. Thompson, 'Voters give double yes to devolution', *The Shetland Times*, 19 September 1997.

[367] 'Devolution thumbs-up in survey', *The Shetland Times*, 4 July 1997.

[368] Newby, 'In building a nation few better examples can be found', p. 308.

[369] Newby, 'In building a nation few better examples can be found', p. 308.

[370] Newby, 'In building a nation few better examples can be found', p. 308.

[371] 'Da Wadder Eye', *The New Shetlander* (179) (1992), p. 23.

Labour government took power at Westminster and the devolution referendum promissed by the new government took place on 11 September 1997, resulting in a majority in favour of a creation of a Scottish parliament with tax-varying powers. This time Shetland saw in devolution an opportunity to have a greater say over its own situation.[372] During a local debate in August 1997, it was remarked that during the eighteen years of Conservative rule more and more power had been taken away.[373] It was important to bring government closer to the people and ensure that decisions are taken by people who are closely in touch with their communities. Furthermore, it was thought that a Scottish parliament "will go a long way to remove the democratic deficit in Scotland" and offer the Highlands and Islands much better representation than they ever had at Westminster.[374]

Shetland archivist Brian Smith has explained the 1979 'No' vote as the product of islanders' conservatism.[375] Islanders' wariness of change has been particularly apparent over the issue of party-political affiliations. Shetlanders had been voting solidly for the Liberals since 1832, as put by Smith:

> As a socialist it paints me to view the mountain of votes that Liberal candidates have enticed from Shetlanders and Orcadians since 1832. But despite the avalanche of ballot papers, island Liberalism is a passionless creed. No one bothered to set up a Liberal association in Shetland until the 1880s; and Shetland's modern Liberal Democrats hardly seem to lift a finger at election times. They just wait for the votes to be weighted.[376]

Indeed, despite the talk of differences between Orkney and Shetland they had formed one parliamentary constituency since

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[372] See e.g. Goodlad, 'Reflections on Shetland and a Scottish Parliament', p. 23.

[373] Yard, 'Politicians united over devolution', *The Shetland Times*, 29 August 1997.

[374] Yard, 'Politicians united over devolution', *The Shetland Times*, 29 August 1997.

[375] Quoted in Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 177.

[376] Smith, 'Island Challenge by Edward Thomason', pp. 35-36.

1832 and their institutional development had been very similar. Each had been a county within the Scottish realm, each affected by gradual depopulation and there had been little political debate or demand for political change until the 1960s.[377] In the 1990s opinions in Shetland appeared to have changed once again. Two reasons behind the shift in voting between 1979 (>30% in favour) and 1997 (62% in favour) are most apparent from the discussion presented above. The first is the advancement of Tatcherism. The second are the feelings of growing realism among the Shetlanders themselves, as put by Smith:

> I often thought about this and discussed it at the time. I believe it was growing realism, based on the progress of Thatcherism in the country as a whole. In the early days Shetlanders thought that they could escape from reality by being different; later they concluded that they couldn't go it alone.[378]

Confirming this explanation was the information gathered by correspondents of *the Shetland Times* and quoted earlier in this section. For instance, some locals had mentioned that while many Shetlanders had desired independent development for Shetland, there was in the 1990s growing realism among the population and devolution was increasingly seen as beneficial for the islands.[379] Yet already in 1978 it had appeared improbable that Shetland could ever function as an independent state. *The Shetland Report* remarked that "the circumstances in which this might come about are hard to visualise."[380]

In the 1970s the focus on a Shetland outlook was above all practical.[381] First expressed through a need for a regional approach

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[377] Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', p. 8.

[378] Personal communication with Brian Smith, 29 July 2011.

[379] D. Thompson, 'Voters exchange support for Union Jack with union flak', *The Shetland Times*, 25 July 1997.

[380] *The Shetland Report*, p. 164.

[381] Smith, *Shetland Life and Trade 1550-1914*, p. 283.

to the economy in the 1960s and exemplified by the role of HIDB, later both amplified and obscured by the arrival of oil in the 1970s.[382] In the early 1980s the initiative in economic development tended, once again, to shift towards local sources.

Adding to this explanation, Callum Brown has pointed out that Shetlanders were less concerned with big constitutional issues in the referendum votes of 1974 and 1979 than with the protection of their immediate interests. This was confirmed by the examination of the aims and objectives of the Shetland movement explored earlier in this chapter. Alternatively, the 'No' vote could be seen a critical reminder to 'authority' of Shetlanders' interests and feelings.[383] By the late 1990s the oil prizes had moderated and the Shetlanders were thriving in comparison to, in Brown's words, much of their twentieth-century history. As a consequence, the boundaries that were being drawn by the community in the 1970s were starting to ease.[384] The high quality of life in the islands after the oil boom has been seen as an important reason behind diminished interest in politics.[385]

Most of the change in opinion in Shetland was related to what was happening in Scotland – among others there was a substantial degree of common ground between all political parties with the exception of the Conservatives, and the Scottish Constitutional Convention of 1988 recognised Shetland's different position and problems.[386] The Convention was seen as representative of a wide-spread consensus for constitutional change within Scotland. It was claimed that there is a contrast to the 1970s, when most proponents of Scottish devolution "did not accept that there should be any further devolution within Scotland and did not accept that Shetland was actually any different from other parts of

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[382] Smith, *Shetland Life and Trade 1550-1914*, p. 283.

[383] Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 177.

[384] Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 178.

[385] See e.g. M. Tallack, 'Independence thinking', *New Statesman*, 2 April 2007.

[386] Goodlad, 'Reflections on Shetland and a Scottish Parliament', p. 23.

Scotland."[387] But other factors played their role too, such as the ongoing economic and demographic changes in the isles themselves. It was no longer possible to estimate how Shetlanders would vote as the number of newcomers had increased significantly. As considered in earlier sections, around one third of all Shetlanders had been born outside Shetland and boundaries had become more fluid.

Those Shetlanders who argued in favour of a Scottish parliament and had supported this stance over the years had done so on the grounds that this gives the peripheral regions more local control and a greater influence on national decision-making.[388] The main problem now was, to ensure that there is effective communication between island authority and national government and that grassroots ideas are taken into consideration in the decision-making process:

> Shetlanders have, albeit with little enthusiasm, endorsed the idea of a Scottish parliament. Those who have argued in favour of a parliament over the years have done so on the grounds that it will give the peripheral areas more local control over their affairs and a greater input into national decision-making. It is a two-way process, and close contacts with Scottish Office politicians are essential as are with the civil servants. While closer contact is already being demonstrated, with visits from three ministers in as many weeks, perhaps Tatcher's visit to Scotland last week was a timely reminder of how out of touch governments can get with the regions, giving a further boost to the yes campaign.[389]

It was also noted that the taxation arguments raised by the

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[387] Goodlad, 'Reflections on Shetland and a Scottish Parliament', p. 23. See also J. Goodlad, The Shetland Islands Council and the future of Shetland', *The New Shetlander* (159) (1987), pp. 9-11.

[388] Goodlad, 'Reflections on Shetland and a Scottish Parliament', p. 23.

[389] 'Making it work', *The Shetland Times*, 19 September 1997.

opposition had an effect, evident in the voting figures.[390] Whether or not the parliament was a first step to independence remained to be seen.[391] Yet, it was perceived as only a small step in the reform of government promissed in the Labour manifesto.[392] SIC called for further devolution of power already in the 1990s when there were attempts to gain more say for the three island groups without success.[393] At the same time the desire for more local control remained a constant theme in local articles, as shown for example in the following comment:

> Why are the headquarters of the shipping operation serving Orkney and Shetland in Aberdeen? Should not the executive posts be located in the northern isles, not only to provide much needed jobs, but also to give those in charge a real understanding of what is required by the island communities?[394]

In March 2008 the desire for more say was expressed by SIC convener Sandy Cluness in conjunction with the Convention of the Highlands and Islands in Lerwick. The Convention of the Highlands and Islands was established in 1996 by the then Secretary of State Michael Forsyth, following calls for the revival of the former Highland Panel, replaced in 1964 by the Highlands and Islands Development Board. The Highlands and Islands Development Board was in turn transformed into Highlands and Islands Enterprise Network and this has now a wider range of powers and executive functions.

Following the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, Executive Ministers agreed that the convention was "no longer to

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[390] 'Making it work', *The Shetland Times*, 19 September 1997.

[391] For reflections on Shetland and the case for an independent Scotland see e.g. the views of Willie Ross (SNP) and Alistair Carmichael (Lib.Dem.) in 'Sounding Off: Breaking free?', *The Shetland Times*, 6 April 2007.

[392] Making it work', *The Shetland Times*, 19 September 1997.

[393] J. Robertson, 'Cluness calls for more local control', *The Shetland Times*, 7 March 2008.

[394] D. Jamieson, 'Da wadder eye', *The New Shetlander* (205) (1998), p. 23.

be a forum for political debate" and this was re-focussed as a forum in which Ministers would meet the public sector organisations and other agencies and institutions for discussion on the economy of the area.[395] While Scottish devolution and the Scottish Parliament have been a good deal for Shetland, some forms of centralisation are still seen by Shetlanders as unnecessary: services such as Water Services and some aspects of tourism are handled from the mainland whereas they could be, in local opinion, successfully managed by the isles.[396]

Regional within Scotland

The centrality of Norse heritage is easily observable in contemporary Shetland: the images of Viking galleys and Viking warriors have long been emblems of the place, promoted by the tourist board and advertising businesses and products. The Viking symbol became the modern image of Shetland in the inter-war period and in the later twentieth century it was adopted as a logo of Shetland enterprise and local government.[397] Contemporary Shetland is often described as a region with "a distinctive linguistic, geographic and economic heritage *imagined* in the context of the medieval Diaspora of the Norse".[398]

Even one of the most visible symbols of distinctiveness, however, the late-winter fire festival of Up-Helly-Aa is a Victorian tradition. The festival is a calendar custom consciously based on the symbols of Shetland's Viking Age and mythical beliefs in the

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[395] Information on the Convention of Highland and Islands was found on the website of Scottish Government. See http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/Enterprise/Convention (retrieved March 2008). I was personally present at the Convention held in Lerwick in March 2008 for part of its sessions.

[396] For example the current SNP government (current at the time of writing) has made moves to increase the autonomy of local authorities and restrictions on how their funding can be spent have been removed. Discussion with Sandy Cluness, 4 March 2008.

[397] Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 28.

[398] Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 58.

strength, resilience and independent spirit of the perceived ancestors of contemporary Shetlanders, the Norse. Always subject to change, the festival only gradually adopted a Norse theme and by 1921 the Norse theme had become its central focus. Since the beginning of the twentieth century also rural Up-Helly-Aa's emerged and their number grew in the 1930s and particularly after the 1960s.[399]

In his recent study Brown has argued that apart from a brief period in the late nineteenth century Shetland's Norse heritage never became an ideological dimension to the definition of the community and this view was confirmed by the examination of the aims of the Shetland movement and devolution considerations in the previous sections of this study. Furthermore, there was no language movement for a Shetland dialect in conjunction with political change and yet the Norse heritage continued to provide Shetlanders with compelling cultural icons.

Nonetheless, in recent years cultural distinctiveness has been given a new focus by two related events – a place branding project (2003) and a Shetland dialect convention (2004). In terms of history and language, what are their aims and objectives and how are these intertwined with wider political change? Issues concerned with dialect will be examined in more detail in later chapters, but it is of value to consider first possible changes in symbolism. This is important, because in Shetland language and myth-symbol complexes just as language history and perceptions of cultural separateness are intertwined possibly to an extent not typical for other places in Europe. Therefore, intellectuals who have commented on Shetland dialect have also made comments on Norse history and the use of Vikings in imagery and these carry occasionally a political message.

As the two aspects are often connected in the public mind change in the one can imply also changes in relation to the other and from this perspective any alterations in imagery are generally

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[399] Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 175.

revealing for changes in prevailing discourses. In the case of Shetland the uses of Norse history and the use of language history are closely intertwined and both relate to issues such as marketing and tourism as also chapters on dialect will elaborate. In 2002, SIC and the Corporate Edge agency created a modernized Shetland brand. According to the report prepared by the agency "Shetland is in danger of being seen as a 'pre-modern society': simple, admirable but lost in a time warp"[400].

The main goal of a new, internationally orientated brand was to re-position Shetland as modern and forward-looking and to promote an image of Shetland as a "small, clever country".[401] The report also argued, on the basis of fieldwork, that Shetland's old icons such as knitting and fishing were seen as insufficient to establish a twenty-first century identiy for Shetland. Equally, the icons of Shetland's ancient past, the report argued, were not enough to demonstrate Shetland's "living vitality".[402] The brand aimed to represent much more than a superficial collection of icons and imagery and within this top-down approach and especially in tourist materials there has been a clearly accentuated focus on modernisation of material and images.

Adam Grydehøj, who has recently completed a PhD in ethnology, has covered issues of Shetland tourism and the Shetland Brand. In a recent article he has shown that while the Shetland Brand attempts to combine old and modern, this resembles the approach to branding and tourism of several other island locations. But he also develops an idea of a conflict between Shetland Brand and Shetlanders' traditional identity conception.[403]

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[400] C. Lodge, 'Project Selkie: the recommended Brand strategy for Shetland.' Report document, 5 June 2003, p. 3.

[401] Henderson, 'Place Branding: Linking the Shetland Brand to a Marketing Strategy for Shetland Tourism', p. 32. Neil Henderson was directly involved in branding and marketing and at the time of writing was working for the Shetland Islands Council.

[402] Lodge, 'Project Selkie', p. 10.

[403] Grydehøj put special emphasis on printed tourism marketing materials and also, in a revised version of his paper, compared Shetland's experience with those

After a brief presentation of his views an attempt will be made to broaden the picture, thereby considering the extent to which the uses of history carry a political message. Grydehøj has demonstrated that tourist literatures of Orkney and Shetland published in 2008 advertise similar activities and attractions. Shetland does so with greater stylistic consistency, but what is lacking, in Grydehøj's view, is a sense of Shetlanders' cultural perception. Orkney and Shetland are contrasted by the author as follows:

> Orkney is, indeed, the closest cultural historical analogue to Shetland, and it is understandable why one might assume that the two archipelagos share a cultural heritage.
> Surprisingly, most Orcadians and Shetlanders would disagree. For example, recent ethnographic research in Orkney has shown that most Orcadians feel strong emotional attachments to the archipelago's pre-Norse archaeological sites and view them as integral to and outstanding elements of Orcadian heritage.[404]

In contrast to Orcadians who feel emotional attachment to the archipelago's pre-Norse archaeological sites, the argument goes, most Shetlanders have hardly experienced any connections with their islands' pre-Norse inhabitants.[405] Furthermore, the Shetlanders are proud of their Scandinavian ancestors and their sense of connectedness lies with the islands' Norse past.[406] Nevertheless, the same is equally true concerning historical and ethnographic writing – narratives and voices which countered the myth tended to be marginalised, while those that conform have been reproduced and this has reinforced stereotypical interpretations of Shetland identity.[407] Similarly to mainland and

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of other European islands. See Grydehøj , 'Branding From Above', pp. 175-198.

[404] Grydehøj, 'Branding from Above', p. 182.

[405] See also Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 18.

[406] Grydehøj, 'Branding from Above', p. 182.

[407] The myth, as put by Abrams, is not necessarily untrue, but it is a highly affectional grand narrative into which every aspect of Shetland's past and present

western insular Scotland, also Orkney has been constructed as Shetland's 'other'. The dissimilarity between the landscapes of the two island groups has amplified perceptions of difference.[408] Furthermore, the distribution of surnames is believed to reflect the differing histories of the isles. Orkney surnames such as Linklater and Marwick, for example, derive from place-names in Orkney. In contrast, Shetland surnames are patronymic, i.e. derived from the father's forename and similar to these in Scandinavia.[409]

It is not in question that the histories of the the two island groups diverged at an early stage. Yet these differences have been highlighted to a different extent by different interested parties in the history of the islands. Indeed, Orkney became involved with Scotland long before the islands were handed over to the Scottish King in 1468-9, while Shetland continued to look to Norway, and later to north-west Germany, for its fish-trade.[410]

Nevertheless, the transfer from Norse to Scottish rule in late medieval times has always been an important factor in the interpretation of the regional history of both Orkney and Shetland.[411] For example, in 1859, David Balfour published his *Oppresions in the islands of Orkney and Zetland*, which underlined the idea that the Vikings are the real ancestors of Shetlanders and Orcadians and the older Orkney historians such as Clouston (1870-1944) and Mooney (1862-1950) tended to idealise the Norse connections. The Norse tradition was regarded as a decisive factor in the cultural differentiation of the Orcadians and this attitude

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tends to be forced to fit. See Abrams, *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World*, p. 13.

[408] Van Leyden, *Prosodic Characteristics of Orkney and Shetland Dialects*, p. 11. Shetland has peat-covered hills and little productive land, while Orkney is green and fertile. A phrase often used in local contexts is that "an Orcadian is a farmer with a boat, whereas a Shetlander is a fisherman with a croft".

[409] Van Leyden, *Prosodic Characteristics of Orkney and Shetland Dialects*, p. 14.

[410] See K. Zickermann, 'Across the German sea : Scottish commodity exchange, network building and communities in the wider Elbe-Weser region in the early modern period' (University of St. Andrews Ph.D. Thesis, 2009).

[411] Øien, 'The Northern Isles – Between Two Nations', p. 80.

has been clearly pronounced almost up to the present day. At present, however, notions have become more diversified.[412] Another example is the organising of an indigenous light-hearted anti-Norse festival in Shetland called the Pictish Festival.[413] The festival sought, in a lightsome manner, to reassert the claims of Shetlanders against islands' Nordic "invaders".[414] Already some years earlier countless journalists and broadcasters had tried to capture the "Shetland way of life", until stereotyped images had become "cliches that irritated even the Shetlanders themselves."[415]

Grydehøj also argued that whereas Shetland is prosperous and wealthy, Shetlanders have used this wealth to bolster traditional aspects of their culture. Bearing this viewpoint in mind Grydehøj states that "Shetland's pre-existing brand is, for better or for worse, centred on the Vikings".[416] Nonetheless, the images of Vikings and Up-Helly-Aa are now played down to a greater extent in tourist material. Instead, there is much more emphasis on physical environment and nature.

For the author of the aforementioned article this demonstrates the desire of Shetland authorities to replace the retrospective, backward-looking character of Shetland culture. Visit Shetland has been applying too strictly the recommendations of the Shetland Brand project and within this framework images of Vikings are hardly used because these can be associated with rusticity and barbarity. Images of Shetland's archaeological sites are held

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[412] Øien, 'The Northern Isles – Between Two Nations', p. 80. This is demonstrated in a new history of Orkney by W. Thomson, who has debunked some of the myths produced by his predecessors. See W. Thomson, *The New History of Orkney* (Edinburgh, 2001).

[413] Personal communication with Brian Smith, 1 June 2011. There is a reference to its having taken place in 1989 in a 'Review of the year' by Radio Shetland. See Shetland Archives, BBCRS/1/16/120/

[414] Shetlanders have a tradition of facetious festivals, a good example of which is the Big Bannock in Northmavine.

[415] M. Magnusson, 'Foreword', in R. Grønneberg (ed.), *Island Futures. Scottish Devolution and Shetland's Constitutional Alternatives* (Sandwick, 1978), p. 4.

[416] Grydehøj, 'Branding from Above', p. 183.

appropriate because these are places that can be visited, whereas photographs of contemporary Up-Helly-Aa, albeit not in black and white, would "nonetheless communicate a message of rusticity – or worse, barbarity – that runs counter to the brand values".[417] As far as tourist material and modernisation are concerned, the author's interpretation appears accurate, yet his argument of a diminished desire to use Norse imagery is not entirely accurate given its widespread use in other instances.

In contemporary Shetland images of Vikings are widely used, for example a Viking parade was included in a leaflet marketing the Shetland Flag Day in 2008 and the use of Old Norse in signs and place-names remains common.[418] Not all initiatives have been successful, however, and Grydehøj does not mention some of them. Nevertheless, these failed initiatives can be rather revealing for the interaction between regional and new national contexts, which, while not in the centre of examination, are essential to understand for the purposes of the present study. The relationship between national and regional is in my view particularly intriguing in the sphere of tourism, because Shetland has some independence over tourism-related decisions, yet part of these are taken on the Scottish mainland.

There are eight key organisations considered important for the strategic development of Shetland tourism. These are Visit Shetland, Shetland Amenity Trust, Shetland Island Council, Historical Scotland, Shetland Tourism Association, Hotels of Shetland Association, Shetland Enterprise Ltd. and Scottish Natural Heritage.[419] In 2003, the Shetland Island Council requested approval for the authorisation of a Viking Galley – emblem to

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[417] Grydehøj, 'Branding from Above', p. 184.

[418] Regarding the use of Old Norse in place names see G. Puzey, 'Planning the Linguistic Landscape. A Comparative Survey of the Use of Minority Languages in the Road Signage of Norway, Scotland and Italy' (University of Edinburgh Thesis, 2007), p. 81.

[419] Henderson, 'Place Branding: Linking the Shetland Brand to a Marketing Strategy for Shetland Tourism', pp. 18-19.

replace in the isles the stylised thistle (symbolic for Scotland), which is used on tourist routes and brown tourist signs to attractions throughout Scotland and which was invented by the national tourist agency, Visit Scotland. This move was preceded by a campaign of islanders and was backed by Shetland Islands Tourism. The request was nevertheless turned down and the thistle has so far remained the only tourism road-sign symbol approved by government regulations. Seeing this as metaphorical "sinking the Thistle with a Viking Galley" the Rampant Scotland newsletter reports:

> Tourist routes and signs to attractions throughout Scotland have a stylised thistle as a recognised emblem, invented by the tourism agency, Visit Scotland. But Shetland Council, in the far north of the country, is proud of the Viking roots of the islands and wants to scrap the thistle in favour of a Viking galley. The move was prompted by a campaign by islanders and is backed by Shetland Islands Tourism. Needless to say, Visit Scotland is not in favour, saying that it would confuse tourists. Currently, the thistle is the only tourism road-sign approved by government regulations but Shetland Council has written to the Scottish Executive requesting approval for a Viking galley to be authorised too. A previous request - to have Old Norse included in road-signs - was turned down.[420]

As noted from the quote above, in 2002, following the example for authorisation of bilingual signs in the case of Highland Council, Shetland Island Council requested further authorisation from the (then) Scottish Executive to use old Norse place-names on direction signs. The signs were seen by the Council to emphasise Shetland's cultural heritage and the existence of close ties with Shetland's Scandinavian neighbours.[421] As in the case of the Viking Galley, also in this case islanders and the Shetland place-names

[420] 'Sinking the Thistle with a Viking Galley', *Rampant Scotland Newsletter*, 22 March 2003.

[421] Quoted in Puzey, 'Planning the Linguistic Landscape', p. 81.

action group supported the use of Old Norse names on direction signs, and also in this case the Shetland Council backed the initiative. Nonetheless, ministers refused this request after considering matters such as traffic management considerations and "the extent to which the Old Norse language is in everyday use."[422]

Tourist signs can be effectively used to express a political message and in Shetland these have become a target of graffiti attacks, in a similar way as those in places like Cornwall.[423] During the period of my fieldwork in Shetland in 2008 it was possible to notice tourist signs where the thistle was painted over. The defacing of the thistle is considered to be vandalism by the authorities and the graffiti attacks are unwanted as they can be damaging for Shetland's reputation.[424] But what is worth of note is that both islanders and local authorities supported the acceptance of a distinct (from the national) tourist emblem. The requests for authorization of own tourist signs are an example of a case in which civil society needed SIC for the articulation of Shetlanders' interests and the two worked for the same cause.

On the other hand, the flag of Shetland was granted official status in 2005 and this is based on the joint historical rule of the islands between Norway and Scotland. The Shetland Flag is one of the most important branding decisions and it is currently widely used by the local government, by visiting yachts and vessels, at sports events (for example at the Island Games) as well as on souvenirs and products. The flag combines Scottish national colours with an offset cross common to all Scandinavian countries thus giving an equal symbolic weight to the fact that Shetland had

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422 Puzey, 'Planning the Linguistic Landscape', p. 82.

423 Cornwall is an area at the tip of the south-western peninsula of Great Britain, which is known for its perceived distinctive Celtic heritage. Some have questioned the present constitutional status and there have been various news corncerning defaced brown road signs bearing England's Red Rose.

424 Correspondence with Neil Henderson, April 2008; Discussion with Henderson, 3 March 2008.

been part of Norway and part of Scotland.[425] Alongside new symbols and images Norse history is considered evident in a variety of elements of contemporary culture, several of which have a linguistic dimention:

> Twelve hundred years ago Shetland was colonized by Viking immigrants from Norway who took with them their Norse language, government and legal systems. This has fed the development of a rich, unique and firmly embedded culture, which is evident through place names, customs, folklore and traditional Shetland music today.[426]

The above quote is from a study on Shetland tourism by Shetland-born and based Neil Henderson. It can be observed that history is reproduced through language not only in existing local varieties, but also in a range of distinct forms through place names, folklore and Shetland music. At the same time Shetland and Scotland as a whole can be seen to have become even more clearly united through an emphasis on Scotland's Nordic ties (including Shetland) and contacts and affiliations with Scandinavia in political discourse.

As remarked earlier in this chapter, Nordic comparisons and references to the Faeroe Islands in particular were used in Shetland in the 1960s. But gradually references to Scandinavia became more common in Scottish nationalist discourse and the arrival in 2007 of Scotland's first SNP administration raised the profile of Scandinavia even further.[427] In issues such as autonomy and independence the use of the Nordic countries as comparisons for post-devolution Scotland have become prominent in Scottish

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[425] The flag was designed by Roy Grønneberg and Bill Adams in 1969 and commemorates the 500th anniversary of the transfer of the islands to Scotland. See e.g. R. Grønneberg, 'The Origins of the Shetland Flag', *The Flag Bulletin*, vol. 41 (2001), pp. 76-80. Midsummer Day (21 June) was recognised as Shetland Flag day for the first time in 2007.

[426] Henderson, 'Place Branding', p. 7.

[427] Newby, 'In building a nation few better examples can be found', p. 308.

politics, and within the SNP in particular.[428]

While Northern connections and comparisons have been used in wider contexts as well, these are nevertheless seen in Shetland to remain a mark of distinctiveness for the Nordern Isles and Shetland in particular. Nonetheless, it is the existence of, arguably marginal, nationalist discourse that complicated the picture. Regarded as an eccentric campaigner for Shetland independence, Stuart Hill, originally from England, recurrently argued in favour of Shetland independence and questioned the legality of two central events of Shetland history: the details of pawning of Shetland in 1469 and, in his words, the "emergence" of Shetland as a Scottish county after the Union of 1707.[429] In reality, as pointed out earlier, the claim by Denmark-Norway was given up in the 1640s by Christian I for the city of Newcastle in pawn.[430]

Similarly, at the beginning of the oil era it was useful to accentuate otherness through Norse history and, at times, distinctiveness began to carry more clearly political associations. Much of the imagery remains the same, but while images of cultural difference remain strong, the actual political climate has changed. Born during the oil era Shetland poet Mark Ryan Smith considers another set of images desirable and here one can see connections between the tradition created prior to the oil era and present-day literary generation. Smith notes, however, that Shetland is often still seen as culturally Scandinavian:

> Shetland is often still seen in these terms, as an everyday marker such as Old Norse place names on road signs show. But the somewhat fetishistic (I use the term here in the Freudian sense) contemporary invocation of Scandinavia can often be a reductive and, at worst, xenophobic trope, used to separate Shetland

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[428] Newby, 'In building a nation few better examples can be found', pp. 311-313.

[429] At the time of my fieldwork in 2008 there was a group called *Shetland & Orkney Udal Law group*, initiated in 2003. See e.g. http://www.udallaw.com (retrieved March 2008).

[430] Murdoch, 'Newcastle in Pawn', pp. 18-24.

> from the Scottish polity it has clearly and straightforwardly been part of since the mid fifteenth century.[431]

The model of cultural figure Smith looks at is William Tait (1918-1992), an author associated or allied with the ideas of the Scottish literary renaissance and whose work represented coming to terms with the Norse influences on Shetland culture. Smith points out that Tait was aware of Shetland's Scandinavian heritage but this was simply one element of the construction of poetic identification with Shetland and connected to cosmopolitan, outward looking vision of Shetland.

But already in the 1970s the usefulness of Norse history for political debate appeared questionable. In the late 1970s Tom Nairn wrote that being a Viking is too improbable and remote to be taken seriously, and therefore can be drooled over for the most spurious of political motives.[432] Yet Shetland had a significant cultural basis for independent political development – the Viking story as a myth of origin; the potential of Up-Helly-Aa as a political symbol; the Shetland dialect and Shetland literature as well as the existence of a local press influential in sustaining community's consciousness.[433] All these characteristics were in the view of outside commentators incontestably part of Shetland identity in a sense that could have become significant politically, but never did.

The attempt to introduce a Viking Galley as an official separate emblem is another context in which the Shetland *ethnie* can be politicised. Prevailing discourses suggests, however, that the desire for difference is simply symbolic and based on desire for

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[431] Smith, 'Shetland Literature and Identity', p. 27.

[432] Nairn, 'The Shetland Problem', p. 19. In addition, it has to be taken into account that the Vikings have been depicted as brave and manly heroes, an image which is opposite to the other often-mentioned association of rape and pillage. Thus, there is also a question of the meanings of Norse imagery. Bravery and manliness are regarded desirable images as opposed to the other possible connotations.

[433] Nairn, 'The Shetland Problem', p. 19.

economic success. Within this framework the local government has clearly distanced itself from the use of history for political aims, while tourism strategies continue to emphasise Shetland difference.

Speaking at the Convention of the Highlands and Islands in Lerwick, presented in a previous section, Douglas Irvine of SIC noted that tourism in Shetland has had to overcome more overwhelming barriers than exist elsewhere in Scotland, because of high travel costs and short visitor seasons.[434] For that reason, the strategy adopted to meet these challenges has given main priority to information technology, with the Visit Shetland website described as one of the most comprehensive tourism sites to be found anywhere.[435] The local approach has also included an emphasis on issues such as partnership and international projects. Shetland has been successful in attracting visitors through the involvement of a wider cross-section of the population and Irvine emphasised not cultural markers but the integrity of Shetlanders' approach to culture:

> There has also been a desire to bring tourism's benefits to a wide cross-section of local people. Partly, it's because there has been increased awareness of Shetland's *very special, very distinctive* cultural and natural heritage. (…) However, it is important to notice that – like other local highlights, including of course Up-Helly-Aa – it wasn't created principally for tourists. What Shetland offers is what Shetland people cherish. Shetland's welcome is an invitation to share these things. That approach has an integrity that may be less obvious in the development of tourism in other parts of the world.[436]

Comments on the role of a wide cross-section of local people

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[434] I was personally present at the convention for part of its sessions.

[435] D. Irvine, 'Shetland – A Case Study. Making a Success out of being Different' (paper presented to the Highlands and Islands Conference), 1 March 2008. Douglas Irvine represented the view of the Shetland Islands Council.

[436] Irvine, 'Shetland – A Case Study', 1 March 2008.

participating in tourism enhancement and stressing integrity is not surprising given the centrality of ideas of egalitarianism, community involvement and integrity as iconic for Shetlanders' self-understanding. At the same time it has become appropriate to emphasise cultural difference without the inclusion of ethnic overtones.

At this and similar occasions Shetland is described to be "a long way north", as close to Bergen or Torshavn as to Aberdeen, or, alternatively, as closer to the Arctic Circle than to London. But there are also consistent references to both Scottish and Scandinavian pasts. As Shetland has been seen to compete primarily with other Scottish islands, the Scandinavian past is accentuated to clearly distinguish Shetland from other places in Scotland. Simultaneously, however, this difference is considered important not only as a cultural and economic asset for Shetland but also for Scotland as a whole. Shetland is "indisputably part of Scotland", yet it is a very different part:

> Although these islands have been part of Scotland for around 600 years, the legacy of Scandinavian rule is unmistakable. It's most obvious in such things as the local dialect, the place names, the traditional boats and some of the architecture. But it *feels* different, too, for both local people and visitors. So, whilst Shetland is indisputably part of Scotland, it's a very *different* part of Scotland. That distinctiveness is an asset for Shetland but it also adds variety and surprise to Scotland's offer, thereby strengthening it. (…) Such an approach is to be commended as it reflects the national strategy of presenting to the consumer a national dish with local flavour. In this, local distinctiveness is promoted within the context of broader consumer demand and capitalises on the national marketing effort.[437]

As later chapters will show Shetland language activists adopted a similar approach. The same idea of enhancing the local variety

[437] Irvine, 'Shetland – A Case Study', 1 March 2008.

within rather outside the new national context has been applied. Furthermore, similarly to contemporary tourism strategies also Shetland dialect movement is concerned with modernisation of images. It is from this perspective that the next chapters deepen examination of regional consciousness in Shetland by considering new language movements and the politics of language. Before that, however, it is helpful to consider other instances of local opinion. The next sections are based on questionnaire results.

Respondents' views

To be a 'Shetlander' in the beginning of twenty-first century means maintaining a number of different aspects of regional and national identification. When talking about Shetland consciousness one would be mistaken to look only at explicit expressions of separatism or demands for greater autonomy of the islands. As the analysis of the discourse employed for the devolution debate demonstrated, the 1990s saw the emergence of new attitudes among Shetlanders, which can be described in political terms as more pro-Scottish than those that existed previously. It has been argued, however, that the result of societal change is simply a more ambivalent self-understanding and that this is visible especially in the situation of the Shetland dialect. In order to examine more explicit connections between views on Shetland dialect and culture and political views local opinions were collected also through written interviews. The total number of written responses was thirty-one and Shetlanders of different age groups participated.

The main aim of written interviews, similar to the analysis of relevant articles, was to establish the extent to which dialect and culture in Shetland carry a political message and the extent to which Shetlanders (and in particular respondents to this study) identify changes in Shetland culture and self-understanding. As noted in the introduction, national identities have tended to be

presented as more homogenous than they are in reality and the same situation applies to regional identities. Thus, my intention was to collect also opinions of local respondents, representing different age groups in order to understand the ways in which local discourses on language and boundaries are further reproduced and understood at the level of the individual. Participants were asked to provide opinions and /or information on the following issues:

> The extent to which *perceptions* of Shetland dialect and culture have changed after the arrival of the oil wealth
>
> The relevance (or lack of relevance) of local dialect for contemporary Shetland culture and Shetlanders' self-understanding and opinions on its promotion
>
> Respondents' descriptions of their nationality and definitions of Shetlander
>
> Identification as Scottish and British
>
> Views on Shetland's and Scotland's future history

Contributors were requested to write a free response rather than to simply reply to questions. As noted in the introductory chapters, respondents' views were not treated as evidence about the past or the present, but as an additional insight into the ways in which boundaries are reproduced and discussed. Nearly all respondents chose to remain anonymous and where opinions from written interviews are quoted, references to informants (gender, age group) appear in square brackets. Opinions received by email and containing further information have been quoted as anonymous.

Belonging to Shetland

Earlier chapters showed that in the beginning of the oil era local discourses were dominated by environmental and social concerns and for a while perceived threats rather than possibilities dominated the local scene. The relevant section of the present study's questionnaire invited respondents to reflect on societal change by explaining how they saw societal change, what changes are considered by them undesirable and what developments have been of positive effect. The post-oil era was described as the most significant period of social change since sixteenth-century influx of Scottish landowners.[438] It was associated with successful economic development and increasing numbers of incomers, but the causes of cultural change were not seen as stemming exclusively from oil-related developments. The oil era had been a massive acceleration of cultural change, which had been under way already prior to oil, visible among others in the demise of agriculture.

Forty years later Shetlanders appeared far more content with the changes brought by oil. Nevertheless, to some extent the initial concerns of the locals had proved justified: many aspects of local life had changed for good. Moreover, because of the smallness of Shetland communities, even a relatively small number of newcomers were able to influence local habits, traditions or local speech. Several of the traditional elements of Shetland way of life, such as crofting, had become merely symbolic. Some respondents also argued that the oil era had created a dependency culture, expressed sometimes in the sentence "the Council will provide."

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[438] As noted above, whether respondents' statements about the past are truthful and to what extent was of secondary importance. It was obvious that Shetlanders would reproduce information they have read or heard. The main aim of the interviews was to examine perceptions of change in terms of dialect and culture and how boundaries are reproduced and discussed, particularly in relation to (mainland) Scotland. The reproduction of language discourses and opinions on dialect are discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

Perceptions of cultural change were most visibly expressed in perceptions of changes in language. While younger respondents stated they expressed their belonging to Shetland linguistically (and often inevitably so) at the same time among respondents there was also spread the view that undermining of dialect since the 1980s had removed the strongest mark of distinctiveness and concept of Shetlander. Contributors born after the oil era believed that the question of cultural change is somewhat unanswerable for them, but one informant pointed out that economic growth has turned some of the traditional elements of Shetland way of life into "something profoundly symbolic". The past was not appreciated for its ability to create boundaries; instead, it was an important mechanism of reflection and appreciation of the experiences of earlier generations:

> For somebody of my generation (born 1976) I am inescapably a child of the oil era. It is, therefore, difficult to appreciate how much the place has changed as I have grown up in an affluent society with good amenities (leisure centers, roads etc). But the study of history and contact I had with my grandparents' generation opens up a view of a different world. This generation, many of whom are passing away now, were perhaps the final scion of the "old" Shetland (whatever that really means) of crofters, whalers, haaf men, the Truck system etc. As a child I, and all my contemporaries, went to the peat hill. Now, when the cutting of peat by hand is little done, this seems profoundly symbolic. Again, a living link back to an older Shetland. (Male, 30-39).

It could be argued that what this respondent described were the realities of general change during the last forty years, concerning not only rural areas and not only the Shetland Islands. More importantly, however, while Shetland traditions were seen in this connection as different from these of earlier times, these were still "Shetland" and, as such, essential for the reproduction of a Shetland consciousness. Several informants elaborated that they

show that they are from Shetland by speaking dialect. There was also expressed the view, among some of the older respondents in particular, that imagery is superficial while it is speech and traditions that matter and therefore language was seen to have (or have had) a central role in Shetland culture. On the other hand, perceptions of decline of cultural distinctiveness were closely intertwined with ideas of decline in linguistic difference. In contrast those who had adopted a dynamic approach to Shetland culture considered Shetland dialect in terms of evolution rather than decline and understood Shetland culture primarily in the meaning of ethnically marked cultural and artistic pursuits and products (such as Shetland poetry, Shetland music, Shetland knitting, Shetland newspapers etc.).

In a second instance questionnaire respondents were asked to engage with possible changes in Shetlanders' self-understanding by elaborating whether in their recollections or opinions people of earlier generations in Shetland identified themselves differently than they do today, and in what ways. Responses included a variety of different views. The opinion that Shetlanders of earlier generations identified above all with Shetland was prevalent. Only two respondents felt that islanders' feelings for their region have not changed significantly, including one of the younger and the oldest respondent to this study. They both felt that Shetlanders of previous generations identified above all with Shetland, but that contemporary Shetlanders continue to do so.

Proponents of the stance that Shetlanders' sense of belonging was different at earlier times were roughly divided into two groups – those who saw Scottish convergence as the main factor diminishing distinctiveness and those who considered wider change in the isles and general cultural and economic change to have affected Shetlanders' affinities. It was pointed out that most Shetlanders had not seen themselves as Scottish:

> Most commoners (majority social class) strongly maintained they were not Scotch. This was because they were Shetland. Being

> British was taken as given. (Male, 40-49)
>
> Stronger sense of identity as Shetlanders. Much lower regard for Scotland and things Scottish. Dislike of symbols such as kilts and bagpipes. (Male, 60-69)
>
> Many people today are strongly influenced by the outside world and take on habits and characteristics from outside. Shetlanders used to be Shetlanders and had a firm knowledge of who they were. (Male, 50-59)
>
> They were independent (Male, 60-69)

This informant saw freedom and independence as the two things that mattered most within Shetland culture. Others, however, regarded change in a long-term perspective and elaborated that Shetlanders must have felt British when they fought in the last two World Wars. Identification with a particular locality and the existence of rivalry between villages were characteristic features of local communities.

Shetlanders had identified much more with their village or parish, to the extent of fierce rivalries with other villages or parishes. There were many stories about these disputes and some areas had been worse than others. Two informants noted that at earlier times Shetlanders, and especially the women, never had an opportunity to travel outwith the islands, communications were very limited and the population had been much more stable.[439] All this meant, these informants argued, that local people were not as cosmopolitan as they are today.[440] Others, however, noted that

[439] This is not entirely true as migration has been common in previous periods, for example single women travelled to eastern England as part of the herring processing industry. However, respondents referred to the scale of migration and opportunities. In addition, as elsewhere in Britain, there has been a notable expansion of women's rights since the 1960s.

[440] This viewpoint can be challenged. In the 1860s for example, Lerwick harbour was full of boats from various European countries. Both the cosmopolitan nature of

Shetlanders have always been in contact with the outside world. Similarly, contemporary historical and sociolinguistic writing on Shetland describes the isles as peripheral only in an administrative sense.[441] While Shetlanders' sense of belonging may have changed in recent decades this was because previously Shetland living had been almost exclusively based on crofting and fishing. This viewpoint was supported also in other stances:

> It is just that they did not have the travel opportunities, apart from the seamen, nor the communication links with the outside world. I'm sure that they would not have thought themselves any better or any different from other people. (Female, 50-59)
>
> Not really. They had less money. But had a great sense of humour which carried them through. Not so many incomers so they supported each other. (Female, 60-69).

Contributors born after the 1970s appeared to agree with the view that the sense of belonging to Shetland had been stronger at earlier times, but did not mention Scottish convergence as a factor for change in identification:

> Probably had a stronger Shetland /Island identity. And more specific definitions of what this means…I imagine the lines are more blurred with younger generations. (Male, 30-39)
>
> People were more passionately pro-Shetland (and maybe more pro-Scandinavian) (Male, 30-39)

Lerwick and the considerable extent and influence of oil-related migration to the isles have been widely referred to in both local articles and recent scholarly studies. For example, Brown remarks that no other place in Britain has experienced such a turnaround in economic fortunes "as quickly as Shetland since the mid-1970s". See Brown, *Up-Helly-Aa*, p. 28.

[441] Such remarks can be found for instance in the books of Lynn Abrams, Robert Millar and Hance D. Smith. See Abrams, *Myth and* Materiality, p. 4; Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots*, p. 180; Smith, *Shetland Life and Trade 1550-1914*, p. 289.

> Shetland was less open to world (Male, 30-39)

Furthermore, one of the younger respondents suggested that the question of how earlier generations identified with Shetland could imply that Shetlanders' self-understanding has become more ambivalent in recent years, which was not an accurate representation:

> This question might imply that Shetlanders formerly felt themselves more "Shetland" than now and that, due to outside influence (Oil, TV) they are now less Shetland than before. I would say, though, there has always been much more contact with the outside world, through commerce, through men going to sea, etc. But, that said, I would say Shetlanders do consider (and perhaps always have) themselves as a particular and distinctive cultural entity. I suppose I would agree with this. (Male, 30-39)

Taken together, the majority of informants saw changes in Shetlanders' sense of belonging to be a result of a wider economic and cultural change rather than Scottish convergence in particular, yet there were also those who mentioned explicitly convergence with Scotland or assault from Scotland as affecting Shetland distinctiveness. Only two respondents felt that Shetlanders' identification with their region has not changed to a significant extent. For these respondents Shetlanders had regarded, and continued to regard, themselves a particular and distinct cultural entity.

Competing narratives

To deny the existence of competing identity narratives in Shetland would be hugely mistaken. Several questionnaires included the descriptions of "not applicable" or "not relevant" when contributors were asked to describe a Scottish person or what makes them Scottish. One respondent replied to this question

"Better ask a Scot" and another mentioned that he does not even fill in the section of the Census asking nationality. By and large, being Scottish was seen by some informants as definable in the same way as for a Shetlander: ethnic, cultural, ancestral and therefore one did not see oneself as Scottish. Some of the older respondents were more positive towards British identity by referring, for example, to the Queen or 'Rule Britannia', while younger respondents were more likely to identify also with Scotland or with all three, but being British "just on passport" was also mentioned.

One informant pointed out that Scots can be defined by their way of living and thinking, but he did not see himself as Scottish. British, on the other hand, was a matter of political geography. Older informants were more likely to refer only to Britain as the nation, while maintaining that Shetland is a county and Scotland a region. One respondent pointed out that he is proud to be Shetlander and British and that 'true' Shetlanders consider Scotland as a place apart:

> In the sense that I'm a British subject, our queen is head of state, we're represented in U.K. government, all institutional and social services ultimately have their founds in Britain, then of course I'm of British nationality. I'm proud of that – Britain is a country of various regional identities. Shetland isn't a nation; it has no government, currency, judiciary, economy or armed services of its own. But it is / was culturally apart, and to ethnic Shetlanders it is the islands that we have greatest affinity for and are proud of being from, and realize it's being different. Scotland isn't a nation (despite many institutions, titular usage of "national"): it is a region, or province. "True" Shetlanders consider Scotland as a place apart from these islands. (Male, 40-49)

> Shetlander first, British second (Bearing in mind that only Britain in the nation. Shetland is a county and Scotland a region (Male, 63)

> Only British can be a nationality. Shetlander first, British second, nothing else. (Male, 50-59)

> Don't feel Scottish (not relevant) I was born in Britain, speak English as my second language, learned British history, am loyal to the monarch, have lived all my life in Britain and have a reasonable knowledge of the British way of life (Male, 60-69)

In the above case Shetland dialect was considered first language and English a second language and this informant saw himself as Shetlander and British. In terms of culture and identification with Scotland it was possible to distinguish roughly two groups: first, Shetland culture was seen as different and Shetlanders of this group did not see themselves as Scottish in any meaningful way; the second group reported instances of identification with Scotland but considered Shetland as culturally different or somewhat different. It was noted that among the Scots there is a greater identification with symbols (and symbols such as kilts and bagpipes were seen as non-Shetland) and one young informant elaborated as follows:

> Perhaps, because Scotland is a nation, there is more identification with national symbols – tartan, bagpipes, etc. – than for Shetland. Maybe this is just the view from the periphery, though, and not a sensible reflection of Scottish identity. (Male, 30-39)

From this quote it can be seen that whereas some of the locals of older generation had pointed out that Scotland is not a nation, but a region, this informant referred to Scotland as a nation and in this connection national symbols were assumed important for Scottishness but not as much for Shetland. Others also mentioned tartan, kilts, bagpipes and Robert Burns as defining for Scotland in cultural terms and as Scottish and not Shetland. One younger informant noted that Shetlanders would not look to Burns as a national figure, not only because Shetland has a separate cultural-

literary tradition but also because he is often caricatured into the tartan and bagpipes iconography of Scotland, which is something Shetlanders generally do not identify with.

However, on instances of local support for Scotland two younger respondents mentioned that Scottish Nationalism often seems to become exaggerated around things like football matches and other big sporting occasions and that on such occasions there are kilts and ginger wigs in evidence in local pubs. Both of them noted, however, that they are not particularly nationalistic for either Shetland or Scotland. Taken together, those who identified with Scotland expressed a personal rather than collective sense of belonging:

> I feel I identify with other Scots and have lived in other parts of Scotland. I feel British as opposed to any other European nationality (Female, 40-49)

> Well, I feel Shetlander *first*. Apart from that, I do feel an affinity (1) to anyone whose speech is something like mine. I never have to change the way I speak at all in Orkney, for example, which is an immediate bond. We share a lot of vocabulary with Aberdeenshire although we have different accents. But (2) I always felt at home with Western Isles people, who only share English with me, because of the lifestyle similarities!

> British: I always felt the collective idea of Britain, with all its nations and island groups, suited me OK, was a bracket into which Shetland could slot in nicely. (Female, 50-59)

> Residence over many years, and knowledge of history and culture. Birth of my ancestors, and love for a region (of Perthshire). British: Birth and upbringing involving England and Scotland equally. (Male, 40-49)

> Scottish - shared aspects of history, Scottish relatives and friends. British – Culture. Language. History, friends and relatives, shared values. (Male, 60)

At the same time as identification with Shetland was important to all informants, some of them did not choose any other label than 'Shetlander' to describe them. Some informants pointed out that the way in which they would describe themselves varies depending on circumstances. In addition, a number of informants stated explicitly that they feel neither Scottish nor British. Outsiders have often suggested that Shetlanders think of themselves as somewhat Scandinavian, while respondents to this study were of the opinion that Shetlanders have seen themselves primarily as Shetlanders.

While the Norse heritage and Scandinavian influence form an important part of what is perceived to be collective heritage, seeing oneself as more Scandinavian than Scottish or British was far from being a common experience. Although locals expressed their appreciation of the Norse heritage of Shetland, none of the individuals interviewed for this project stated explicitly they would describe themselves also as Scandinavian. In fact, all informants straightforwardly excluded both labels such as Scandinavian and the suggested label of "Scottish-Scandinavian", with one respondent stating that he would definitely not describe himself as Scandinavian "though the place-name and language links are interesting".

A few of the younger respondents mentioned that they would accept also the label of 'European' to describe them. One person pointed out that she does not feel British, because 'British' is associated with Englishness. A 30-year old respondent suggested that he would describe himself as British first, Scottish-British second and Shetlander third, but that this would be greatly depended on who is being informed. Similarly, depending on situation, another younger respondent stated he would describe himself as British first, Scottish second and Shetlander third. Reproducing prevailing contemporary discourses, younger interviewees confirmed to be comfortable with being Scottish and British, while retaining pride in being Shetlanders:

> I don't go over the top with it. I am as much British and Scottish as a Shetlander (but proud to be a Shetlander). (Male, 30-39)

> Opposite to the views of some of the younger respondents, one informant was of the opinion that cultural convergence with mainland Scotland is destroying the last remnants of Shetland culture:

> What matters most in culture is somewhat academic, given that there is precious little left that is distinctly Shetland. Strongest factor is the assault from Scotland; literature, art, sport, music become more institutionalized through clubs and competitions and concerts, and most have affiliation to Scotland. Even interest in Shetland dialect comes as part of encouragement of Scottish (i.e. not British regional).[442] Symbols are superficial and anyway the Shetland flag is a Scottish nationalist inspired colouration, negating UK's existence. Any other symbols are mere 'logos' like Viking imagery, used everywhere. What is worth saving most, like folk traditions, are dead already. The sense of identity, and difference, can hardly survive with death of dialect on one hand, and growing Scottish convergence on the other. (Male, 40-49)

Scottish convergence was intertwined with diminishing Shetland distinctiveness also in the following stance:

> Especially among the older generation, quite a number still acknowledge the sentiment of the old saying that "all we ever got from Scotland was dear meal and greedy ministers!""
> In my own youth, when significant dialectic variation existed among about a dozen or more Shetland districts, a speaker's district or island could be identified easily. Now, the number of districts having such individuality are few, and the young people are rapidly losing (and a great many have lost) any vestige of such distinctiveness - in fact, any vestige of the dialect itself, in many cases. When the dialect is lost, surely the major element contributing to distinctiveness is lost. (Male, 60-69)

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[442] The informant referred here to 'Scottish' in the meaning of Scots language.

An essential point to emerge from the sample of statements was that Shetland is undergoing an inter-generational identity shift. Some of the older respondents expressed dislike of the behaviour of young Shetlanders, who have adapted habits from the mainland – for example, by wearing kilts at weddings or changing their way of speaking. Mobility and increasing Scottish influence were mentioned as reasons for change in identification on part of younger Shetlanders, even the feeling that it is perhaps somewhat old-fashioned not to feel more Scottish today:

> In my experience, my father's generation saw themselves as Shetlanders first and British second, but not as Scots. I think that nowadays they see themselves as more Scottish than before - perhaps because the non-Scottish feeling is open to ridicule. (Male, 50-59)

While respondents of younger age felt more Scottish in comparison to those of earlier generations, cultural commitment to Shetland was important to all. Political and national identities did not contradict, in most cases, loyalty to distinct Shetland culture and self-understanding. But for those Shetlanders who felt differently the question of cultural difference was a question of ethno-cultural survival and continuity, and perceptions of Scotland as *the other* were as strong as ever.

Shetland's future

Bearing in mind the existence of contemporary nationalist discourse and the differences in devolution rhetoric in Shetland in the 1970s and 1990s, I was interested to find out respondents' views on the future history of Shetland and Scotland, especially concerning devolution and independence, and how they felt about this. As in other instances contributors were asked to reflect on the posed questions rather than simply reply to them. By and large, respondents focused on economic and social rather than political

issues. Two of the younger respondents to this study reported the absence of separatist feelings or demonstrated this implicitly, and two commented as follows:

> I have never felt in the least nationalistic, not for Shetland, Scotland or anywhere else. I feel fortunate to have access, through the accident of my birth and upbringing, to an unusual linguistic heritage but this doesn't translate into any kind of nationalism (Male, 30-39)

> Shetland is politically part of the UK. This will, I would say, remain the same. Talk of independence is usually from the lunatic fringe and often disguises a revolting, xenophobic right-wing intolerance. That said, were there more local control, within existing structures e.g. the ability to run our own water and drainage services; more control over fishing or education policy (I think local culture and history should be taught in schools, if they aren't already), then I think that would be a good thing. (Male, 30-39)

> I think that Scotland will eventually achieve independence (I don't have any strong views on this either way) but it appears to be going that way. I think key to the future of Shetland is attracting people here to live and work and also not to waste our community financial resources. (Male, 38)

The last informant quoted above did not have a strong opinion for or against Scottish independence, but considered independence to be likely. All other respondents who commented on political issues envisaged Shetland and Scotland remaining part of the United Kingdom either as more likely and /or as an option preferable to Scottish independence:

> I hope Shetland will always be part of the United Kingdom and never gain independence. (Female, 60-69)

> Hopefully together as part of a forward thinking, progressive

> Britain. Depends on the rise of Scottish nationalism and their attempts to break Scotland from the Union. Hopefully this will fail. (Male, 30-39)

> Probably more autonomy (devolution) for Scotland, but not formal independence. For Shetland, no more autonomy, and a continued loss of Shetland identity. Happy (about this), except about the last prediction, which saddens me. (Male, 40-49)

One local commented that there should be less interference from Governments in far away places and that the ways Shetland place names are spelled in English which destroys their meaning should be changed. Contemporary desires for more local control in Shetland, although being justified on economic grounds, are considered to nevertheless have their foundations in Shetlanders' feeling of detachment from the mainland.

Frustration and dissatisfaction with administrative issues handled on the mainland have become occasionally connected to cultural issues in the public mind and the two aspects are closely intertwined. The desire for more local control was confirmed by questionnaire responses. Several contributors were in favour of greater autonomy by devolved powers from Edinburgh. It was thought that there will be more devolution than exists at present and more local control of Shetland's own affairs was considered desirable:

> I think there will be more devolution than we have now. Fine, as long as the devolution continues further than Edinburgh. More local control of our own affairs would be good. I'm not in favour of complete Scottish Independence. I'd like a federal system. (Female, 50-59)

> I would hope that Scotland remains part of the United Kingdom and that Shetland would have more control over its own affairs by devolved power from Holyrood. (Female, 50-59)

Younger informants were of the opinion that Shetland and Scotland will be probably more integrated, as the world becomes a smaller place and also because of already existing ties:

> Economically/politically – we're probably tied together in a lot of ways already so we'll share the same fate. It's a natural progression, not necessarily a bad thing. The island community will live on, regardless. So the spirit should too. (Male, 30)

The future was seen as dependent on the economy. It was observed that for both Shetland and Scotland developments are dependent on whether the economy keeps thriving and that as long as there is employment, people will stay in both places. Local contributors stated that Shetland has had lean times and boom times all through history and one has to hope that a thriving economy continues. Others hinted at the demise of the oil industry in Shetland and were concerned on whether this may have an adverse effect. There was also reported a need to ensure Shetland culture is not lost through increased mobility and use of media. One respondent noted:

> So many rules that freedoms and industry will be stifled. Identity will be further lost to the global village. (Male, 50-59)

The presence of more and more newcomers was assumed to affect further the tendency to feel apart from mainland Britain through more inter-marriage and breaking down of differences. While change was generally associated with global developments and local immigration, in some responses it was specifically developments within Scotland that appeared to matter. One respondent remarked that in the future bureaucratic links would only bolster the process of growing convergence with Scotland and undermine Britishness, which would be an undesirable event:

> It will converge. Up to now 1970-2000s it has been growing,

> voluntary, convergence, through economic and cultural links. In future the political and bureaucratic links will cement this process, and undermine Britishness on the way. It is a tragedy. Regional difference is eliminated (at the same time as "diversity" is encouraged). Shetland's traditional non-Scottishness conveniently forgotten. British group identity broken. (Male, 40-49)

Another older respondent saw cultural homogenisation and uncertain economic future in connection with the possibility of Scottish independence:

> Homogenisation of cultures; questionable economic benefits, gradual disintegration of England-Scotland political Union to the benefit of no-one. Feeling: Pessimistic! But …maybe a Shetland Movement will be revived to keep the growing Scottish influence at bay (Male, 60-69)

From the quotes above it can be seen that the visions for the future in terms of devolution were somewhat similar among questionnaire respondents regardless of generation or background, yet there was a relatively strong division in their interpretation. Among the older respondents some were explicitly pessimistic about economic development and / or the demise of cultural difference, which marked a clear difference from the generation of the post-oil era. Yet only one respondent made an explicitly political statement by mentioning a revival of the Shetland movement in connection to opposing Scottish convergence. The dissociation of politics from culture was reinforced by a large number of replies emphasising the value and importance of Shetland culture and distinctiveness, but making no comments on politics at all.[443] These same issues are considered in

[443] As noted earlier, in May 2007 the SNP was able to form a minority government, ending half a century of Labour hegemony in Scotland and the views quoted above were recorded in March 2008. Further changes in political opinion are outside the scope of the present study; it is worthy of note, however, that Shetlanders' views,

the next chapters from the perspective of the politics of language and contemporary discussions on cultural change and continuity.

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especially on the apparent march towards Scottish independence, may have changed in the last two years or so.

V. The politics of language

This chapter returns briefly to Scottish contexts and considers the relationship between Gaelic, Scots and Scottishness against the background of new language movements. This is necessary in order to understand in what ways language discourses in the islands are similar to, or different from, these on the mainland. The chapter is based primarily on research literature. Similarly to political autonomy, linguistic autonomy also needs historical contextualisation to justify current positions and perceptions. This chapter focuses on the arguments used in contemporary language discussions and how these are linked to Scotland's past. Its aim is to discuss the politics of language in mainland Scotland while chapters 6 and 7 clarify the case of Shetland in relation to mainland Scotland.

New language movements

Movements to revive lesser used languages in the service of a region or nation remained uncommon until the late twentieth century.[444] Since the 1990s the amount of literature on linguistic diversity and minority languages has grown substantially. Scottish historian Houston has commented that the perceived problem of contemporary lesser-used languages is that they are in decline and are considered to deserve saving for the purposes of maintaining cultural diversity. Those who now support minority languages have had a cultural statement to make about the value of diversity and a political one about the validity of separatism. Less welcome,

[444] R.A. Houston, 'Minority Languages and Cultural Change in Early Modern Europe', in N.Ó Ciosáin (ed.), *Explaining Change in Cultural History* (Dublin, 2005), p. 27.

however, have been notions that linguistic purism can be equated with superior patriotism.[445]

The aspect of historical oppression as an explanation for the diminution of certain languages and success of others has been often central for the ideology of language movements. Whereas this ideology tends to be focused on the value of linguistic and cultural diversity in international settings, the foundation of linguistic rights can in part be traced back to the nineteenth century ideas about nationhood. Standardisation has affected the fortune of non-standard languages and many of them have declined, but a variety of factors have contributed to their distinct fortunes.[446] In many countries a relatively uniform written language (from the late middle-ages) coexisted with several spoken tongues.

Resistance to oppression has been a typical argument also for research on literary revivals. Scholars such as Marfany, whose views are presented next, have disagreed with the ways in which this literature has been interpreting among others the significance of single literary events as acts of loyalty to language. From a historical perspective, the idea of a literary revival in the case of minority languages has not been questioned and the early existence of literature has often been explained "as a discontinuous series of 'precedents'; discrete acts of inchoate cultural resistance, isolated surfacing of a deep, but as yet inarticulate will to survive."[447] Nevertheless, loyalty to language cannot be proved on the basis of assertions in explicit statements of love and affection towards the language without taking into account the other works of the same author and the extent to

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[445] Houston, 'Minority Languages and Cultural Change in Early Modern Europe', p. 27.

[446] Houston, 'Minority Languages and Cultural Change in Early Modern Europe', p. 13. For a detailed discussion of literacy in Scotland see R.A.Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity* (Cambridge, 1985).

[447] J.-L. Marfany, 'Minority' Languages and Literary Revivals', *Past & Present* (184) (2004), p. 140.

which authors used their native tongue in different cases of social transactions, and in social activities outside home environment, for example in diaries and letters.

Not every literary act in what was (or later came to be seen) as an endangered language can be interpreted as an expression of a strong statement of commitment to the language and neither its survival can be seen as an act of deliberate resistance.[448] In early modern Europe the problem – and this was not necessarily considered a problem – were the concrete obstacles different varieties created in terms of communication and integration.[449] For this reason, governments and churches sometimes used vernaculars that would be accessible to the largest number of speakers in a particular region; also translators were used, for example, in court proceedings. Prior to the rise of language-based ideas of culture it was the instrumental value of language that was of major importance – the value of language as symbol was still unknown for its speakers.

All contemporary language revitalisation movements are based on similar arguments, but what are their specific characteristics in Scottish contexts? From this perspective the next sections consider images of decline and language discussions.

Images of decline

Closely related to Irish, by the eleventh century, Gaelic had spread throughout nearly all of what is now mainland Scotland and had become established as the language of the Scottish kingdom. The main events associated with the decline of Gaelic are connected to the internal split in Scottish society between Gaels and Lowlanders, a division which was not originally clear-cut.[450] The expansion of Scots began from around the twelfth century. As a

[448] Marfany, ''Minority' Languages and Literary Revivals', p. 141.

[449] Houston, 'Minority Languages and Cultural Change in Early Modern Europe', p. 28.

[450] Horsburgh, *Gaelic and Scots in Grampian*, p. 14.

consequence of language shift in the south and east of the country during the late Middle Ages, Gaelic became restricted largely to the north and west of the country (the Highlands or Gàidhealtachd) from the fourteenth century onwards. From the seventeenth century the history of Gaelic has been one of demographic decline in terms of speakers and language loss. In the nineteenth century migration, education and general economic and cultural change encouraged a shift to English and bilingualism.

Change occurred markedly after the introduction of the Education Act of 1872. The Act did not mention Gaelic and monolingual English-speaking teachers became more common in the Highlands.[451] In 1918 Gaelic was granted a statutory role, but until the mid-twentieth century the authorities saw no benefit in bilingualism. In the late nineteenth century linguistic unification was also part of national development, as expressed by the critic Matthew Arnold in 1866 "the fusion of all the inhabitants of these islands into one homogenous, English-speaking whole – is a necessity of what is called modern civilisation."[452]

The dominance of English was in reality so unchallenged that it did not require articulation by politicians or state institutions or any kind of prohibition of minority languages. There are no monoglot speakers of Gaelic at present and the 2001 census showed a total of 58,969 Gaelic speakers aged 3 and over in Scotland, a mere 1.2% of the Scottish population.[453] Scots, the Germanic vernacular of the Lowlands, was in official use at the royal court and society in pre-Union Scotland, but lost its status after Scotland's Union with England in 1707.

It has been stated several times that whether Scots is seen as a

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[451] Glaser, *Minority languages and cultural diversity in Europe*, p. 70.

[452] Quoted in V. Rogers and W. McLeod, 'Autochthonous minority languages in public-sector primary education: Bilingual policies and policies in Brittany and Scotland', *Linguistics and Education* (17) (2006), p. 351.

[453] Statistics can be found at http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm/scotcen2/reports-and-data/scotcen-gaelic/

language or a dialect (or dialects for that matter) is dependent on a political point of view or that defining present-day Scots as a language has been difficult for both linguistic and historical reasons.[454] Certainly, there are numerous sources revealing that Scots was once recognised as the medium of diplomacy and trade. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Scots was employed in relations with other countries and the host countries often demonstrated an awareness and recognition of the fact that Scots was distinct from English.[455]

Recent research by Peter Davidson on perceptions of the British Isles and Ireland among the Catholic exiles provides some evidence suggesting that it was more problematic for an Englishman to understand Scots than for an Irish Gaelic speaker to understand a Highlander. In the documents, there was scattered evidence that the Jesuits were well aware of the linguistic disposition of Scotland, of the possibility of an Irish Gaelic speaker serving the Gaelic-speaking Scottish Highlanders, of the difference between Scots and English in the Lowlands, and "of the difficulties and questionable usefulness of sending an Englishman on the Scottish mission."[456]

A series of letters and memoranda of various administrators demonstrated distinctions between Highland and Lowland and "the parallel perception that the Scots and the English are antipathetic, being divided by custom, law and language."[457] An

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[454] See e.g. T. McArthur, *The English Languages* (Cambridge, 1998); D. Leith, *A Social history of English* (London, 1983), p. 164. Marina Dossena has argued that Scots is certainly distinct enough to be dealt with separately. In her view a terminological distinction between Scots and Scottish Standard English "has to be drawn very clearly and explicitly to avoid confusion." M. Dossena, *Scotticisms in Grammar and Vocabulary* (Edinburgh, 2005), p. 9 and p. 13.

[455] See Horsbroch, '*Nostra Vulgari Lingua*: Scots as a European Language 1500-1700', pp. 1-16.

[456] P. Davidson, 'Perceptions of the British Isles and Ireland among the Catholic Exiles: the Case of Robert Corbington Sj', in D. Worthington (ed.), *British and Irish Emigrants and Exiles in Europe, 1603-1688* (Leiden, 2010), p. 320.

[457] Davidson, 'Perceptions of the British Isles and Ireland among the Catholic

early-seventeenth century memorandum on the state of Scotland also emphasised that Scots and English are barely mutually intelligible as spoken languages, and that it is extremely difficult for an English speaker to adapt his dialect to one acceptable to the Scots. After the Union of the Parliaments of Scotland and England, English became the language of administration and prestige and Scots became more and more restricted in use and scope. In contemporary research, however, the view that Scotsmen of all classes were coming into regular contact with southern English is considered unlikely.[458]

The lack of a printed Scots Bible certainly contributed to the decline and English came to be regarded as the language of religion. But the general lack of a strong linguistic loyalty in the wake of the Reformation, rather than the Reformation itself, led to the diminishing use of Scots.[459] While political developments influenced linguistic developments, these have to be placed into the context of seventieth century Scotland. After the Treaty of Union in 1707 Parliament was moved to London, but Scotland continued to exist as a separate civil society and retained many of the institutions of self-government, particularly its own church and educational and legal systems.

Within the Union with England, a conscious process of rejection of Scots in favour of southern English came to dominate the literary and intellectual scene. The period of Scottish Enlightenment (1660-1843) was characterised by deliberate efforts to eradicate Scotticisms from writing and speech on part of the highly self-conscious Scottish Middle classes. Demands of politeness, correctness and refined social behavior and language were centered on prestige norms set by London. The aspiration to conform to a southern standard of English was important for many educated Scots. The philosopher David Hume, for instance, was particularly careful in his linguistic choices and his list of

Exiles', p. 320.

[458] A. Hagan, *Urban Scots Dialect Writing* (Bern, 2002), p. 60.

[459] Hagan, *Urban Scots Dialect Writing*, p. 61.

Scotticisms to be avoided in writing and polite society is a well-known example of the desire to eradicate "provincialisms".[460]

First these attitudes were typical for the educated classes and a matter of course for them, while since the late nineteenth century these became more widespread with the replacement of parish schools by more centralised education system. Perceptions of Scots were an integral part of the so-called Scottish cringe, the rejection of Scottish characteristics in favour of southern, English norms.[461] At the same time Scots varieties were frequently spoken among the Scottish population.

The urbanisation of the Lowlands in the nineteenth century gave rise to a distinction between rural and urban varieties, while education reinforced class-based divisions. In comparison to their urban counterparts, the rural dialects had the advantage of belonging to more homogeneous communities and had higher unifying role and integrative value for the corresponding language communities. This was, as noted in earlier chapters, particularly typical for Shetland, often given as an example of relatively stable and homogeneous language community.

According to Macafee it seems likely that broad dialects of Scots will survive only in communities with immunity from external forces, meaning mostly rural communities with less migration of the younger generation, such as the north-east, Orkney and Shetland. In her opinion, middle-class people and teachers who have grown up in the area speaking the local dialect are able to provide children with role models in being local and successful at the same time and in being bilingual.[462] While some have perceived Scots as a "dying language" for at least two centuries, others hold the opinion that Scots continues to be present in Scottish culture, literature and society.[463] Unlike for

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[460] See e.g. Dossena, *Scotticisms in Grammar and Vocabulary*, pp. 116-133.

[461] McClure, *Scots and its Literature*, pp. 5-19.

[462] C. Macafee, 'Ongoing Change in Modern Scots', in Ch. Jones (ed.), *The Edinburgh History of the Scots Language* (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 546.

[463] A.J. Aitken, 'Scots and English in Scotland', in P. Trudgill (ed.), *Language in the*

Gaelic, there is no census data on the speakers of Scots. By estimates as many as 1.5 million people speak some form of Scots.[464]

Reassessing history

Manifestly two factors have fed the Scots language movement: the debates about Scottish political autonomy and the growth of official support for Gaelic. By gaining major concessions from the government, the achievements of the Gaelic lobby had launched the issue of language into the political arena and caused many speakers of Scots to ask themselves the question: Why them and not us?!"[465] The question of "why them and not us?" is interesting because on the basis of history both languages can be seen as equally national. The contemporary position of Gaelic in Scottish national life is distinctly different from that of Irish in Ireland or Welsh in Wales, because it is not the only language at stake in national discourse and has been a minority language for centuries.

Two different lines of thought developed within the Scots movement, which can be termed as *official* and *cultural* parties.[466] The first group consisted of those who attempted to promote Scots for official purposes while the second group was mainly

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British Isles (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 517-532; W. McLeod and J. Smith 'Resistance to monolinguality: the languages of Scotland since 1918', pp. 21-30.

[464] This was shown in a report published by the Government in 1996 through the General Register Office (Scotland). The Government researchers came to "the view that a 'Pure Scots' did exist at one end of a continuum to English...and that many people's speech could clearly be placed as predominantly stemming from one or other of the two languages." See GRO(S) *A Report on the Scots Language Research* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 8. See also C. Macafee, 'The demography of Scots: The lessons of the census campaign', *Scottish Language* (19) (2000), pp. 1–44.

[465] Murdoch, *Language Politics in Scotland*, p. 1.

[466] Millar, *Language, Nation and Power*, p. 193. Although there are various presentations of the different strands within the Scots language movement and views on spelling, the distinction between what Millar called the 'official party' and 'the cultural party' is particularly useful.

concerned with its cultural value. As at earlier times, the search for Scottish identity on the basis of language has come mostly from members of the middle class and people with academic education, who are not necessarily speakers of Scots. The writer and broadcaster Billy Kay, author of *Scots. The Mither Tongue* is one of the activists who have pursued an overtly political agenda. In the 1990s he and others were instrumental in the nationalist movement in persuading the SNP to adopt a pro-Scots policy.[467]

Kay has argued in favour of Scots as a national tongue, closely intertwined with both political agenda and Scottish cultural identity. His descriptions of Scots as a language with a unique role "rooted deeply in the physical landscape" has been particular influential with language activists. Scots, Kay argues, is "essential for Scotland as her folk, her towns, her fields and rivers. It is a mirror of Scotland's soul."[468]

Another of the greatest supporters of the national vision for Scots is Derrick McClure, who has considered in several writings the revival of Scots in the context of complete revival of all aspects of Scottish national culture.[469] In its most ambitious sense, the official party has envisaged the extension of Scots into all domains of literary and non-literary activity, which are presently inhabited by English.[470] There have been numerous attempts to create a standard for Scots; these have been less successful however. For non-literary writing its use is new and in official settings remains so far restricted, while at the same time it is widely employed in

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[467] In the early 1990s the SNP was the only party to have the word 'Scots' (relating to language) in any policy document and the intention of the SNP was to develop Gaelic as a compliment to, and not an alternative, to Scots. See Murdoch, *Language Politics in Scotland*, p. 13. Internal pressure from Scots language activists led to SNP conference passing a number of resolutions in favour of Scots. Many Scots activists have argued in the SNP for increased support for Scots, such as John Law, Kenneth Fraser, Alasdair Allan MSP and Michael Hance.

[468] Kay, *Scots. The Mither Tongue*, p. 189.

[469] See e.g. D. McClure, *Why Scots matters* (Edinburgh, 1988).

[470] Millar, *Language, Nation and Power,* p. 193. For the debate on Scots orthography see McClure, *Scots and its Literature*, pp. 37-43.

the arts, literature, marketing and sectors of the media. The members of the cultural party have stressed instead the need to connect the language above all to the rich vernacular tradition from which it originates. Representatives of the official party have disagreed with such a viewpoint since it could be taken as encouraging regional separatism, thereby weakening the movement as a whole.[471]

In spite of occasional divergence of views between proponents of Gaelic and proponents of Scots and the existence of two separate movements, there has been little tension between their supporters:

> Significantly, and perhaps surprisingly, there has been relatively little conflict between Gaelic activists and Scots activists, although arguments of a "zero-sum" nature are common (i.e. that Scots initiatives should be taken instead of rather than in addition to Gaelic initiatives) and occasional disparaging remarks emerge from one camp or the other. Several key figures consciously advance an inclusive, multilingual approach, and the more common dynamic, at the public level at least, is one of cautious mutual respect.[472]

From the point of view of language history, both Gaelic and Scots can be seen as equally Scottish. In fact as Peter Davidson's research shows (as quoted in the previous chapter) one can find arguments to the effect that Scots was more distinct from English in the seventeenth century than Scottish Gaelic was from Irish. From this point of view, should not Scots be supported today as national on equal terms with Gaelic? The arguments presented by the proponents of equal treatment for Scots in the 1990s (and against a one-dimensional interpretation of Scottish past) deserve a special attention as these concern central issues of Scottish

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[471] Millar, *Language, Nation and Power,* p. 193; C. Macafee, 'Lea the Lead Alane', *Lallans* (57) (2000), pp. 56-65.

[472] McLeod, 'Gaelic in the New Scotland: Politics, Rhetoric and Public Discourse', p. 14.

history.

Horsburgh and Murdoch have covered in several articles the ways in which language history has been subject to myth building producing at times anachronistic interpretations or politically loaded views.[473] There are various ways to interpret history and historical selectiveness has at times affected ideas of language and national history.[474] The politics of language has not only concerned names of language varieties, but also ethnic and regional notions. This has reinforced perceptions of divisions between Highland and Lowland along linguistic lines.

However, one cannot accurately use such broad historical terms as 'the Highlanders' or 'the Lowlanders'.[475] These groups seldom acted as homogeneous groups and language was a means of expression and not necessary an important factor in personal identification with one group or another. As far as the Scottish population as a whole is concerned, many Lowlanders are of "Gaelic" origin and many carry "Gaelic" names. Language contact, language shift and bilingualism have been playing a major role in reshaping the linguistic history of Scotland.[476]

Another erroneous view was that in Scottish residence the Lowlanders are more recent than the Highlanders and that their forefathers were English-speaking people who worked their way northwards from England. Both assertions were incorrect from a historical point of view – the language spoken was Anglo-Saxon and only few migrated northwards.[477] Language contacts after the establishment of the burghs were an example of a language spread rather than an ethnic spread as demographic event. Although some migration took place, it is unlikely that during that period

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[473] A more detailed discussion is presented in Nihtinen, 'Scotland's linguistic past and present'. Here I summarise the results of recent research on the subject.

[474] See Murdoch, *Language Politics in Scotland*, pp. 5-9.

[475] Murdoch, *Language Politics in Scotland*, p. 8.

[476] Murdoch, *Language Politics in Scotland*, p. 9.

[477] Murdoch, S. / Mac Mhuirich, S., 'Language of nationalism divides partisans', *Scotland on Sunday*, 3 November 1996.

this was a massive spread of population, but rather a linguistic spread.

A further issue to take into consideration is the idea of 'Celtic nationhood'.[478] Many writings on cultural matters in Scotland defined Scotland simply in terms of the presence or absence of Gaelic.[479] Recently reborn Celticness placed a new emphasis on the history of Gaelic in Scotland, but at the same time Lowland linguistic history was affected by contemporary perceptions of Scots as a dialect of English.[480] The argument goes that Gaelic has been equated with Scottishness to the extent that other aspects of Scottish linguistic history are being ignored. Furthermore, Scotland has been described and perceived as a Celtic country, a division, which is often entirely language-based.[481]

The modern affection towards all things Celtic has been seen to have caused in Scotland inconsistency in claiming Scottish Gaelic as *the* national language (a claim based on a period of dominance that ended eight hundred years ago) whereas nobody had claimed the same either about English or about Scots. Moreover, the argument continues, the language of England has been the dominant language in Scotland since the eighteenth century but most Scots would reject the idea that this makes English the national language of the country.[482]

Scots was dominant only three hundred years ago, but few would support the view that Scots alone is the national language of Scotland. Clearly, one cannot and should not assume that a period of political dominance alone makes a language the national

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[478] D. Horsburgh, 'The haill kintra is gat begunkit. The thrawn historie o Scotlan's cultures', *Cairn* (Aberdeen, 1997), p. 7; Horsbroch, 'The Scots language: An historical and political assessment', p. 23; Nihtinen, 'Scotland's linguistic past and present', p. 121.

[479] Horsburgh, 'The haill kintra is gat begunkit', p. 19.

[480] In addition, the 'victim' narrative of the Highland Clearances did not sit well with Scots, but did include Gaelic. Consequently, this also produced an emphasis on the history of Gaelic.

[481] Murdoch, *Language Politics in Scotland*, p. 9.

[482] Horsburgh, 'The Scots language: An historical and political assessment', p. 22.

tongue in a country with a complex linguistic history. This had led to other major questions such as: 1) to what extent Scotland is Celtic in the eyes of its own people? 2) when was Gaelic Scottish or when was Scotland Gaelic?[483] Celtic nationhood is a misleading notion when connected to present day Scotland, because in the common mood of romanticism Lowland Scots culture did not seem to fit with the ideal.[484]

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Scottish scholars refined the idea that Scottish Gaeldom formed a distinct cultural province, with a distinct language. Irish and Scottish Gaels were forced to assess their cultures in response to the expansion of both England and Lowland Scotland. Therefore, in the modern period Scottish Gaels have often chosen to play down the common Gaelic culture and language, while on the other hand Irishmen have often regarded Scottish Gaeldom as an adjunct of Irish culture.[485] Horsburgh has pointed out that it was during the Jacobite period that Gaelic became 'the ancient language of Scotland' with emphasis exclusively on Scotland. By the mid-eighteenth century Scottish Gaelic culture and language were established as Scottish and clearly distinct.[486]

Horsburgh clarified an interesting role-reversal. Whereas written Scots, on the one hand, had become increasingly anglicised during the seventeenth century, Gaelic was increasingly scotticised in Scotland. By the eighteenth century the written language of the Lowlands (for most public purposes) had become

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[483] See D. Horsburgh, 'When was Gaelic Scottish? The Origins, Emergence and Development of Scottish Gaelic Identity 1400-1750', in C. Ó Baoill and N.R. McGuire (eds.), *Rannsachdh Na Gaidhlig 2000/ Scottish Gaelic Studies Conference* (Aberdeen University, 2-4 August 2000), pp. 231-242.

[484] Horsburgh, 'The haill kintra is gat begunkit', p. 8.

[485] See e.g. T.F. O'Rahilly, *Irish Dialects Past and Present with Chapters on Scottish and Manx* (Dublin, 1972), p. 123; L.Leneman (ed.), *Perspectives in Scottish Social History* (Aberdeen, 1988), p. 108.

[486] Horsbroch, 'When was Gaelic Scottish?', p. 240; D. Horsburgh and S. Murdoch, *Kennin yer Earse fae yer Alba. The Scottish Office, the Gaelic Lobby and the Scots Language – a discussion document* (Aberdeen, 1998), pp. 9-10.

English with some Scottish characteristics. In the Highlands, however, Scottish Gaelic had become a lively new expression of Scottishness. Both languages had, in fact, reversed the positions which they enjoyed relative to each other in the seventeenth century.[487]

Recent history writing on language has thereby attempted to redress some of the myths surrounding both Gaelic and Scots but from partially different perspectives. The politics of language, entrenched in linguistic terminology, also offers competing interpretations. Until the late fourteenth century, Gaelic was referred to as Lingua Scotica, whereas from the fifteenth century onwards Scottis or Scots began to denote the language previously known as 'Inglis'.[488] By the end of the fifteenth century the Germanic language variety of the Lowland was called Scots while Gaelic was known as 'Erse' (Irish). Their speakers, however, were both indigenous Scottish populations that used languages related to those spoken in neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, it had remained a political expedient for some authors to describe Scottish Gaelic as an Irish dialect or Scots as an English dialect, depending on their political agenda or belief.

Avoiding convergence

In similar ways as the relation between Scots and English has been a matter of debates linguists have also disagreed as to how and when Scottish Gaelic came to diverge from Irish. The extent to which medieval Gaeldom constituted a single cultural province is considered ambiguous.[489] Contemporary research suggests that

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[487] Horsbroch, 'When was Gaelic Scottish?', p. 239.

[488] J.D. McClure, 'Scottish, Inglis, Suddroun: Language labels and language attitudes', in R. Lyall and F.J. Riddy (eds.), *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Scottish Language and Literature* (Stirling and Glasgow, 1982), p. 52, Horsbroch, The Scots language: An historical and Political Assessment', p. 26.

[489] W. McLeod, 'Linguistic pan-Gaelicism: a dog that wouldn't hunt', *Journal of Celtic Linguistics* (12) (2008), p. 88.

this has been usually overstated. According to Wilson McLeod, by the early seventeenth century Irish speakers perceived Scottish Gaelic as a distinct, although perhaps still mutually intelligible, variety.[490] Although Ireland and Scotland were never politically unified, a range of cultural and political links were maintained through the centruries, at least until the mid-seventeenth century.

It is therefore meaningful to consider also the contexts in which Gaelic was part of wider Gaelic rhetoric and to what extent language played an important role. Research by McLeod shows that pan-Gaelicism was a prominent theme in the Gaelic language movements of the nineteenth century, but actually worked to promote linguistic separatism.[491] Due to the different position of Gaelic in Scotland the Gaelic renaissance of the late nineteenth century was not comparable to that of Irish in Ireland. The emergence of Scotland's city-based Highland associations corresponded to the beginning of a modern language movement in Ireland in the end of nineteenth century. This was also followed by the founding in 1891 of the more broad-based *An Comunn Gàidhealach* (the Highland Association), partially analogous to the Gaelic League in Ireland, but less clearly language-focused.[492] However, not only were the aims of the organizations different, in terms of language and politics, but also the situation of the two languages was clearly different at that time.

While by the 1870s Irish was less written and less read, Scottish Gaelic was arguably more written and more read than ever before.[493] As well as having experienced a less dramatic demographic decline, Scottish Gaelic was in most respects more developed than Irish at that time. Several hundred Scottish Gaelic

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[490] See W. McLeod, *Divided Gaels: Gaelic Cultural Identities in Scotland and Ireland, c. 1200- c. 1650* (Oxford, 2004).

[491] See McLeod, 'Linguistic pan-Gaelicism', pp. 87–120.

[492] McLeod, 'Linguistic pan-Gaelicism', p. 92.

[493] For the ways is which Gaelic was written in Late Medieval and Early Modern Scotland see Maccoinich, 'Where and How was Gaelic written in Late Medieval and Early Modern Scotland?', pp. 309-356.

books had appeared in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, alongside a number of journals (albeit mostly short-lived), at a time when Irish publishing was minimal. The land reform movements of the 1880s, and the subsequent foundation of the Highland Association were the closest Gaelic society ever produced in terms of political movement, but the main concern of that movement was not the language, but the security of tenure and the securing of the crofting way of life.

There were elements of transnational 'Celtic Nationalism' in the context of land agitation in Highland Scotland in the late 1870s. Radicalism in nineteenth century Scottish society consisted of a combination of class-based social reforms and national consciousness and included occasionally pan-Celtic rhetoric, leading to agitation on land, labour and Home Rule after the mid-1880s.[494] Gaelic was seen as intertwined with the fortunes of the crofters and the existence of cultural dimension in the movement was part of a modernisation project and by no means a nationalist project. A systematic language-based movement for Gaelic did not emerge until the late 1960s. In comparison to nationalist and assimilatory movements in Europe, the situation of Gaelic in nineteenth century Scotland was somewhat different as there was no need to politicise the language question.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there were contexts of pan-Gaelic solidarity and rhetoric and this rhetoric (concentrating on the strengthening of connections between Gaelic Ireland and Gaelic Scotland) was a prominent feature in the nineteenth century Gaelic language movements.[495] It was periodically rediscovered, but at the same time both language movements remained focused primarily on the situation in their own countries. The restoration of the Irish language became a key focus of the restoration of the Irish nation, whereas there could be no meaningful role for the Scottish dimension in this process. As a

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[494] See A.G. Newby, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. 85-116.

[495] McLeod, 'Linguistic pan-Gaelicism', p. 87.

result of these complex reasons, in the end of nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, solidarity with Gaelic Ireland was by no means a widespread sentiment among the Scottish Gaels. Many Scottish Gaels were firmly attached to the British state and had little sympathy for Irish nationalism.[496] Difference from Irish Gaels was based on belonging to Scotland and the British state, while at the same time the political and language situations were plainly different in the neighbouring countries.

Despite pan-Gaelic rhetoric of solidarity for the Scottish Gaels it was of major importance to retain the Scottishness of their language. Therefore, to avoid opportunities of linguistic convergence was the only meaningful response to changed discourses. Against this background it is not surprising that contemporary Gaelic speakers have showed an explicit dislike for participation in what can be called minority rights discourses and also avoiding linguistic convergence remains the norm in language discussions. Although Gaelic speakers have tended to speak of themselves as a distinct group, they have not seen themselves as a distinct ethnic group within Scotland.[497]

National initiatives

Language matters have been seen as far less important for Scotland than other concerns and Scottish history and distinctive institutions have formed and shaped the meanings of Scottishness rather than language. Nevertheless, both Gaelic and Scots have been increasingly perceived as an essential part of Scottish cultural distinctiveness. In recent years their position relative to one another in Scottish life has been affected by political change in the country, notably the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh in July 1999.

The UK's ratification in 2001 of the *European Charter for Regional*

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[496] McLeod, 'Linguistic pan-Gaelicism', p. 94.

[497] See McLeod, 'Gaelic in the New Scotland', pp. 21-24.

or Minority Languages was intended to ensure a certain degree of institutional support for both languages. The UK government bounded itself to Parts II and III of the Charter in relation to Gaelic and only to part II in relation to Scots. At that point, although this meant that Scots could count on less support in comparison to Gaelic as a result of ratification, Scots activists considered this event as important, together with the establishment of the cross-party group on Scots in the Scottish Parliament.[498]

Both language movements have their background in the Scottish Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s, when apart from Scots also Gaelic was repositioned to the center of Scottish culture. Unlike earlier movements, the revitalisation movement emerging in the late 1960s and known as the 'Gaelic renaissance' has been a language-based movement. During recent decades the language has come to benefit from greater status and institutional recognition than ever before. Gaelic has been supported in various ways, in education, media and public life. The language has been also monitored on a systematic basis and it has been possible to analyse its state in terms of demographics and patterns of language use. The new recognition of Gaelic has now been protected in legislation with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 which recognised Gaelic as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language.[499]

Bòrd na Gàidhlig, originally established in 2003, has now been given a variety of specified powers and responsibilities. For example, any public body in Scotland may be required to prepare a Gaelic language plan. In contrast, in recent reports and statements Scots has been perceived essentially as a supplement to Gaelic by the Scottish authorities and often seemed to be an

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[498] Interview with Colin Wilson, see A. Nihtinen, 'Re-acquainting with the language of childhood and grandparents…and much more', *Studia Celtica Fennica* (1) (2004), pp. 3-8. The ratification of the Charter was followed by several, more recent changes. For a detailed discussion and bibliography see Nihtinen, 'Gaelic and Scots in devolved Scotland', pp. 69-81.

[499] Nihtinen, 'Gaelic and Scots in devolved Scotland', p. 72.

afterthought.[500] In spite of its recognition (although this is arguably minimal) the practical steps taken in support have been limited.[501] These have been generally focused on either its literary use or research into its decline. Differences in the attitudes of policy makers to Gaelic and Scots have also been visible in the symbolic use of Gaelic as opposed to different approach to Scots. The languages have been used differently for example in speeches of politicians and in the work of the Parliament from the very beginning.[502] Both Gaelic and Scots were used briefly but symbolically at the otherwise English language ceremonial opening of the new Parliament in Edinburgh, but in different ways.[503]

One obvious difference between the contemporary situations of the two languages is that Gaelic is institutionalized and supported both as a national and cultural issue and as an endangered minority language. Scots is usually supported with regard to its role as a national cultural asset, but this has been less visible in governmental language policy. Simultaneously, the position of Gaelic has become increasingly contradictory. In spite of significant funding in broadcasting, public life and education, surveys have shown that Gaelic is being used less and less frequently in home and community life even in the traditionally strong Gaelic-speaking areas. Discourse about Gaelic often has had little to do with the language *per se*, as a medium of expression and communication, but rather with concepts such as 'Gaelic language and culture' and 'raising the profile'. In Gaelic arts events and cultural tourism Gaelic tended to be used only ritualistically or tokenistically.[504]

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[500] See R.M. Millar, ''Burying alive': Unfocused Governmental Language Policy and Scots', *Language Policy* (5) (2006), pp. 63-86.

[501] Millar, 'Burying alive', p. 82.

[502] Nihtinen, 'Gaelic and Scots in devolved Scotland', p. 73.

[503] Sheena Wellington sang one of Robert Burns' best-known songs 'A man's man for a' that'.

[504] McLeod, 'Gaelic in the New Scotland: Politics, Rhetoric and Public Discourse', p.

Developments for Scots have so far remained less ambitious in terms of finance and institutional support, yet in 2008 an audit of provision for services in Scots was commissioned on the initiative of the Scottish Culture Minister.[505] As a result, the Scottish government has taken over funding for the Scots Language Centre and increased support to the main Scots organisations.

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[505] At that time Linda Fabiani.

VI. Decline or evolution?

While the previous chapter focused on the politics of language in mainland Scotland the aims of this and next chapters is to clarify the case of Shetland in relation to mainland Scotland. To this end, analysis first concentrates on language discourses in Shetland in terms of change and continuity. In turn, the next chapter discusses arguments for and against language status for the Shetland dialect and the correspondence between national and regional. Primary sources include local articles and papers and scholarly literature.

Shetland as different

From the point of view of the islands the picture that emerges is even more interesting – while Gaelic is a clearly a distinct language in Scottish contexts its speakers have seen themselves as Scottish and it has never promoted Gaelic separatism. On the other hand, Shetland dialect (whether termed a dialect of Scots or a dialect of English) has been seen as distinct from other Scottish varieties and closely associated with Shetland's cultural separateness.

A Shetland Dialect Convention was held in Scalloway in March 2004 and more than 150 speakers and delegates gathered to discuss Shetland dialect.[506] The declared aim of the gathering was the encouragement of a debate on how the local dialect should be kept alive in spite of the influence of the media (especially television) and of cultural homogenisation. Not all Shetlanders

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[506] 'Future of Shetland dialect goes under the Spotlight', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 26 March 2004, p. 6.

have seen the results of the Dialect Convention equally. Indeed, some Shetlanders have considered dialect promotion activities as unnecessary, at the same time, on the other hand, there have been suggestions for a language status. Nevertheless, debates on dialect and language history had existed long before the Convention and these have also continued after that. Somewhat paradoxically, Brian Smith and John Magnus Tait, neither of whom are active in the activities of the newly emerged dialect group, have tended to represent the two opposite viewpoints on language in Shetland. These discourses will be examined in more detail in subsequent sections, but the issues I am focusing on can be summed up as follows.

Recent dialect-based ideas of Shetland culture can be described in two ways. First, historical writing has aimed at redressing Norn-related myths. Second, by focusing on dialect promotion as a socio-economic rather than nationalist project Shetland dialect activists and writers have considered dialect to only put the concerns of many in more radical terms.[507] These two discourses deserve special attention as they constituted much of the contemporary debate on language in Shetland and are connected to both local and national contexts.

In the early 1990s in an article on Shetland dialect Derrick Tulloch wrote that while Shetland dialect has been generally described as a mixture of Scots and Norn, it would be just as correct to call it 'heavily Norn-influenced Scots'. Shetlanders had seen their dialect as "unique" and not related to the mainland Scots dialect, but if Shetlanders were willing to see Shetland dialect as part of the Scots language then its future would be at least one of survival and perhaps of expansion:

> While our dialect is generally described as a mixture of Scots and Norn, it is just as correct to call it "heavily Norn-influenced Scots". I would suggest that the latter is the more productive point of view as far as the future is concerned – there is no a

[507] This is clarified in more detail in chapter 7.

> terribly great possibility of Norn TV programmes.[508]

The main argument of the article quoted above was that considering Shetland dialect a branch of Scots may prove to be a more beneficial viewpoint for the future. On the other hand, commenting on local change in opinion, Shetland-born language activist John M. Tait argued that whereas thirty, or perhaps even twenty, years ago Shetlandic was the native speech of almost all Shetlanders, it was now rapidly becoming a rural dialect. Traditionally Shetland dialect had been referred to by its eponymous designation as *Shaetlan* (*Shetland*), while it was increasingly referred to as dialect. Tait considered the changes in perceptions and terminology closely intertwined with Shetlanders' self-understanding and has recurrently criticised the absence of desire among the Shetlanders for a separate language status and official use of Shetland dialect.

By comparing Shetland to places such as the Faeroes, Tait argued that what elsewhere is considered "progressive movement" is seen in Shetland as "narrow activism".[509] What is clear is that the Shetland dialect did not become an official language. Moreover, as later considerations will demonstrate, there has been little support for the idea of language status not only among the island population but also among those Shetland intellectuals, who have been involved in the production of language dicourses. By this notion I mean the majority of dialect activists in Shetland and Shetland-born or Shetland-based writers and editors.

For the purposes of this study main attention was paid to the views of writers and editors such as John and Laurence Graham, representatives of the younger generation of writers such as Malachy Tallack and Mark Smith and the speakers at the Dialect

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[508] D. Tulloch, 'Nae futir fur Shetland dialect', *The New Shetlander* (179) (1992), p. 35.

[509] Tait's views are discussed in detail in chapter 7.

Convention, presented in the introduction of the thesis.[510] If the idea of language status was not popular, how then can we understand the role of dialect in contemporary discourses? Furthermore, identities are constructed out of references to history, but why is language history playing a significant role? In order to clarify these issues it is appropriate to examine prevailing discourses on language history and narratives of change; this is the objective of the next sections.

Dimensions of change

> When I was young almost all the people were Shetlanders. The Doctors, Ministers and Teachers were all mainland folk, speaking with an English tongue. Their children mixed with us in school and learned the Shetland Dialect. Now the shoe is on the other foot. Mainland people are in the majority, so the children mixing together at school speak now with the incomers tongue.[511]

The above quote of a contemporary Shetlander pointed clearly to the role of *mainland folk*, perceived or real, for dialect change. The Swedish scholar Gunnel Melchers, who researched language attitudes in Shetland during the spring of 1983, argued that the strong sense of affiliation with Scandinavia was a dominant feature of Shetlanders' self-understanding at that time, and existing in both culture and everyday life on the islands. In the context of change Shetland dialect had not only important but somewhat central role in Shetlanders' identification as a separate group.

In the beginning of the oil-era Shetland dialect was considered the primary means of communication in almost all contexts by Shetland natives and, as later chapters demonstrate, contributors

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[510] See figure 1 (primary sources).

[511] Opinion provided by Elma Johnson, local storyteller. Personal communication, 25 April 2006.

to the present study attributed an ethnic dimension to it. Melchers quoted a memorandum to teachers circulated by John Graham, at that time the headmaster of Anderson High School in Lerwick, which shows that Shetlanders were capable of switching between Shetland dialect and Standard English.[512]

Language use in the isles was an example of bilingualism or bidialectism and speakers were able to keep English and Shetland dialect as separate varieties unlike speakers from the mainland. The explanation for this difference between mainland and islands, apart from isolation and absence of class-consciousness, was also the existence of local attitudes against *knappin*. This local word referred to the use of a standardised form of English with locals, which has been traditionally disliked in the isles. Shetlanders were a homogenous speech community with a certain amount of regional but hardly any social variation, and a marked linguistic identity.[513] Shetland dialect was perceived to be a direct successor of the old Norn and, although no longer the main element of the language variety itself, this constituted a major element of Shetlanders' linguistic awareness. Melchers argued that positive attitudes towards all things Scandinavian kept the Scandinavian element alive.

However, although she does not develop this thought, the opposite can be an equally valid claim: having Scandinavian elements in the language could be seen to have engendered a positive attitude towards Scandinavia. On the other hand, her informants expressed dislike for things Scottish. Nevertheless, already in 1983 only about 50% of the Anderson High School pupils in Lerwick had both their parents born in Shetland.[514] While

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[512] Melchers, 'Language attitudes in the Shetland Islands', p. 97; Macafee, 'Ongoing change in modern Scots', p. 520. On Shetlanders' bilingualism see also Graham, *The Shetland dictionary*, p. XVI. Melchers wrote various articles on this theme. Here I have chosen to consider this particular article because of its focus on Shetlanders' attitudes to language.

[513] Melchers, 'Language attitudes in the Shetland Islands', p. 97.

[514] Melches, 'Language attitudes in the Shetland Isles', p. 90.

in the beginning of the oil era Shetland dialect was widespread, linguistic research has suggested that more recently, particularly in Lerwick, the use of a Shetland-accented form of Scottish Standard English has become widespread, even between fellow Shetlanders.[515]

Contemporary sociolinguistic research on Shetland, such as a recent study of Jennifer Smith and Mercedes Durham demonstrates a significant variation in opinions expressed on the state of Shetland dialect among the Shetland population.[516] Their examination showed that the linguistic situation is more complex than straightforward loss of Shetland dialect across the generations. Half of their younger informants were using dialect forms just as much as the older age groups, while the other half hardly used them at all. The researchers also noted that some locals were of the opinion that reports of dialect decline are exaggerated.

Shetland and Norn

Popular understandings of language history in Shetland have been affected by the nineteenth century Norse revival movement and perceptions of Shetland dialect as Norn have been present also in the twentieth century. In spite of its fragmentary existence in Shetland dialect, Norn-based rhetoric has been periodically rediscovered and it is an integral part of cultural distinctiveness in Shetland.

Until recently, both research and popular interest were focused almost exclusively on Shetland's Scandinavian characteristics. Some Shetlanders considered Shetland's linguistic distinctiveness to have been lost with Norn, which they assumed to have been a distinctive language in contrast to the modern Shetland dialect.

[515] Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots*, p. 182.

[516] J. Smith and M. Durham, 'Shetland voices: dialect use across three generations in Lerwick', *Shetland Life* (May 2009), p. 35.

Proponents of this view argued that Norn was clearly distinct and that Shetland's distinctiveness was lost with the decline of Norn and in comparison the contemporary dialect has been seen as deficient.[517]

In the romantic, essentially pessimistic viewpoint Shetland's Scandinavian history was regarded as the period of real greatness and all subsequent history was evidence of progressive decline from a Norse Golden age.[518] On the other hand contacts with Scotland were seen as intrinsically corrupting and this was transferred to understandings of language history. In terms of Shetland dialect the pessimistic images of decline entered the scene towards the end of nineteenth century, but, as noted earlier, these views were also combined with pride in distinctive culture. However, recently prevailing attitudes in the islands have been described as pro-Scandinavian and at times anti-Scots and this has sometimes led to prejudiced reading of historical sources and has tended to emphasise links between Shetland and Scandinavia.[519]

The reinvention of Norn played an important role in the emergence of modern Shetland self-understanding and in the late nineteenth century was connected to wider economic modernisation. Both Norn and Shetland dialect had remained important part of local discussion. Both the idealisation of Norn and modernisation contributed to pessimistic interpretations of the past. In popular discourses and tourist material it is still not uncommon to encounter images of Norn as modified (or "watered down") into the present dialect. Davy Cooper, Shetland storyteller,

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[517] This widespread image is referred to also in a book review concerning John Graham's dictionary. See 'The Shetland dictionary', *The New Shetlander* (131) (1980), pp. 30-31.

[518] The same was equally true for Orkney. As remarked in chapter 4, the older Orkney historians regarded Orkney's Scandinavian history as the period of real greatness whereas at present notions have become more diversified.

[519] See e.g. B. Smith, 'Shetland, Scandinavia, Scotland, 1300-1700: the changing nature of contact' in G. Simpson (ed.), *Scotland and Scandinavia 800-1800* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 25-37.

author of *Viking Stories*[520] and currently member of the Shetland Folklore Development Group and Shetland ForWirds expressed this as follows:

> Shetland folklore is diverse and covers a wide range of tales, legends, proverbs and odd sayings. A key component of much of it is the ancient Norn language which has been modified and watered down into the present Shetland dialect. Many of the terms used in folklore are based on Norn words. Indeed it is only in old tales and proverbs that many of these words now survive, having been lost to general usage.[521]

Contemporary academic research of Shetland-born Brian Burgess also considers Shetland dialect, in particular Shetland vocabulary, in terms of erosion and loss. An academic paper by him is entitled 'Observations on the extent to which vocabulary is being weakened, eroded or lost in the dialect of Shetland' and in his thesis Burgess has considered dialect to be used very differently by the old and young generations, with the older generation demonstrating full knowledge of the investigated vocabulary.[522]

The results of the above research can be questioned as the situation of Shetland dialect regarding vocabulary is not necessarily much different from the situation in other British (or European) communities; the effects of media influences and globalisation are similar. Nevertheless, Burgess reproduced the images of erosion and loss. Furthermore, from the above perspective dialect loss was seen as a rather new phenomenon with the younger generation being a carrier of different attitudes. Yet the examination of Burgess registered on the other hand affection towards dialect among Shetlanders of all age groups.

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[520] The book was published by the Shetland Amenity Trust. See D. Cooper, *Viking Stories* (Lerwick, 2004).

[521] D. Cooper, 'Shetland Folklore. Monsters & Myths', *Shetland Visitor* (2007), p. 31.

[522] B. Burgess, 'Shetland ForWirds. Generation gaps', *Shetland Life* (September 2007), p. 33.

Parallel to the images of change and "watering down" of Norn into Shetland dialect the use of Norse elements in literary production became an important part of literary discourses. Robert Alan Jamieson is one of the Shetland authors who have widely experimented with language. In producing a work of poems *Shoormal* in 1986 he had used both Norse and Scots dictionaries to the opposite effect:

> Jakobsen's dictionary opened up a hinterland of learning that I felt was given to me for all time. A huge pile of words sorted out alphabetically for easy access. It was a gift and I made as much and as free use of it as I could. Not a definitive work, but a broad gate opening into the fertile ground of the past. The second of the two dictionaries, the 'Concise Scots', worked against that. It carried a reverse twist, so to speak. I was living in Edinburgh at that time and there was a lot of dust raised by this book, and how at last there was a scholarly work to pin down finally the essence of the whole MacDiarmid-led 'Scots Renaissance'.
> And there was a kind of arrogance in the way some people without the slightest understanding of what Scots was like as a spoken tongue nonetheless saw themselves suddenly expert, because they'd bought this book. That annoyed me, because it was so reductive and patronizing, although I must say that this is not a criticism of the book itself, for it is an outstanding publication – rather the fault lay with the readership.
> So the way that Shoormal came into being was this - upon one hand I had these wonderful old words from Jakobsen and my days in Sandness, and upon the other there was a concise dictionary being mistaken for a comprehensive one, that didn't contain many of the words I knew. In a way, I used one dictionary to offset the other, and subtitled the glossary 'words outwith the Concise Scots Dictionary'.[523]

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[523] R.A. Jamieson, 'Meditations upon a poet's responsibility to the mother tongue', *Dialect. Two days conference & public debate on the developments of the Shetland dialect* (Lerwick, 2004), p. 58. The article was presented and published in Shetland dialect. Its original title is 'Da Saekrit Paetbank’: medittaesjins apo a Sjetlin poyit’s

Indeed, one of the explicitly mentioned exclusions of *the Concise Scots Dictionary* concerns vocabulary from Shetland, Orkney and Caithness, more specifically the exclusion of material "from these areas which belongs not to Scots but to Norn, the Norse language formerly spoken there."[524]

While literary choices (such as those of Jamieson for instance) are often seen as a reflection of individual rather than collective views, with respect to the widespread popular perceptions of language, similarly to Scotland, also in Shetland it is language history that has been a matter of considerable contemporary debate. The existence of conflicting views is not surprising, but it is important to pay attention to the views of those setting the contemporary debate and agenda for others. In the beginning of the oil era it had become quite useful for Shetlanders to draw parallels between the transition time experienced in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the oil era. Local authors of considerable importance such as John and Laurence Graham saw the late nineteenth century as a transition time, an obvious parallel to the ongoing oil era.

One can find a variety of articles on both Norn and Shetland dialect and John and Laurence Graham, who edited *the New Shetlander* for more than forty years, produced or edited several of these writings. The contemporary Shetland dialect has been described in local articles, notably by John Graham as a product of "the merging of Norn with Scots and English", an amalgam in which the Norn element is progressively disappearing.[525] Similarly, his *Shetland Dictionary* depicted the Shetland dialect as "an amalgam of Norse, Lowland Scots and English, each element reflecting a period in the islands' history dominated by these

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responsibielities t'dir mither tung'.

[524] M. Robinson (ed.), *The Concise Scots Dictionary* (Edinburgh, 1996), pp. XVII-XVIII.

[525] J. Graham, 'Education and local culture in Shetland', *The New Shetlander* (120) (1977), p. 6.

respective nations."[526] Some viewpoints have seen dialect in terms of evolution, while others have concentrated on its decay.

But also images of language decline have been related in Shetland to two different sets of events and it is of value to pay attention to the arguments presented by local authors. In the first instance these are connected to old vocabulary (Norse and Scots), which can be seen to have diminished especially since the nineteenth century as a result of wider modernisation and English-dominated education. In the second instance these are connected to a perceived acceleration of change, caused by a variety of new factors. The first process mentioned above is seen as a result of the improved communications with Scotland and England, with education placing emphasis on spoken and written English.[527] The images of decline Graham portrays are connected to the fact that Shetland had no regular schools until the early eighteenth century, when the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian knowledge began to send one or two itinerant teachers to the isles. Commenting on language in the beginning of the eighteenth century John Graham wrote as follows:

> The language enshrined the cultural identity of the Shetlander. It was the vehicle for everyday communication, for transmitting local legend, lore, proverbial wisdom, and with its strong Norse flavour was a living link with Shetland's Scandinavian past, now tending to become idealised against the background of Scottish exploitation and disregard of local custom and tradition.[528]

[526] Graham, *The Shetland Dictionary*, p. XI.

[527] A detailed description of education in Shetland is John Graham's book *A Vehement Thirst After Knowledge: Four Centuries of Education in Shetland* (Lerwick, 1998). He discussed education also in a variety of articles in the *New Shetlander* and in the introduction of *the Shetland dictionary*, among other things. Graham's writings have been seen as valuable by both Shetlanders and from a Scottish perspective. For instance, Donald Withrington describes Graham's book as "a very welcome contribution to our better understanding of Scottish educational history as a whole." See D. Withrington, 'An educational battle-ground', *The New Shetlander* (206) (1998), p. 4.

[528] Graham, 'Education and local culture in Shetland', p. 6.

More significant change occurred with the vast majority of Board Schools from 1872-1918, which were staffed with teachers coming from outside Shetland.[529]

Another issue, however, concerned lessons content. Describing his experiences of rural Shetland in the 1930s Graham elaborated that the content of lessons was also divorced from children's domestic lives as children were familiar with national rather than local history and geography. It was only after the Second World War that this situation had started to change.[530] Apart from this wider context, described by Graham, images of decline have been also connected to the acceleration of change, caused by a variety of new factors. These include the impact of television and mass media; increase in immigration from other regions and countries and return migration, with partners / children from other linguistic backgrounds; and economic growth and cultural change more generally.[531] Although only part of these recent changes is connected to the oil-era in a straightforward manner, the arrival of oil industry to the isles has been seen by authors like Graham and Tait to have an accelerating effect on dialect change and cultural change.

To demonstrate the point of continuity and change in local discourses it is of value in this connection to pay attention to an article of Laurence Graham produced in 1980 and to reveal the facts and evaluation of facts, which he presents in his article. It will be then possible to compare them also to more recent interpretations of local language history. By emphasising the role of local press for Shetlanders' self-understanding in the nineteenth century Graham elaborates the liberating effect of the Crofters' Act. Referring to Laurence Williamson, Jakobsen and Haldane Burgess, Laurence Graham presents a picture of a proud Shetland dialect. In a letter written in 1892 Laurence Williamson, a crofter

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[529] Graham, 'Education and local culture in Shetland', p. 6.

[530] Graham, *The Shetland Dictionary*, p. XII.

[531] See e.g. J. Strachan, 'Wir dialect. A black outlook', *The New Shetlander* (198) (1996), pp. 26-27.

and scholar from Yell, had written that Shetland is experiencing such a transition time as never had been before. The old Northern Civilisation, Williamson claimed, is now "in full strife with the new and southern one, and traditions, customs which have come down from hoary antiquity, are now dying for ever."[532]

While pessimistic views on Shetland history entered the scene, Shetland also experienced a literary revival on the pages of the newly found Shetland newspapers and a growing linguistic curiosity. In terms of language history the contribution of Jakobsen and nineteenth century intellectuals were seen as central for Shetlanders' linguistic self-understanding. Jakobsen had been a major contributor to the Faeroese cultural revival and the Faeroese had remembered him mostly for his work in gathering old ballads, folk tales and legends. In Shetland, he became recalled and appreciated for his collection of many thousands of old Norn words and place names.[533]

Graham described Jakobsen as passionate about Shetland Norn. The scholar wrote that he felt strongly its near affinity to his own mother tongue, his love for it and his "detestation of the Scotsmen and English who by design have crushed its growth and marred its blossoming."[534] Shetland dialect was reinvented as Shetland Norn, but more importantly, it was seen as distinct from both English and Lowland Scots varieties. Similar ideas, Graham continued, were expressed by the prominent scholar, novelist and poet Haldane Burgess, who chose to write in Shetland dialect, because he had heard fellows from the south saying that great thought and feeling could not be expressed in dialect. A polished language was required. Yet, Shetland dialect was seen by him

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[532] L. Graham, 'The Shetland Dialect and the Shetland Press', *The New Shetlander* (131) (1980), p. 6. These themes are discussed also in L. Graham (ed.), *Shetland Crofters: A Hundred Years of Shetland Crofting* (Lerwick, 1984).

[533] He found 10 000 words of Norn origin and claimed that these still existed at the time of his visit. See J. Jakobsen, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland* (London and Copenhagen, 1928-32).

[534] Graham, 'The Shetland Dialect and the Shetland Press', p. 6.

capable to express different kinds of thoughts "from the homely humorous to the most sublime."[535] During the post war period Shetland dialect had retained and in fact regained "much of its versatility and dignity in contrast to most Scottish counties where dialect was only used for low humour or farce".[536] These arguments presented by Graham on the value of Shetland dialect for Shetland culture are not essentially new, yet these were written in 1980s, again at a time of major societal change.

An influential in local contexts recent account on the history of Norn is the book of the linguist Michael Barnes *The Norn language of Orkney and Shetland* (1998). As two local commentators John Magnus Tait and Brian Smith have widely referred to Barnes in their arguments both for and against language status for Shetland dialect this should be more closely examined.[537] Barnes has argued that because the language survived for so much longer in the Northern Isles, there has been "a widespread tendency to apply Norn solely to the Orkney and Shetland situation" although some have also wanted to include north-eastern Caithness, an area closely linked with the Norse Earldom of Orkney.[538]

Barnes remarks, however, that even in this narrower sense Norn is by no means an unambiguous term. To some it means any piece of Scandinavian language material originating from the Northern Isles, including Viking-Age runic descriptions and medieval documents; to others it denotes only the spoken Scandinavian of the islands and written records of such speech. Yet Norn has appeared also in other contexts. Most confusingly, it has been a name sometimes given to modern Shetland dialect.[539] Terms such

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[535] Graham, 'The Shetland Dialect and the Shetland Press', p. 7.

[536] Graham, 'The Shetland Dialect and the Shetland Press', p. 7.

[537] While Smith has been referring to the work of Barnes, Barnes on the other hand has been referring to Smith in his writings and their viewpoints regarding Norn are similar, as considerations in these sections show.

[538] Barnes, *The Norn language of Orkney and Shetland,* p. 1.

[539] Barnes, *The Norn language of Orkney and Shetland,* p. 1; Barnes, 'The study of Norn', p. 27.

as 'Norn', 'Scots', 'dialect' and 'language' have been often used in a vague manner, thereby contributing to confusing notions. The extent to which language history has been debated shows on the other hand that language has provided an important means for competing identity conceptions. Since the 1980s a reawakening of interest in Norn appeared, producing also several research projects on the Scandinavian elements in Shetland dialect.[540]

The person who has taken on a primary role in local history writing on language is Brian Smith. As he was one of the participants in the Dialect Convention it is of value to consider his arguments presented in his speech in 2004, in addition to which also others of his writings will be taken into account. In his speech to the Dialect Convention Smith notes that there are controversies about how Norn disappeared but emphasises that these are of little value to the occasion for which dialect convention delegates had gathered. [541] Smith, like Graham in the article considered above, is keen to give the Shetland dialect of the past a political value. In Smith's view in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Shetland writers who had firm ideas about society consciously chose dialect. It was by no means "writing for the sake of writing". Instead, for them dialect was the voice of the people. They used dialect to celebrate the common people, and "what they regarded as the people's common sense". [542] Therefore the choice of dialect as the medium of writing was political, but political in the sense that it was conveying a message about its speakers thereby emancipating them.

Similarly to Graham, Smith takes Jakobsen into consideration but his tone is critical regarding his statements on Shetland dialect. Instead he focuses on Shetlanders' emancipation in the late nineteenth century in order to describe the significance of the time

[540] Barnes, 'The study of Norn', p. 36.

[541] B. Smith, 'Wir Ain Auld Language: Attitudes to the Shetland dialect since the nineteenth century', *Dialect. Two days conference & public debate on the developments of the Shetland dialect* (Lerwick, 2004), p. 11.

[542] Smith, 'Wir Ain Auld Language', p. 13.

when Jakobsen entered the scene. During the 1880s and early 1890s Shetlanders had changed completely. The Crofters (Scotland) Act and new market circumstances in the form of Scottish herring industry had emancipated them. In the words of Smith, this was "a society which had just become free, and which was violently disaffected from its own modern history."[543] For the Shetlanders themselves the Act was a response to demand for change and the day was celebrated in Shetland with "large and beautiful bonfires in honour of justice".[544]

While sharing Graham's arguments in terms of the role of dialect writing, Smith notes that in spite Jakobsens' distinguished career Jakobsen's vision of the Shetland dialect as only a pale reflection of Scandinavian, as "pure, abused speech" and somewhat retarded has been unfortunate.[545] To Jakobsen, the Norn language deteriorated and the Shetland dialect was a result of a gradual process of the weakening and worsening of Norn. For this reason, his influence on Shetlanders' views and his attitude were anything but liberating.

Furthermore, Jakobsen contradicted himself by saying that the variety spoken in Shetland resembled Lowland Scotch and then published a dictionary with the title of *An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland*, being – as Smith argued – a list of random vocabulary with Scandinavian roots. The point, which Smith makes with this historiography, is that in spite of the fascination of Shetlanders with Jakobsen he painted a Golden Age

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[543] Smith, 'Wir Ain Auld Language', p. 11.

[544] Local commentator quoted in 'Marching for justice?', *The New Shetlander* (203) (1998), p. 3.

[545] For Smith's views see also his presentation of Shetland dialect from a historical perspective in three subsequent issues of *The New Shetlander*, published in the early 1990s. The series of writings include B. Smith, 'The development of the spoken and written Shetland dialect – a historian's view, part one', *The New Shetlander* (185) (1993), pp. 9-12; B. Smith, 'The development of the spoken and written Shetland dialect – part two), *The New Shetlander* (186) (1993), pp. 26-28; B. Smith, 'The development of the spoken and written Shetland dialect – part three), *The New Shetlander* (187) (1994), pp. 27-29.

of the past and this Golden Age was Norse.[546] The modern dialect, on the other hand, was less worth of his attention and only an inferior version of the old language. Jakobsen had his followers, such as expatriate Shetlander William Sandison who in 1950s produced Shetland Verse: fragments of the Norn.[547] Sandison not only admired Norn, but he also utterly regretted the fact that among the Shetlanders there was no desire to struggle, similarly to the Norwegians, to revive their mother tongue. Smith focuses on the modern Shetland dialect instead. From this viewpoint it is not Norn, but writing in dialect and the lively debates about dialect that deserve, in Smith's view, primary attention.

From Norn to Shetland

In his paper to the Shetland dialect conference Brian Smith seemed particularly reluctant to discuss Norn, because his main focus of attention was on the modern Shetland dialect and literary tradition. In the 1990s, however, he had published, among others, two articles dealing with the linguistic myths of Shetland language history. A new phase in local discourses brought to prominence the studies of the Danish linguist Laurits Rendboe, who has written extensively on Shetland since 1984.[548] In an issue of *The New Shetlander* published in 1985 one can find a local review of what is described as a "revolutionary view of Shetland Norn in a Danish university magazine" and this book review refers to the findings of Rendboe.[549]

[546] On myth-building and Golden Ages, see A.D. Smith, 'The "Golden Age" and National Renewal', in G. Hosking and G. Schöpflin (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (London, 1997), pp. 36-39.

[547] W. Sandison (ed.), *Shetland verse: remnants of the Norn* (Shrewsbury?, 1953); Quoted in Smith, 'Wir Ain Auld Language', p. 13.

[548] For Rendboe's works see e.g. L. Rendboe, 'How "worn out" or "corrupted" was Shetland Norn in its final stage?', *NOWELE* (3) (1984), pp. 53-88; L. Rendboe, *The Shetland Literary Tradition* (Odense, 1985); L. Rendboe, *Det gamle shetlandske sprog* (Odense, 1987).

[549] T.M.Y.M., 'Revolutionary view of Shetland Norn in a Danish university

This minority view has suggested that language shift from Norn to Scots was due to a rather violent takeover by Scots speakers and that there were speakers of Norn in the late seventeenth and even eighteenth century who were hiding their language from landlords and ministers. As long as it was used, it is claimed, Norn stood firm to the end. This account of history claims that the preserved fragments of Norn were actually much purer in form, and closer to Old Norse, than it has been generally assumed. Among other things Laurits Rendboe reinterprets the evidence found by Low in a new way. Low had found a much quoted rhyme, possibly from around 1750 recited by a man from Unst, who had sent his son to Caithness and was proud of his linguistic achievements:

> De vaar e (vera) gooa tee,
> "when" sona min "guid to" Kaadanes:
> haayn kaayn ca' *russa* "mare,"
> haayn kaayn ca' *bigg* 'bere'
> haayn kaayn ca' *eld* 'fire'
> haayn kaayn ca' *klovandi* 'taings'
>
> That was a good time,
> when my son went to Caithness:
> he can call *russa* "mare",
> he can call *bigg* "bere" [a from of barley],
> he can call *eld* "fire",
> he can call *klovandi* "taings" [tongs]' [550]

While the traditional interpretation of this rhyme (embraced even by Nornophiles like Jakobsen and Sandison) has suggested that lad's parents were proud of the linguistic acquirements of their son, Rendboe developes further the viewpoint of another local, John Stewart of Whalsey who claimed that earlier interpretations had missed the point of the sardonic Norse

magazine', *The New Shetlander* (151) (1985), p. 24.

[550] Translated by Robert Millar. See Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots*, p. 173.

humour of the verse. Another piece of evidence discussed by Rendboe (1987) was 'Hildina Ballad' recorded in the isles in 1774 by Rev. George Low.[551] As recently demonstrated by Barnes, Rendboe's analysis of the Norn texts has been designed to selectively show the absence of Scots influence. Rendboe supports the view that Norn, under the influence of Scots, gradually became a hybrid variety but he also attempts to show that the Scots incomers were oppressive of the native population. Shetlanders resisted oppression through the preservation of particular language features and avoidance of others.[552]

In local contexts Rendboe's views have been severely criticised by Brian Smith. In the early 1990s Smith published a critical account of linguistic interpretations of Shetland language history. The articles dealt with the old and new myths of Norse history. One of the old myths was a belief that Shetlanders were writing documents in Norn until the first decade of the seventeenth century.[553] Many of these documents had been found by the Shetland antiquary Gilbert Goudie, who had written an influential and widely read article about them.[554]

Smith has revealed an interesting phenomenon – the discovered Norse documents were actually written in Norway.[555] Due to commercial links with Norway it was natural that some of the details of trade or other transactions were written in a variety understandable for both parties. However, Smith argues, these documents by no means prove what language was spoken in Shetland at that time, in particular because only one of them was

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[551] Barnes, 'The study of Norn', p. 29. The different interpretations of how Scots replaced Norn have been analysed recently by Robert Millar, see Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots,* pp. 174-176.

[552] Barnes, 'The study of Norn', pp. 37-38.

[553] B. Smith, 'The development of the spoken and written Shetland dialect: a historian's view', in D. J. Waugh (ed.), *Shetland's Northern Links: Language and History* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 31.

[554] See G. Gouldie, *The Celtic and Scandinavian Antiquities of the Shetland Islands* (Edinburgh, 1904), pp. 74-131.

[555] Smith, 'The development of the spoken and written Shetland dialect', p. 31.

written in Shetland (in 1545).[556] The most unusual feature of the documentary record of Shetland history, from the moment when there are documents, is the fact that no-one ever referred to language problems.

Smith supports the view that after the medieval period Shetland was a multilingual community, in which both the native population and the ruling class seem to have been largely polyglot. What is interesting in Smith's account of language history is the fact that, unlike Laurence Graham and other locals who had held Jakobsen in great regard, Smith is critical not only of Norn-related romanticism but also of Jakobsen. But he opposes particularly promptly the views presented by Rendboe. For Smith, Rendboe based his theories on a belief that Shetlanders are obsessed with narrow, mythical visions.[557] Rendboe's arguments have been rejected by contemporary research in both Scotland and Shetland. There has been no evidence to support the assumption that language shift in the case of Norn was connected to any kind of active and conscious imposition of Scots.[558]

For instance, Knooihuizen notes that "there is no evidence that Scots was forcefully imposed on the islands, nor that Norn was wilfully eradicated."[559] Nevertheless, in 2002, Rendboe's arguments founded support also from the Norwegian scholar, Geirr Wiggen.[560] The considerable Scots influence on Norn was acceptable for Wiggen, but his major argument was that Norn was not lost until the onset of mass schooling in the early nineteenth century.[561] This view has also been recently criticised in Scotland,

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[556] Smith, 'The development of the spoken and written Shetland dialect:', p. 31.
[557] Smith, 'The development of the spoken and written Shetland dialect – a historian's view (part one)', pp. 10-11.
[558] Barnes, 'The study of Norn', p. 39; Knooihuizen, 'The Norn-to-Scots language shift', p. 113.
[559] Knooihuizen, 'The Norn-to-Scots language shift', p. 113.
[560] Barnes, 'The study of Norn', p. 40.
[561] See G. Wiggen, *Norns død, især skolens rolle* (Oslo, 2002), pp. 70-71; Quoted in Knooihuizen, 'The Norn-to-Scots language shift', p. 111; Barnes, 'The study of Norn', p. 40.

for example by Knooihuizen.[562] For both Knooihuizen and Barnes modern Shetland dialect is Scots, as noted below:

> It is … often held that modern Shetland dialect is a kind of Norn. But that is patently not the case. Modern Shetland dialect is Scots. It contains a small Scandinavian element, and one that is steadily diminishing, but in terms of pronunciation, structure and vocabulary no linguist would have any hesitation in identifying it as fundamentally Scots.[563]

Similarly, Robert Millar explains that:

> Too much can be made of the Scandinavian element in the traditional dialects of Orkney and Shetland, however, possibly because, in a post-Romantic Scotland, it is this feature, above all else, which expresses the difference between the Northern Isles and the Scottish mainland. In terms of the lexis of both dialects, much of the material is, or has been, shared with the more traditional mainland varieties.[564]

In Orkney and in Scottish contexts in general the political importance of Norn for the Northern Isles has been emphasised by Orkney-based academic Donna Heddle. What she emphasized is that maintaining focus on the Norse cultural heritage is essential for maintaining cultural distinctiveness in Orkney and Shetland.[565] Thus, Heddle represented a slightly different view from the one of those most closely involved in the Scots language movement. In her paper to a language conference in Orkney held in 2009 she argued that cultural affiliation and conflict are ultimately the main means of identity politics in the modern world and considered such a focus to be articulated through, and expressed, most clearly

[562] Knooihuizen, 'The Norn-to-Scots language shift', p. 111.
[563] Barnes, 'The study of Norn', p. 27.
[564] Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots*, p. 179.
[565] D. Heddle, 'The Norse element in the Orkney dialect', in R.M. Millar (ed.), *Northern Lights, Northern Words.* (Aberdeen, 2010), p. 48.

in language.[566] She pointed out that the use of Old Norse in modern day Orkney and Shetland is politically motivated and ceremonial. Highlands and Islands Scottish cultural identity had traditionally allied itself to the Celtic origin myth whereas the cultural heritage of the Northern Isles was seen as diametrically opposed by the inhabitants of Shetland and Orkney.

While accepting that modern day Shetland dialect is a form of insular Scots, Heddle described Scots from a historical point of view as a dialect, and remarked that the local dialects were only partially subsumed also because of the absence of one single dominant variety:

> The Scots settlers who came to Orkney and Shetland were from all walks of life and from all the airts of Scotland. They brought with them divergencies in pronunciation and in vocabulary which were assimilated into the Scots dialect used as *lingua franca* in Orkney and Shetland and which would have cross fertilised with the extant Norn substrate. Therefore the Scots itself was under siege from the indigenous dialects and later on from the Standard English taught in schools and the modern usage of transatlantic English by the younger generation. So the indigenous dialects were not completely subsumed by an all conquering dominant language variant - because there wasn't one extant.[567]

Nevertheless, the modern dialects are essentially Scots, and it is within this framework that Heddle considers Norn to still have an important political and linguistic role for the modern dialects of Orkney and Shetland. Unlike Smith, Heddle considered both dialects in terms of decline rather evolution by stating that the status and awareness of both dialects have been "slowly eroded" by the various cultural changes faced by the Northern Isles in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the changes of the oil era,

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[566] Heddle, 'The Norse element in the Orkney dialect', p. 48.
[567] Heddle, 'The Norse element in the Orkney dialect', p. 52.

in particular. Heddle also rejected a theory presented in a recent linguistic study of Klaske van Leyden, which suggested a Celtic influence on the Orkney variant and posed the question of whether there could be "a more Nordic explanation".[568] Such an explanation, the argument goes, would tie the Orkney dialect firmly back into the Norse linguistic heritage.[569] By placing a particular value on Norn, Heddle is in favour of regarding the issue of language a political matter for the Northern Isles.

Literary tradition

Contemporary Shetland intellectuals and supporters of Shetland dialect as a dialect have emphasised the existence of a separate literary-cultural tradition and the role of dialect for Shetlanders' self-understanding. Represented by Brian Smith, contemporary cultural figures from Shetland such as Alex Cluness and journalists such as Tom Morton, to mention just a few, this view stresses the fact that there never has been an official version of Shetland dialect, and that dialect change should be seen in terms of evolution rather than decline. I will consider the views of Shetland writers later in this section. Nevertheless, it is of important to examine the contemporary Scottish contexts as a whole. In the last few decades, prose written entirely or mainly in Scots varieties has appeared, in addition to the literary magazine *Lallans*, published by the Scots Language Society.

The weakness of *Lallans* as a literary standard has been seen to arise from the absence of a close connection between the literary

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[568] Heddle, 'The Norse element in the Orkney dialect', p. 53. Van Leyden described the dialects presently spoken in Orkney and Shetland as conservative varieties of Lowland Scots with a substantial Scandinavian substratum. In the final chapter of her published PhD dissertation she suggested a Celtic influence on the Orkney dialect. See van Leyden, *Prosodic Characteristics of Orkney and Shetland Dialects*, pp. 97-103; K. van Leyden, 'Shetlanders speak – Orcadians sing', *The New Shetlander* (226) (2003), pp. 4-7.

[569] Heddle, 'The Norse element in the Orkney dialect', p. 53.

and spoken medium.[570] Whereas different varieties of Scots have been used for literary purposes, *Lallans* has been often regarded as, and equated with, literary Scots. Nevertheless, the magazine of the Scots Language Society carrying the same name has been publishing stories in various dialects and the idea that *Lallans* is removed from spoken dialect is no longer true.[571]

At earlier times, in contrast to varieties such as Shetland dialect, which are mainly spoken varieties also used in literature, *Lallans* was self-consciously literary and removed from spoken Scots, because of its eclectic and archaic character. Furthermore, it has been possible to argue that in terms of written versions Scots has been affected both by its literary pedigree and by the history of the collapse of its status.[572] By the end of the eighteenth century, any written Scots was produced in a mélange of orthographical styles which enabled seeing it as corrupt English.

Prominent figures such as Robert Burns wrote in Scots by using English spelling, which made his writings popular with English speakers.[573] By using apostrophes he unconsciously contributed to the impression that Scots was closer to English than it actually was. Since that time the literary tradition in Scots varieties has been characterised by a lack of agreed spelling system and contemporary writers have followed different trends. Some writers and language activists have seen the present dialectal diversity as a "form of deviation away from, and corruption of, the once and future standard."[574] This view is associated among others with the leader of the Scottish Renaissance of the 1920s Hugh MacDiarmid who produced a

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[570] Lallans is an abbreviation of *Lowland Scots*. Here I am referring to *Lallans* as a variety intended to function as a literary standard. The magazine of the Scots Language Society (founded in 1972) carries the same name.

[571] For example, some issues have included writings in North-East Scots in addition to issues dedicated to the Northern Isles.

[572] Millar, *Language, nation and power,* p. 190.

[573] See Horsbroch, 'The Scots language: An historical and Political Assessment', p. 31.

[574] Millar, *Language, nation and power,* p. 191.

literary variety of Scots known as *Synthetic Scots* and later *Lallans* – a language intended to be both a symbol of Scottish national identity and a rich means of literary expression.[575] The opposing view, widespread in creative writing, has paid little or no attention to a "glorious" past. A third strand has been represented in the *kailyard* literature (renamed by Millar as the post-Burns tendency) treating Scots as a series of dialects and focusing on nostalgic and sentimental subjects.

Similar concepts of a literary standard have developed also in Shetland and it has been therefore possible for Shetlanders to develop separate discourses of their own. In the previous section it was noted that Norn-related romanticism was criticised in local contexts. This can been interpreted as a transferral of support for closer convergence with language discourses in mainland Scotland. The picture that emerges from Shetlanders' views is more complicated however. The reduced use of Norse history has by no means meant diminishing use of language history.

It is the actors of the past rather than any particular elements of this history that offer a source of identification with a Shetland tradition. For example, Shetland poet William J. Tait is often given as an example of an author who was aligned with the ideas of the Scottish Literary Renaissance and who referred to MacDiarmid and Burns as "an alien though allied tradition" – but worth to be followed by Shetland writers in creating a literary language for Shetland based on, but not bounded by the language of its speakers:

> not in the sense of imitating an alien though allied tradition, but in constructing an eclectic literary language, based on, but not bounded by the speech of the people. They must be afraid neither of experimenting, nor of judicious borrowing, but aware of the underlying genius of the language...They must look on it as their duty to restore to general currency by

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[575] See e.g. C. Milton, 'Hugh MacDiarmid and North East Scots', *Scottish Language* (5) (1986), pp. 39-47.

> imaginative use many of the fine old words now known only by a few.[576]

The same is equally true when contemporary ideas of writing in dialect are being considered and Brian Smith, Mark Ryan Smith and Christine de Luca all refer to William Tait in their writings. Similarly to the existence of different terms to denote Scots and Scots varieties in the mainland, also in Shetland notions of *dialect* and *language* have been often used as intermixable, and the use of notions such as standard dialect can be found already in the 1970s and in fact it can be traced back also to Peter Jamieson and his Shetland League, which never came into existence.[577]

To offer another example, in an article published in the beginning of the oil era one of the notable Shetland poets of the twentieth century T.A. Robertson (Vagaland) emphasised the importance of Shetland dialect, which he considered as mainly based on two languages, Shetland Norn and the old Scots tongue.[578] For him Shetland dialect could not be taught in terms of language teaching because of the absence of a standard, while both Shetland dialect and Norn should be taught as subjects of study in other disciplines.

If Shetlanders wanted, he argued, it was possible to create a unified Shetland dialect. T.A. Robertson notes that what Shetlanders have is a dialect, but at the same time compares it to a number of languages without the feeling that Shetland dialect is in any respect less worth of attention as such.[579] Similarly, two pieces of writing from the beginning of the oil era, which can be seen as representative, elaborated explicitly that, on the hand, the Shetland tongue was a mark of being Shetlander, and second, that

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[576] Quoted in B. Smith, 'The development of the spoken and written Shetland dialect - part three', *The New Shetlander* (187) (1994), p. 28.

[577] See chapter 3 of the present study.

[578] T.A. Robertson, 'Shetland dialect', *The New Shetlander* (107) (1974), p. 8.

[579] Robertson, 'Shetland dialect', p. 10. See also T.A. Robertson, *The Collected Poems of Vagaland* (Lerwick, 1980).

there was no need of "artificial" revival. The first piece of writing was a local poem by G.P.S. Peterson published in 1974 with the title 'The Shetland Tongue.'[580] This poem advises its readers to look at neighbouring nations and what distinguishes them from one another. It is not shape, dress or creed, the poem states, but their individual languages.

The significance of a language for nationhood can be debated as there are nations with more than one official languages, in addition to several dialects. Nevertheless, the poem made a strong case for the respect which the Shetland dialect, in author's view, deserves. It is worthy of note that the emphasis of the poem is on language in comparison to other elements of culture – the Shetland dialect is seen as defining for the Shetlanders as a distinct group of people. At the same time the author encourages Shetlanders to be proud of their culture and past. Yet, as another local writing from the same time period puts it, "modern revivals of dialects are largely artificial and lack conviction; valiant idealistic work, but in vain."[581] In contrast, Shetland is fortunate for "Shetlandic only needs succour, not artificial respiration."[582]

Old sources, modern uses

In resonance to broader transformation of images, issues of modernisation and social inclusion have been central to the philosophy of both dialect movement and contemporary writers. At the same time inclusiveness does not concern only people, but language varieties as well. One example of this approach are the writings of Shetland poet Mark Ryan Smith, who has seen the incorporation of new registers as desirable, Shetland dialect is free to include "words from other tongues, from television programs, from songs" and from different countries as part of ongoing

[580] G.P. Peterson, 'Da Shetland Tongue', *The New Shetlander* (110) (1975), p. 6.
[581] J. Godwin, 'Save our dialect', *The New Shetlander* (122) (1977), p. 14.
[582] Godwin, 'Save our dialect', p. 15.

evolutionary process.[583]

The focus of this viewpoint is that Shetlanders have been exploring and encountering their language in writing for about two hundred years and that the development of a Shetland literary tradition is also the story of the emergence of a literary language. The tradition, which started in the nineteenth century, is regarded to have continued to the present day. Writer's focus is on the creative process involved in the development of a literary language and it is pointed out that there never has been an official version of the Shetland tongue and poets and writers have been free to explore and develop the language. Within this framework the notion of language, rather than dialect, is frequently used. For Mark Smith it is experimentation that is the key to the continuation of this tradition:

> The achievements of the past should be recognised (and it would be a welcome thing if more people knew about the good things in our literature) but the idea that there is a right way and a wrong way to write in the Shetland tongue is an idea to be avoided at all costs. It is important to remember that the Shetland tongue is not the only idiom open to the Shetland writer. The Shetland language can easily shift toward Scots, and the native writer can easily work in English if he or she chooses too. The important thing for writers to keep in mind is that there is no league table when it comes to the languages they choose to work with. The Shetland language is no more able to express Shetland things than the Scots one. The English language has the weight of institutions like the Oxford English Dictionary behind it but there is no logical reason to think it any better than what is spoken every day in shops, in cafes, in truck cabs and on crofts all over Shetland. There is nothing inherent in any medium of speech or writing that makes it superior to any other medium.[584]

[583] See M.R. Smith, 'Shetland Poets, Learn Your Trade: The Kind of Poetry I Want', *The New Shetlander* (246) (2008), pp. 26-28.
[584] Smith, 'Shetland Poets, Learn Your Trade', p. 27.

According to this view Shetland poetry that is retrospective and looks back to a mythical past would be a failure. Furthermore, literature should look forwards as well as back, but avoid mythic beliefs in Golden ages and decline. Writers and poets are regarded as the custodians of the language and all of them should strive to enrich and put that language to new and sophisticated uses. Poets and authors are considered the people who use the language as raw material and have a duty to their language. Consequently, the more serious written work is produced, the more acceptable the language variety becomes as a literary medium.[585]

Another issue believed important by cultural figures is the issue of social inclusion. For example, Shetland poet Christine De Luca underlines dialect's inclusiveness by writing that Shetland dialect is culturally "splendidly inclusive" and speaking it is not seen as a sign of social inferiority. Incomers to the islands, she states, often demonstrate assimilation by allowing their children to use it."[586] Similarly, her views on self-understanding are dynamic, inclusive ones, yet she feels it is important to build "various identities confidently on home soil" which is achievable through the maintenance of local cultural distinctiveness. While being comfortable with "various identities – as a European, as a British citizen and as a Scot" de Luca describes identification as a Shetlander as the most important for her in terms of emotional reality. Aspects of national belonging are comparable to Russian dolls and "peeling off the layers to get to the heart is essential." [587]

For De Luca Shetland dialect is a variety of Scots, significantly affected by Norn at all levels and she describes her experiences of language as follows:

> It is probably the most distinctive of the variants of Scots and as such pushes at the limit of the concept of a dialect. It was our

[585] Smith, 'Shetland Poets, Learn Your Trade', p. 27.
[586] C. De Luca, 'Introduction to Shetlandic', in C. De Luca, *Parallel Words* (Edinburgh, 2005), p. 1.
[587] De Luca, 'Introduction to Shetlandic', p. 1.

> mother tongue as children and we had to be forced to leave it outside the classroom door. But that's fifty years ago. Today the situation is reversed: schools now encourage the use of dialect in the face of much social change.[588]

> As a child I was aware that, although the bulk of the poetry canon of Britain was in English, Shetland had poets whose work was worth reading and that some of their best poems were written in dialect; and that it was something rather distinctively different from the Scots of the Scottish mainland. The considerable value locally accorded that poetry has underpinned my attitudes to language and its importance in cultural transmission.[589]

If one compared her poetry collections produced in 1994, 1997 and 2002 respectively, as De Luca herself elaborated, it was possible to observe a growth in the proportion of poems in Shetlandic.[590] Similarly to other writers she also emphasises the role of producing literary material for Shetlanders' use, while at the same time her approach to dialect writing, and dialect use in general, is inclusive. Being participant in the Shetland dialect convention of 2004 Robert Alan Jamieson also employed arguments in favour of social inclusion and modernisation of images.[591] As with traditional music, dance, folklore and handicraft, the promotion of dialect was seen to relate as much to tourists as to Shetlanders themselves:

> But in the global market, with its emphasis upon 'branding', Shetland will perhaps have to work harder to be understood as well. More seriously, what should be clear to us all is that this little gathering of land in the north Atlantic is unique and

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[588] C. De Luca, 'Language and my poetry', in R.M. Millar (ed.), *Northern Lights, Northern Words* (Aberdeen, 2010), p. 107.

[589] De Luca, 'Language and my poetry', p. 108.

[590] De Luca, 'Language and my poetry', p. 110.

[591] See Jamieson, 'Meditations upon a poet's responsibility to the mother tongue', p. 61.

> precious, its music and its language, its songs and its dances. And when the prestige of the local is raised higher, people will perhaps feel more at their ease speaking and writing Shetlandic. …If Shetlanders come to feel that writing and speaking good Shetlandic is something to be proud of, they will do it – locals or incomers.[592]

Jamieson's views were also focused on individuality, experimentation with language and personal experiences. He noted that language is inevitably a part of the political context, but that such a standpoint does not take full account of the fact that languages cross borders and run through them. There are other possible models, Jamieson argued, for the ways in which language and dialect co-exist. For him personally there always was another language, be it Shetlandic or English, or "somewhere in between". As a child, Jamieson had made little distinction between these other forms of language. It seemed as if a Shetlander might imitate Churchill and "quote from the seventeenth century English of the King James Bible with equal familiarity".[593] All over Britain, there were people who had the same complicated relationship with the Imperial tongue, whereas now many are concerned about the impact of American English. But also this concern is both old and new, as remarked by the Chairman of the Folk Society Douglas Sinclair:

> The same thought obviously bothered author and poet James Stout Angus who in a letter, in 1917, to the afore mentioned Christina Jamieson stated 'Our simple, comprehensive and euphonious Norn is being superseded by English – of a sort - not the English of the Bible, nor of the modern masters, but the English of the silly novel and the yellow newspaper, with a "sprinkling" of Yanky slang thrown in'.[594]

[592] Jamieson, 'Meditations upon a poet's responsibility to the mother tongue', p. 61.
[593] Jamieson, 'Meditations upon a poet's responsibility to the mother tongue', p. 57.
[594] Sinclair, 'Shetland Folk Society: A shining example', p. 51.

It can be seen that arguments in favour of promotion of Shetland dialect are well grounded in the past, but mainly through the actors of the past. Within this framework the use of Scots on the mainland is seen as culturally somewhat separate but allied tradition.[595]

Laureen Johnson, another participant at the Dialect convention and a local writer related the issue of contemporary use of Shetland dialect to the use of Scots on the mainland by pointing out that mainland authors and performers are examples of wider public success.[596] The use of Scots dialects in cultural performance has been both understandable for a broader audience and widely accepted and authors such as Irvine Welsh and James Kelman, using urban varieties, are extensively read and appreciated. Johnson distanced herself from the Norse history of Shetland dialect and focused on its present instead. She elaborated that while the question of where Shetland dialect originates is interesting, it is not particularly important.[597] More important is what one does with the contemporary Shetland dialect.

From the opinions considered above presented by actors of different generations it can be noted that these mostly deal with the continuation of tradition and opposition to cultural homogenisation. Instead, these are little concerned with linguistic boundaries.

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595 See e.g. L. Johnson, 'CD@6? An interesting point in time for the dialect', *Dialect. Two days conference & public debate on the developments of the Shetland dialect* (Lerwick, 2004), p. 20.

596 Johnson, 'CD@6? An interesting point in time for the dialect', p. 20.

597 Johnson, 'CD@6? An interesting point in time for the dialect', p. 20.

VII. Dialect or language?

In the previous chapter it was noted that contemporary language discourses produced in Shetland and those of (other) Scottish or Scotland-based scholars are similar regarding the history of Norn. In addition, only a very small minority has supported the view that Shetland dialect should be considered a separate language in the meaning of 'a separate language variety in a need for official status.' The view that Shetland dialect could or should be considered a language and that standardisation should be in the centre of attention has not received popularity. If Shetland dialect was not to be treated as a separate language, yet it was not a branch of Scots from a cultural point of view, how did Shetland intellectuals understand its role? This chapter discusses arguments for and against language status for the Shetland dialect and the correspondence between national and regional. It is based primarily on local papers and articles and the last two sections sum up respondents' views on language as unifier and as creator of boundaries.

National and regional

To explore the extent to which Shetland dialect is seen in Shetland as an issue of culture, and to what extent it carries a political message, it is important to examine the correspondence between national and regional viewpoints. Whereas most Shetlanders had assumed Shetland dialect to be a dialect of English, it has been considered by most Scots activists to be a dialect of Scots. In recent years Shetland and Orkney have been included in statistical assessments of Scots speakers and in these studies terms like *Shetland dialect* and *Shetlandic* have been

characteristically taken to be equivalent to Scots.[598]

The study of Steve Murdoch, conducted during his years of participation in Scots language discourses, was the first attempt to estimate the proportion of the population of Scotland who consider themselves to be Scots speakers. The question he asked was: What do you consider your native language? Answers such as Doric, Shetlandic or Glaswegian were taken to mean those dialects of Scots and not dialects of English unless otherwise stated. Greatest variation was recorded among the different regions of residence and schooling. The lowest figures in the Lowlands were for Strathclyde, Central and Glasgow, while the highest were for Shetland, Orkney and Grampian.[599]

A report prepared in 1996 by Ian Maté of the General Register Office for Scotland also included speakers of Shetland dialect and these were automatically regarded as speakers of Scots.[600] The issue of whether Shetland dialect is a version of Scots was one of the questions addressed at the Dialect Convention, yet the debate of the relation between Shetland dialect and Scots was not essentially new. Nevertheless, changes in political contexts and the growth of the Scots language movement in the 1990s could be assumed to have had further influence on the existing situation. Mainland views on the contemporary Shetland dialect were diverse depending on the extent to which Scots was seen at present as a meaningful notion.

Some actors of the Scots movement considered Shetland dialect to be simply one of the dialects of Scots. For example, Scottish writer and broadcaster Billy Kay stated:

> Even in Shetland and Orkney, where Scots has replaced the Scandinavian tongue Norn, the core vocabulary of the dialect is still general Scots with an admixture of Scandinavian words

[598] See e.g. J.M. Tait, 'Whit is Shaetlan?', *The New Shetlander* (201) (1997), p. 17.
[599] Murdoch, *Language Politics in Scotland*, p. 24.
[600] GRO(S), *A Report on the Scots Language Research*, p. 4.

> which are unique to the dialects of the Northern Isles. [601]

Bearing in mind that Billy Kay supported the view of Scots as a language in its own right, and not just a dialect of English, the argument was transformed in Shetland to look like this:

> Even in Scotland, where English largely replaced the Celtic tongue Gaelic, the core vocabulary of the dialect is still English with an admixture of Gaelic and older English words which are unique to the dialects of Northern Britain. [602]

Some Scottish accounts of language history, however, award Shetland dialect something of a special position, for instance *the Edinburgh History of Scottish literature* describes Shetland dialect as a special case.[603] It is clearly of value to look at the view of those mainland activists who have been active in including Shetland in the concept of Scots. From the list of speakers to the Shetland dialect conference (2004) one can see that persons such as Michael Hance, Derrick McClure and John Law were invited as well as the Faeroese scholar Jóhan Poulsen to discuss dialect issues from a broader perspective than simply on local terms.[604] It is therefore essential to consider the views on Shetland of those representing the Scots movement.

Both Derrick McClure and John Law supported the view that Shetland dialect is a sub-set of Scots.[605] In McClure's view the present-day Shetland dialects are dialects of Scots and they can be seen as a separate language "no more than the Doric of the North-

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[601] Kay, *Scots. The Mither Tongue*, p. 156.
[602] Tait, 'Whit is Shaetlan?', p. 17.
[603] I. Brown, et al. (eds.), *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature III* (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 25.
[604] See list of speakers, presented in the introduction section on primary sources.
[605] J. Law, 'The Collogue on Scots Register', *Dialect. Two days conference & public debate on the developments of the Shetland dialect.* (Lerwick, 2004), p. 25; D. McClure, 'Dialect study in Scotland and beyond', *Dialect. Two days conference & public debate on the developments of the Shetland dialect* (Lerwick, 2004), p. 44.

East mainland, equally well-preserved and equally the focus of a strong affection and pride as a mark of regional identity".[606] In his paper he drew a parallel to Northern Ireland, by saying that the dialect of Scots settlers during the reign of James VI continued to flourish, and has recently received attention and recognition as *Ulster Scots*. Two alternative terms (*Ullans* and *Shetlandic*) have been insisted on by some and disapproved by others; yet remained – as McClure pointed out – esentially dialects of Scots.[607]

To elaborate the point of continuity and change in local and national discourses on language, I have chosen to consider in more detail the views of the director of the Scots Language Centre Michael Hance, for the reason that he has been active both in the contemporary language movement in Scotland and in cooperation with Shetland activists. In a recent paper Hance remarked that many of those who support contemporary linguistic distinctiveness in Scotland tend to share some of the attitudes of the renaissance writers and it is possible to observe the connections between the literary renaissance and present-day activism.[608]

According to Hance, the language movement in Scotland remained diverse and to an extent fragmented, but the readiness of Scots to assert dimishing identification with Britain and increasing awareness of the value of Scottish culture has been considered by mainland activists to have given a new set of political and philosophical groundings to the Scots language movement. Two factors are regarded to be important influences on contemporary movements: the wider attention given to civil rights and the rights of minority groups in the latter part of the twentieth century and second, the renewed appreciation of the great literary traditions of the past. Both these trends have been

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[606] McClure, 'Dialect study in Scotland and beyond', p. 44.

[607] McClure, 'Dialect study in Scotland and beyond', p. 44.

[608] M. Hance, 'The Scots language movement' (paper presented to the University of Pittsburgh conference 'Language, Literature and Identity in the European Union'), 8 May 2009, p. 8.

reflected in discussions about Scots as it has been possible to articulate demands within frameworks already well established within political and popular discourse.[609] Activists have also been able to point to the inadequacy of provision of services and support given to certain language groups while absent for others. Other factors considered contributory to the change in atmosphere have been the devolution of power to Edinburgh; the increasing focus by all parties on emphasising their Scottish credentials and the development of new forms of communication.[610]

This raises the question of how Shetlanders have related to these changes. All these factors can be seen to have affected also Shetlanders' dialect movement, but local realities may differ from wider scale issues. Shetland activists have regarded these very same factors as beneficial, including the support of languages and dialects in international settings; more support for culture in Scottish contexts and the development of new forms of communication. For example, during the conference it was pointed out that circumstances are in favour of dialect promotion and that it is useful to look at other examples which could be useful from a Shetland perspective.[611]

On the other hand, other factors have also contributed to the change in atmosphere in Shetland itself, such as the increased powers of local government and the accentuated focus by all Shetland organisations on emphasising their Shetland character and local specificity within the national context. From this point of view, language developments in Shetland can be seen to interact with two different sets of social curcumstances: on the one hand, with national developments affected also by larger scale issues, and on the other, with specifically local issues important for the

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[609] Hance, 'The Scots language movement', 8 May 2009, p. 9.

[610] In recent years Hance contibuted also to the January editions of *Shetland Life* with columns on Scots, see e.g. M. Hance, 'Continuing uncertainty harms language bodies', *Shetland Life* (January 2009), p. 33.

[611] See 'Minutes of Dialect 04 public debate', *Dialect. Two days conference & public debate on the developments of the Shetland dialect* (Lerwick, 2004), pp. 63-70.

islanders themselves. Attending the conference in Shetland, after presenting issues of political and legislative character regarding Scots and Gaelic, Michael Hance appealed to those Shetlanders who were present to take part in national (i.e. Scottish) campaigns. Hance claimed that Shetland dialect activists must now consider how to best exploit the changed political circumstances in which they find themselves.[612] He remarked that decisions relating to Shetland dialect are increasingly taken in Edinburgh by people who may not understand all the issues of relevance to the islands and if that problem is to be resolved activists in Shetland will need to ensure that "they direct their campaigning and lobbying activities at the right people".[613]

The dialect movement in Shetland, Hance argued, also needed to work out how they want their relationship with mainland Scots activists to develop, and that such discussion "must take place locally and should be held in an open manner which deals with political realities in a mature and sensible fashion".[614] As Scotland continues to orientate towards Edinburgh, the argument goes, Shetland must ensure that its distinct voice is heard in the places where decisions are taken. From this perspective the Shetland Dialect Convention can be seen to have led to a closer connection, and cooperation, between Shetland-based and national discussions.

Initiatives and aims

Corresponding with both local and national developments, the year 2004 saw the emergence of a local group, *Shetland ForWirds*. During the dialect conference representatives of the Scots movement presented their views, which inevitably affected

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[612] M. Hance, 'Inching forward – the development of language policy in devolved Scotland', *Dialect. Two days conference and public debate on the development of the Shetland dialect.* (Lerwick, 2004), p. 37.

[613] Hance, 'Inching forward', p. 37.

[614] Hance, 'Inching forward', p. 37.

Shetlanders' decisions on collaboration. Nevertheless, there were also local reasons and earlier writings in the press that had elaborated these same issues.[615]

To develop the point of comparison with national contexts it is worth examining the aims and activities to which group members have committed. It will then be possible to analyse these in comparison to the presence or absence of such aims in the insular groups considered in the final chapter of the dissertation. The declared overall aim of Shetland ForWirds is to promote the continued use of the Shetland dialect and the dialect group has committed itself to three main objectives: first, to establish and define a recognised body of words; second, to raise the status and enhance the profile of the dialect and, third, to develop an educational role at all levels from pre-school to adult. These main objectives are to be achieved through concrete activities or "action points" which include the following:

- Formally lobby Shetland Islands Council and other agencies to achieve the creation and implementation of a Shetland-wide dialect policy
- Develop links with linguistic groups outwith Shetland and add our voice to national campaigns
- Develop a website dedicated to the promotion of the dialect
- Research schools' requirements and develop, commission and create contemporary teaching materials for use at all educational levels, from pre-school to adult
- Continue to work towards establishing a comprehensive and practical English- Shetland vocabulary list
- Promote the public use of dialect through a series of initiatives
- Seek ways of working with the local print and speech

[615] One example was an article of Tulloch, mentioned also in the previous chapter of the thesis. See Tulloch, 'Nae futir fur Shetland dialect', pp. 35-36.

media
- Assist in creating artistic/cultural projects which will help to further the objectives of the group
- Publicise the distinctive character of the Shetland dialect to visitors to Shetland as an integral part of cultural tourism
- Support and promote the establishment of a dialect study centre in Shetland to facilitate research and store archives[616]

In terms of education the activities of Shetland ForWirds are concentrated on production of material relevant to modern needs.[617] The groups intention was to promote dialect as part of the life histories of all inhabitants of the region, which attempted at changing its role from ethnic in an essentialist meaning towards regional and dynamic. At earlier times divisions between locals and newcomers were reinforced by dialect and to a certain degree, in popular discourses, divisions between native and non-native speakers as a mark of ethnicity continued to be applied.[618] Shetland-wide dialect policy was high on group's agenda but at the same time lobbying for a separate language status remained absent. The duality of loyalties experienced at a local level was reflected in concrete initiatives aiming at strengthening the position of Shetland dialect as distinct while at the same time

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[616] *Action Plan of Shetland ForWirds.* Draft principles were provided by Mary Blance, Communications Officer, Shetland ForWirds. Personal communication, March 2008.

[617] On dialect in Shetland's schools see reports such as M. Blance and J. Moncrieff, *Whit da bairns telt wis Dialect. Two days conference & public debate on the development of the Shetland dialect* (Lerwick, 2004), pp. 52-55; L. Johnson and Ch. Tait, *Dialect survey of Primary schools* (Lerwick, 2006); F. Tait, *Dialect in Local Authority Nursery Classes and Partner Providers* (Lerwick, 2006). These surveys led to the production of new dialect materials for pre-school and primary classes. Mary Blance, Laureen Johnson and Christian Tait are members of *Shetland ForWirds* and at the time of my fieldwork in March 2008 Frances Tait worked for the Education and Social Care Department of the Shetland Island Council.

[618] See e.g. M. Tallack, 'The language question', *Shetland Life* (May 2009), p. 3.

Shetland dialect was now more clearly connected also to wider national contexts.[619]

One of the examples of this approach concerned the development of a website dedicated to the promotion of Shetland dialect.[620] While Shetland dialect featured also on the website of the Scots Language Centre representing insular Scots, at the same time Shetlanders saw as important the creation of local resources in education, internet and media.[621] The declared action points of the local dialect organisation included "adding our voice to national campaigns" and its members were active in initiatives securing funding and attention for Scots. This was demonstrated for example in a letter written in 2008 on behalf of Shetland ForWirds and addressed to Liberal Democrat, Shetland MSP Tavish Scott:

> Shetland ForWirds, a voluntary group dedicated to promoting the Shetland tongue (a branch of Scots) is seeking support in our campaign to secure the future of Scottish Language Dictionaries and the Scots Language Centre both of which face loss of funding from the Scottish Arts Council. (…) Our MSP, Liberal Democrat leader Tavish Scott, has tabled a motion in support of both organisations to go to the Scottish Parliament. It is motion number S3M-02474. Mr Scott makes a number of important points about the organisations and about future support for Scots and we hope that language campaigners, activists and writers across Scotland will ask their MSPs to support it.[622]

In the same connection, a number of points were raised by group

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[619] Discussion with Frances Tait (SIC, education), 4 March 2008.

[620] I was present at an initial meeting dealing with the development of a Shetland dialect website held at the Lerwick Hotel in August 2006. Present at the meeting were members of Shetland ForWirds and Dr. Jonathan Church.

[621] 'Minutes of Dialect 04 public debate', pp. 63-70.

[622] Letter signed by Mary Blance, Communications Officer, Shetland ForWirds. Received by email from Michael Hance of the Scots Language Centre, 11 September 2008.

members, concerning financial support for the Scots Language Dictionaries and the website of the Scots Language Centre, described in their letter as "an important focus for all interested in the Scots language".[623] Nevertheless, the aims and action points of Shetland ForWirds and their implementation in local contexts suggested that Shetland activists considered Scots to be a collective notion without concrete relevance to local life.[624]

Taking part in wider promotion for Scots was regarded beneficial because of Shetland's small size, and the emergence of new national contexts. Yet it was Shetland dialect that continued as relevant to local contexts of belonging, and as such declaring it dialect was not regarded in contradiction with regional specificity. As it can be seen from the aims of the group listed in this section these were similar to the aims of other language revitalisation movements, but do not include lobbying for a language status on Shetlanders' part at neither national nor international level and these by no means attempt to strive for recognition of Shetlanders as ethnic minority. As the above description of these aims showed, significant attention and local resources were focused, or planned to concentrate, on promoting dialect in the economic sphere and Shetland tourism. In fact, language discourses in Shetland shared a significant common ground with the Shetland Brand and modernisation projects of the Shetland Islands Council, considered in earlier chapters.

The second purpose of the organisation, to raise the status and enhance the profile of the dialect, was also by no means connected to a desire for a language status. Instead, tourism was given an important role. Among other things Shetland dialect activists adopted an advisory role and collaboration with commercial enterprises wishing to include the use of dialect sayings. One of the projects concerned Shetland dialects signs at Sumburgh

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[623] Letter by Mary Blance, 11 September 2008.

[624] One example was a new local dictionary project, initiated by Bill Moore and Derick Herning of Shetland ForWirds. In response Christine Robinson of the Scottish Dictionary Association visited the islands.

airport and various projects aimed at the inclusion of dialect phrases on products intended mainly for tourists.[625]

Shetlandic and politics

By the year 2004, the term Shetlandic had been used to describe the Shetland dialect, although not without controversies – the term itself was insisted upon by some, but strongly disliked by others, in part depending on their views whether Shetlandic was a language or a dialect of Scots.[626] A small minority has supported the view that Shetlandic should be considered a language and that standardization should be in the center of revitalization efforts. The language activist who has developed the idea of Shetland dialect as a separate language most explicitly is John Magnus Tait, one of the speakers at the Dialect Convention.[627] Tait uses the term Shetlandic. In various writings Tait has commented on the need for separate language status for Shetland as connected to Shetlanders' perceptions of themselves before and after the oil era.

While the idea of expansion and official use of Shetlandic has not received wider popularity in Shetland, it is nevertheless valuable to pay attention to the main arguments presented in favour of such status. This viewpoint can be summed up as follows. Prior to recent economic change Shetlanders spoke *Shaetlan* and the name itself was associated with the place.[628] During the oil era Shetlanders had began to describe their speech as dialect. When the older generation had spoken *Shaetlan*, the

[625] Discussion with members of Shetland ForWirds, 6 March 2008.

[626] McClure, 'Dialect study in Scotland and beyond', p. 44.

[627] This section examines writings of those who were in favour of Shetlandic as official language (Tait and Herning), see e.g. Tait, 'Whit is Shaetlan?', pp. 16-18; 'Keppin da vynd', *The New Shetlander* (202) (1997), pp. 10-11; 'Shaetlan is daed – lang live dialect', *Dialect* (Lerwick, 2004); 'Shetland identity and (the) (Sh(a)etlan (d(ic))) (D/dialect)', *Shetland Life* (July 2007), pp. 10-11; D. Herning, 'Shetland dialect – a defense', *The New Shetlander* (118) (1976), p. 26; p. 29; D. Herning, 'A brief history of language in Shetland', *Shetland Life* (July 2007), p. 35.

[628] Tait, 'Shetland identity and (the) (Sh(a)etlan (d(ic))) (D/dialect)', p. 10.

distinction between dialect and language had not been relevant. The notion of dialect would have appeared only when looking at Shetland dialect from a standard point of view, but this was seldom the case.

Most Shetlanders had not regarded themselves as Scots (nor as Scandinavian, as – the argument continues – some debunkers of the traditional Shetland self-conception erroneously maintain), but simply as Shetlanders. The name *Shaetlan* for their language was therefore an unselfconscious recognition of themselves as a separate group. There was simply no demand for other concepts. Nonetheless, in recent years, most Shetlanders have abandoned this viewpoint:

> In recent years - due perhaps partly to the increase of incomers associated with the oil industry, but perhaps also to public caricature of the traditional attitude - most Shetlanders have abandoned this viewpoint. However, while the traditional view may have been embarrassed into disappearance, or at any rate silence, it is not evident that it has been replaced by a new one. Shetlanders, insofar as they may now admit to being Scots, tend to do so reluctantly rather than enthusiastically. In other words, they have been deprived of their traditional concept of their own identity without a concept of Scots identity to fall back on. The perception of Shetlandic in Shetland reflects this ambivalent attitude to identity.[629]

From this quotation above it can be seen that Tait perceived different aspects of identification as exclusive rather than complementary. For him Shetlanders "have been deprived of their traditional concept" of non-Scottishness without a concept of Scots identity to have replaced it. An interesting quote from a local article written in the 1990s suggests otherwise:

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[629] Tait, 'Shetlandic in a Context of Linguistic and Cultural Identity', p. 4. See Inbuis ta Shaetlan-website at www.wirhoose.co.uk (retrieved July 2008). The website has been recently removed.

> The integration of a smaller community into a larger usually means that the dialect, or language, of the smaller disappears and then the whole culture ceases to exist as its members become one with the larger. This has happened before in our history...Are we ourselves now about to be integrated into the English culture? God forbid! We've had enough arguments in the past about whether we're Scottish or Norwegian. Do we now have to answer them in the best Oxford English? Let us by all means learn to make ourselves understood to outsiders, but not at the expense of our own rich tongue...Be Shetland and proud of it![630]

Here one can see particularly clearly that language is regarded important, yet it is claimed that whether Shetlanders are Scottish or Norwegian is an argument of the past. The belief that Shetland is in need of an official language was based primarily on a linguistic argument: it was argued that the descriptions of Shetlandic as dialect have been held up as a justification for its present position.[631]

The argument continued that the term *dialect* as used by the public anywhere carries connotation of primitiveness.[632] Dialects are seen to have no clear boundaries and are infinitely variable; they cannot be standardised or taught, and 'dialect' is also such a vague concept that it cannot be even said to be lost. Furthermore, there is a widespread belief that people who are speakers of dialect are in no need of learning how to read or write it.[633] If *Shaetlan* had been a language, rather than a dialect, Tait argued, then it would have been possible to deal with illiteracy; yet literacy in a dialect is another contradiction in terms. The designation dialect hampered attempts to enhance the status of Shetland dialect. As a consequence examples from other places in the world were seen as being irrelevant, because other places had

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[630] Strachan, 'Wir dialect. A black outlook', pp. 26-27.

[631] Tait, 'Shetland identity and (the) (Sh(a)etlan (d(ic))) (D/dialect)', p. 10.

[632] Tait, 'Shaetlan is daed – lang live dialect', p. 30.

[633] Tait, 'Shaetlan is daed – lang live dialect', p. 33.

languages, but Shetland had dialect.[634] Tait's interpretation of the lack of public support for language status was interpreted as being a reflection of, and also influencing, Shetlanders' identification as Shetlanders. By comparing Shetland to places such as the Faeroes and Friesland, Tait stated that what elsewhere is considered forward-thinking movement is seen in Shetland (and Scotland) as narrow activism:

> When we read that teachers in Friesland in the late 1800s spoke about 'That insufferable Frisian dialect' which 'puts so many obstacles in the way of instruction in the Dutch language', we can see the contrast in approach between places where people are making a serious attempt to revitalise their own tongues, and the precarious ideologies which influence how we think about 'dialect' in Shetland. What is progressive language policy in Friesland would be 'narrow activism' in Scotland.[635]

In the above statement Tait does not consider Friesland or any other case in any greater detail and his observation remains merely rhetorical.[636] But what is a characteristic feature of the opposite discourses on dialect, most notably the ones produced by John Magnus Tait and Brian Smith is that they often refer to the same sources and the same comparisons but to the opposite effect. In fact, national actors of the movement such as Michael Hance also employed these similar comparisons.

In his recent presentation to Pittsburgh University, Hance remarked that popular notions of a language movement often included images of activists being engaged in the type of high profile acts that have been witnessed in recent decades in, for

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[634] Tait, 'Shetland identity and (the) (Sh(a)etlan (d(ic))) (D/dialect)', p. 10.

[635] Tait, 'Shaetlan is daed – lang live dialect', p. 32.

[636] For a comparison to other languages and language movements see e.g. K. Deprez, 'Diets, Nederlands, Nederduits, Hollands, Vlaams, Belgisch-Nederlands', in M. Clyne (ed.), *Undoing and Redoing Corpus Planning* (Berlin and New York, 1997), pp. 249-312.

example, Wales, Catalonia, Quebec and Belgium.[637]

The defaced road signs have been the iconic badge of an active and radical language movement. In Scotland, Hance claimed, it is uncommon to see a defaced English-language road sign though some activists have argued that there are good reasons to object to the mono-lingualism of signs in the Scottish Lowlands. The rendering of place names was seen to have often ignored local and historic speech forms. Hance contrasts the revivalist movements in Norway and the Faeroe islands, saying that these were products of their own time and it can be argued that these would have developed rather differently in the age of the internet and mass education.[638] In Shetland contexts, both Norway and the Faeroe islands have been used in arguments for or against language status for Shetland. Whereas John Magnus Tait uses the Faeroes as an example of what Shetland could or should do, Brian Smith contrasts Shetland and Faeroe.[639]

In an article on the development of literature in Shetland, by contrasting the Shetland dialect with Faeroese, Smith stated that Shetland dialect is by definition a dialect, not a language. This is a social definition, but, in Smith's view, a convincingly well-established one:

> Shetlanders don't write, as Faeroese writers have done, whole newspapers, histories, liturgies, botanical texts, or a bank's articles of incorporation in dialect. The reason is simple: Shetland dialect is by definition (a social definition, but a formidably well- established one) a dialect, not a language. It does not have, and in my opinion never will have, sufficient status to be used in every walk of life and for every type of communication.[640]

[637] Hance, 'The Scots language movement', 8 May 2009, p. 2.
[638] Hance, 'The Scots language movement', 8 May 2009, p. 3.
[639] Tait, 'Keppin da vynd', p. 10.
[640] B. Smith, 'The development of literature in Shetland – part two', *The New Shetlander* (175) (1991), p. 18.

There is no need, Smith claimed, to read a bank's articles of incorporation in the Shetland dialect, English already has this function – instead, the continuation of literary-cultural tradition is a matter of considerable importance. Within this framework he pointed out the importance of incisive and unsentimental writing.[641] Dialect activist Derick Herning employed yet another parallel. By drawing a parallel with Ulster Scots, Herning is of the opinion that Shetlandic could receive similar status if Shetlanders could devise a Shetlandic vocabulary to express the concepts of government:

> Most Shetlanders nowadays speak a highly diluted form of Shetlandic, and the younger generation seems to be turning their backs on it. It is however possible to turn the tide if enough Shetlanders desire this. In Northern Ireland, Ulster Scots has acquired official status, and the same could be the case with Shetlandic if we can devise a Shetlandic vocabulary to express the concepts of government.[642]

The above comparison is troublesome in various ways, most notably because there were obvious and specific reasons why Ulster Scots was given funding, such as balancing the Ulster Nationalist aspiration to have Irish recognised as an official language. Furthermore, it is not necessarily the case that the youth of Northern Ireland has embraced Ulster Scots in any meaningful way. The comparison between Scots and Ulster Scots / Ullans has been nevertheless widely used also within the Scots language movement as a whole. Some scholars and Scots activists supported the view that one of the reasons for lack of progress for Scots is political.[643]

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[641] Smith, 'The development of literature in Shetland – part two', p. 19.

[642] D. Herning, 'A brief history of language in Shetland', *Shetland Life* (July 2007), p. 35.

[643] See Horsburgh, 'The Scots Language: An Historical and Political Assesment', p. 38; Nihtinen, 'Gaelic and Scots in devolved Scotland', p. 75.

The argument was that Gaelic is considered to be a safer recipient of support, because of its very low demographic base and the fact that it has always had a different position in Scottish life in comparison to Irish and Welsh. The parallel to Ulster Scots made the lack of progress for Scots in Scotland seem even more clearly a political issue, because Ulster Scots has been largely supported on the account of its value as a symbol of British Unionism. This view was supported, among others, by Derrick McClure. He argued that the contrast between Scotland and Ulster could not be greater, but that, in fact, the Scottish government's fear was largely imaginary. The literary and cultural groups who had maintained interest in Scots over the last thirty or forty years, and campaigned for its recognition in national life, had seldom emphased the political value of the Scots language.[644]

When considering the question of Shetlandic as being at the very core of Shetlanders' self-concept Tait distinguished between Gaelic, Scots, Orcadian and Shetlandic cultural and linguistic areas.[645] It is interesting that Shetland and Orkney are seen in this connection as separate linguistic and cultural areas. The two island groups have been constructed as opposites also by Brian Smith, in terms of their literary histories.[646]

Three viewpoints were listed by Tait as important to take into consideration. In broad terms these can be described as follows: 1) each of these cultural and linguistic areas are connected to separate traditions as distinct from the others. Any attempt to include them in the others would not be any different from their previous inclusion in "a centralised Anglophone educational and cultural hegemony"; 2) it is necessary to abandon the adoption of the external values of the UK in decision making in Shetland; 3) it is crucial to acknowledge the relationship between confidence and

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[644] J.D. McClure, and M. Dossena, 'Language Policy in Scotland today: the (strange?) case of Scots' (paper presented to the Sociolinguistics and Language Planning Conference, Ortisei, 12-14 December 2002), p. 4.

[645] Tait, 'Shetlandic in a Context of Linguistic and Cultural Identity', p. 10.

[646] See Smith, 'Wir ain auld language', p. 14.

economics. In Shetland there has been much admiration of Faeroe, yet the cultural and linguistic aspects of the Faeroese experience have been regarded as irrelevant to Shetland:

> It may be that the apparent assumption - that Shetland could copy the Faeroese economic and political model without a corresponding emphasis on linguistic and cultural identity - is a fallacy, itself reflecting the assumptions of a centralised approach which, unlike the Scandinavian, is not orientated towards the needs of island communities.[647]

From this perspective what is seen by the author as desirable is the abandonment of the adoption of inappropriate decisions of central Government. It can be argued that the Faeroes are a very different case in comparison to Shetland. Tait's point, however, is that the communities themselves have tended to adopt centralised attitudes inappropriate to their situation and this includes language solutions.[648] An attempt has been made to solve internal problems, in Tait's words, with conceptual tools that are created for a quite different situation and what is necessary is the adoption of a different conceptual framework. From the above statements it can be noted that what Tait sees as inappropriate conceptual tools are those connected with the national contexts whereas appropriate conceptual framework would be the ones to be found elsewhere.

His article 'Shetlandic in a Context of Linguistic and Cultural Identity' touched also on the connection between the need for status for Shetlandic and contemporary developments in mainland Scotland, which were directly linked. Tait argued that although Shetlandic does not have a political status at present, this will not necessarily be the case in the future. One aspect of this was the nation-wide promotion of Gaelic, which, in the light of islands' non-Gaelic characteristics could result in inappropriate

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647 Tait, 'Shetlandic in a Context of Linguistic and Cultural Identity', p. 10.

648 Tait, 'Shetlandic in a Context of Linguistic and Cultural Identity', p. 9.

legislation being foisted on Shetland. But another was connected to Shetland's perceived non-Scots characteristics. For example, in his views, the introduction of a standard Scots in Shetland would be an uncomfortable half-way solution between the adoption of standard English on the one hand and the development of Shetlandic on the other. Most Shetlanders would also regard this "as at worst a nuisance and at best an irrelevance, having neither the cultural relevance of Shetlandic nor the practical utility of Standard English to recommend it."[649]

Tait continued that the way in which Shetlandic is treated in education and society would depend on how it is perceived.[650] In case it is perceived as a dialect of Scots, and if Scots continues to be a collective term for all the various regional and urban varieties, then the teaching of general Scottish literature might be regarded as meeting the requirements of culturally relevant education in Shetland. On the other hand, if Shetlandic is considered as historically valuable, then the introduction of traditional Shetland vocabulary into the study of disciplines such as geography could be seen as sufficient. In view of this, the author claimed that any culturally relevant treatment of Shetland dialect must recognise its distinctiveness. While provision for Shetland dialect was prominent when considered in "dialect terms", it was not sufficient for those considering language status necessary.

The point of this section and all these descriptions of arguments is to show that considerations on language status in Shetland were mostly looking for argumentation in political and institutional development of other minority languages rather than being ethnic in the sense that they were relatively little concerned with history. They mentioned Shetlanders' traditional self-concept as being different from the Scots and they referred to the cultural hegemony of English at the same time. But what they mostly

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[649] Tait, 'Shetlandic in a Context of Linguistic and Cultural Identity', p. 6.
[650] Tait, 'Shetlandic in a Context of Linguistic and Cultural Identity', p. 8.

portrayed was loss of dialect in the face of modernisation. Of considerable value to these arguments were examples of other countries and languages and a desire for Shetland to follow their model in contemporary language movements rather than a desire to undo previously wrong policies. Nevertheless, in the end of his paper to the Dialect Convention Tait drew a parallel between the demise of Shetland dialect and the demise of Norn by quoting Michael Barnes. Barnes wrote that the reason Norn died was because the Northern Isles became more and more orientated towards Scotland and the motivation to preserve a low-prestige vernacular had disappeared. For these same reasons, Tait remarked, if there was no will in Shetland to give Shetlandic prestige, official status, and written form, then talk about "preservin da dialect" remains useless and pointless.[651]

Radical movement?

If the Shetland dialect movement was not radical in the sense of emancipating dialect towards an official recognition and language status, then in what sense *was* the dialect movement radical, as claimed in the opening speech of the Dialect convention? To receive a clearer picture of what were all the issues central to dialect promotion in Shetland that made this revolutionary it is first of value to examine some of the arguments of the opening speech presented by Alex Cluness with the thought-provoking title "Save Us From Dialect Fascists!: a background to Shetland Arts Trust's Dialect '04 Convention".[652] After that it will be possible to connect these ideas to similar remarks in other connections.

The appeal "Save us from dialect fascists!" was a phrase of a local respondent, which Cluness describes as a passionate and genuine plea and one of the most remarkable responses to

[651] Tait, Shaetlan is daed – lang live dialect', p. 34.

[652] A. Cluness, "Save Us From Dialect Fascists!": a background to Shetland Arts Trust's Dialect '04 Convention', *Dialect. Two days conference & public debate on the developments of the Shetland dialect* (Lerwick, 2004), pp. 7-9.

Shetland Arts Trust's questionnaire on literature in Shetland.[653]

In 2000 as part of a research process Cluness carried out a survey of local views and prepared a report on developing literature in Shetland. The report was followed further by a Literature Development Project and Shetland dialect Convention.[654] His questionnaire asked a wide range of Shetlanders the question: In terms of the future of Shetland Dialect literature, are there issues you feel need to be addressed? The responses had shown conflicts of opinion. There were appeals for dialect spelling books into Primary schools, for road signs in dialect, for teachers from outwith Shetland to be instructed in dialect and simultaneously there were pleas and advice to completely ignore the whole issue. Respondents, according to Cluness, commented on dialect rather than on literature, with the literary aspect being often taken away from the question.[655] Respondents saw it as important for Shetland organisations to promote Shetland dialect and enhance its profile before it is completely lost, but there was expressed uncertainty as to what could be done locally and by which local organisations. Opinion was divided between respondents supportive of an active role in dialect promotion and those against involvement with the issue.

Among those in favour, several respondents felt that it was time to create a wider Shetland Islands Cultural policy, of which dialect is just one part, along with Shetland artistic activities and products such as indigenous crafts and music.[656] Shetland, it was argued, should have its own Cultural and Linguistic Development Office with special responsibility for the development of cultural studies and activities. This was planned to involve a wide range of relevant bodies, including the Arts Trust, the Education Department of the Shetland Islands Council and the schools and

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[653] The extremely emotive wording of this paper has been criticised by John Magnus Tait, as later considerations in this section show.

[654] Cluness, 'Save Us From Dialect Fascists!', p. 7.

[655] Cluness, 'Save Us From Dialect Fascists!', p. 7.

[656] Cluness, 'Save Us From Dialect Fascists!', p. 8.

Colleges and the University of the Highlands and Islands Project.[657] In March 2002 the Arts Trust initiated a Schools Dialect project to replace the previous dialect visits to schools. Several projects were planned to bring together all the interested parties and organisations in Shetland and to discuss possible approaches for the development of dialect strategies in Shetland and these also led to the organisation of the Dialect Convention in 2004. Despite this ambitious programme, the continuous failure of language ideology to find support is best reflected in the opening speech of Shetland dialect conference:

> Save Us From Dialect Fascists!: a background to Shetland Arts Trust's Dialect '04 Convention. Save us from dialect fascists! I will always remember this passionate and genuine plea. So … dialect, Shaetlan, Shetlandic – am I alone in never being sure what I should call it, or even whether that's important? … And what of the respondent who called to be saved from dialect fascists? Why did their anarchic exhortation stick in my head more than others? Perhaps because it actually just put in more revolutionary terms the concerns of many in that questionnaire of 2000. There is development and then there is imposition. We walk warily when we try to shape the identity of others.[658]

In contrast to the generally used argument in language movements that the emancipation of a dialect begins with changing its name, the names one uses to call Shetland dialect are in this connection seen as anything but important. The term Shetlandic has been often criticised. For example journalist Tom Morton has asked the question of just how much of a gesture is Shetlandic being a notion intended to cover all the the varying forms of dialect.[659] Morton referred here to the the existence of a significant dialectal variation between the islands, and dialect

[657] Cluness, 'Save Us From Dialect Fascists!', p. 8.

[658] Cluness, 'Save Us From Dialect Fascists!', p. 9.

[659] T. Morton, 'Dialect left them both thunderstruck, du kens', *The Shetland Times*, 13 June 2003; Quoted also in Tait, 'Shaetlan is daed – lang live dialect', p. 31.

differing from island to island. He continues that Shetland dialect will never be a consistent system of grammatical rules and pronunciation, because it is not and never has been, a language, though there have been various attempts to modify it towards some kind of norm. From this perspective one can argue that there will always be a Shetland dialect as there will be forms of distinctive speech in Ayrshire, Caithness or North-east Scotland.

This standpoint supports the idea of a literary language, but opposes the thought of a standard language. Similar views have been expressed by local teachers, for example by Anette Gear.[660] Common opposition to a language standard for Shetland has come from the lack of desire for such status. But what has been characteristic for Shetland discourses is the clearly pronounced dislike for the idea of linguistic separation.[661] Tait notes that the dislike for linguistic autonomy has been observable in various connections. He also reports that a member of the staff of the University of Highlands and Islands[662] had described the idea of linguistic separation as 'Balkanisation' and the same thought has been echoed in comments of dialect fascism.[663]

Another example, commented on by Tait, is a story of Jim Mainland, published on the pages of *the New Shetlander*, which had Shetland ForWirds as its theme. In this fictional work, the group, initially a moderate organisation, is later infiltrated with extremist members who create a Shetland-speaking police state where "knappin" (speaking standard English with locals) is forbidden. This is seen by Tait to merely be another expression of local unwillingness to engage in language issues and avoidance of

[660] Gear, 'A brighter forecast', p. 27.

[661] Tait, 'Shetland identity and (the) (Sh(a)etlan (d(ic))) (D/dialect)', p. 11.

[662] Tait refers probably to the UHI Millennium Institute, as this article was published in July 2007. The UHI Millennium Institute got its status confirmed as a University in February 2011. In August 2011 the event was celebrated with presentations in English, Gaelic, Scots, Shetlandic and Orcadian.

[663] Tait, 'Shetland identity and (the) (Sh(a)etlan (d(ic))) (D/dialect)', p. 11.

critical examination.[664] By giving an example of a current website of the University of the Highlands and Islands, which included a series of translations of its aims into Scots, Gaelic, and the Orkney and Shetland dialects, Brian Smith has condemned the translations as an example of useless resurrectionism, which is more likely to discourage rather than encourage dialect use.[665] From this perspective Smith has seen as necessary to argue with the "Shetland dialect Jeremiahs" because:

> These people are far more interested in words, individual words, than in the way that men and women use them in discourse and text. They moan because Norse is obsolete; they groan because young people don't know the Shetland word for a bluish-grey sheep. It is an unrealistic way of looking at the world, and it results in false predictions of disaster.[666.]

These attitudes have been an untrue and erroneous account of Shetland's linguistic history and erroneous accounts of Shetland's present. Smith considers himself non-interventionist and favours the use of dialect in schools, but only in terms of its creative use.[667] For supporters of official status the problem with these opinions is that these maintain the status quo and arguably serve the majority of writers but not dialect speakers.

All these views (considered in different sections of this and previous chapters) clearly show that while prevailing discourses in mainland Scotland are ideologically linked to these in Shetland and vice versa, also Shetland tradition in itself has provided a means of cultural and linguistic identification with Shetland in particular. The opinions expressed in Shetland reflect simultaneously also local realities. In a society, highly conscious of the role of history in identity construction the fact that Shetlanders

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[664] Tait, 'Shetland identity and (the) (Sh(a)etlan (d(ic))) (D/dialect)', p. 11.

[665] Smith, 'Wir Ain Auld Language', p. 15.

[666] Smith, 'Wir Ain Auld Language', p. 15.

[667] Smith, 'Wir Ain Auld Language', p. 15.

have a dialect and not a language reveals a great deal about its connection to place-specific developments. Not only that, but through their participation in Scottish discourses Shetlanders also contribute to, and maintain, perceptions of the value of regional varieties as a matter of culture rather than politics. These themes will be further developed in the comparative chapter, but not before another examination of local opinions.

Shetlanders by choice

With the change of Shetland communities, the need for social inclusion of the new Shetlanders became an important characteristic of official discourses and civil society. In discussions with representatives of local authority and individual Shetlanders it was also pointed out that key to the future of Shetland is attracting people to live and work in Shetland. These descriptions were of immediate relevance to self-identification and appeared often combined with emphasis on multicultural, multilingual history, rather than simply Norse history. For example, an article published in *Shetland Life*, described Shetlanders' self-understanding as encompassing "so many different voices of the past: Nordic, Scottish, with perhaps a hint of Dutch occasionally?"[668]

As commented by a local commentator, although Shetlanders have traditionally viewed themselves as "not quite Scottish", it could be argued that Shetland is "Scotland in a kind of microcosm".[669] Indeed, as extracts of local opinions showed, perceptions of non-Scottishness were often based on a stereotype of Scottish identity which does not exist in reality.[670] The author also suggested that while Shetlanders are now usually reluctant to feel Scottish, Shetlanders' more distant ancestors felt perhaps the

[668] J. Murray, 'Cultural schizophrenia', *Shetland Life* (July 2007), p. 11.
[669] 'Da Wadder Eye', *The New Shetlander* (203) (1998), p. 27.
[670] See chapter 4.

same about Norway, instead:

> In Shetland we have perhaps traditionally viewed ourselves as being not quite Scottish. (Did our more distant ancestors feel the same about Norway?) Ironically, it could be argued that we are Scotland in a kind of microcosm. Like the larger version, over the centuries, our islands have become home to a wide and varied selection of peoples, a true melting pot. The last 20 years of mainly oil-driven immigration are but the latest chapter in a long running saga. And in many Shetland communities it is people who started life in England who are now seeking to make this their home. Every community needs fresh blood from time to time. From diversity comes strength. Scotland is also a country, which has been build up on various traditions and peoples stretching back into the mists of time. As devolution is established and as there are perhaps increasingly thoughts about what it is to be Scottish, then it would be an enormous mistake to try to define a single Scottish identity. Many Scottish communities, while holding so much in common, also have their own identities.[671]

The author also remarks that "Scotland must forget England as an adversary" and that the best advice is "to treat people as individuals and value them for their qualities".[672] Cultural development is combined with social inclusion also in Shetland's cultural strategy. The strategy sees culture as being "at the heart of any new Shetland, especially our own indigenous culture and dialect".[673] This, in turn, is described as vital for the future health and prosperity of the islands. According to the strategy cultural development is a key aspect of community planning and "can contribute so much to economic prosperity, the further development of tourism, lifelong learning and social inclusion."[674]

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[671] 'Da Wadder Eye', *The New Shetlander* (203) (1998), p. 27.

[672] 'Da Wadder Eye', *The New Shetlander* (203) (1998), p. 27.

[673] *Shetland Cultural Strategy - A Vision for Cultural life in Shetland 2004-2008* (Shetland Island Council), p. 4.

[674] *Shetland Cultural Strategy,* p. 4.

In the beginning of the oil era arriving to Shetland from the mainland and making Shetland one's new home meant realising and accepting the importance of difference for the local people:

> Like a lot of south folk coming to Shetland, I didn't realise I was coming abroad – that I'd suddenly become a foreigner. I thought Shetland was just another corner of Scotland….So what was different then? The dialect, of course. That took me a while to work out. Then there was the history, and historical links. The affinities, or so I was told by many people, were eastwards, with Norway. The defining moments were Norse-linked: the arrival of the Vikings, the pledging of Shetland. Glencoe and Culloden, those two great Scottish moments, were irrelevant here. And I was disconcerted to find the Scots were regarded as the traditional villains of the piece, the way the Scots traditionally regard the English.[675]

Apart from Norse history also Shetland dialect had become a badge of being Shetlander and although night classes in dialect are on offer, for those desiring to learn Shetland dialect, according to Tallack, dialect continues to be ethnic and exclusive at times.[676] In the beginning of the oil era dialect reading had been taught in local schools but some newcomers or those of non-Shetland background growing up in the isles had felt themselves excluded from the collective identity as Shetlanders. In a recent article the current editor of *Shetland Life* Malachy Tallack explains that when he was at school children were given dialect poetry to read in class, but those of them who had the "wrong" accents were never expected to participate in the lesson fully:

> We were never asked to read out loud (perhaps to save us from being ridiculed) and even our comprehension of the text was never really tested. Through gradual process of quiet discouragement, Shetland dialect became a language that was

[675] M. Taylor, 'A soothmoother speaks', *Shetland Life* (July 2007), p. 27.
[676] Tallack, 'The language question', p. 3.

> part of my life, part of my culture, but whose words were never permitted to pass my lips. I find this sad, both from a personal perspective and because I am sure there are many others like me who suffer this strange disconnection between themselves and a dialect that really ought to be part of their identity.[677]

In a recent article published in *Identity Essays* (*Shetland,* 2009) he emphasises the roles of landscape and people in creating Shetland the place it is today, and the variety of peoples that have participated in this process:

> In Shetland, human society has evolved in both gradual and sudden movements. (…) Pictish culture began to take hold in the islands, and then it too disappeared when the Vikings arrived in the ninth century, overwhelming the indigenous people. Yet despite these changes, despite all that came and went in that time, it was always the land that dictated the means of survival. The Norsemen arrived as Vikings, but they became Shetlanders. They became fishermen and farmers, just as the Picts had been, just as the broch-builders had been, and all those before them.[678]

Tallack highlights the very same idea of Shetland's past as combination of influences and concludes that it is only unfortunate that Shetlanders have chosen the Vikings, arguably the most vivid and colourful characters of their history as symbols of who they are and the brand by which they are known by the outside world. It is troublesome, Tallack continues, where to locate a region's identity but Shetlanders "can do better than holding up empty caricatures of the past".[679]

The appropriation of Norse history had led to translating images of Vikings into defining Shetlanders as a whole. From the experiences of Taylor and Tallack one can see that Shetland dialect had carried identifiably ethnic overtones, and while included in

[677] Tallack, 'The language question', p. 3.

[678] M. Tallack, 'Landscape and Identity', *Identity Essays Shetland* (2009), p. 12.

[679] Tallack, 'Landscape and Identity', p. 13.

the curriculum some Shetlanders had experienced this as divisive. On the other hand, Tallack reports that although his grandparents were neither crofters nor fishermen and "neither of them even saw Shetland" he considers himself a Shetlander and connected to Shetland's past, seeing it as his own.[680]

Reflecting on the contemporary widespread use of inclusive notions of Shetlander, a number of contributors to this study drew attention to issues such as social inclusion. Relevant data from the present study's questionnaire survey showed that – regardless of age group – Shetlanders define themselves and others on the basis of birth and upbringing and/ or on the basis of choice and commitment to place. To the question of "what makes a Shetlander?" a variety of different responses were elicited with only 7 respondents (out of 31) mentioning explicitly language in their definitions. This can be explained either by the fact that dialect has been considered exclusive or by the fact that definitions such as 'born and bred' are automatically including 'being raised in a dialect-speaking home.' Respondents noted that definitions or criteria for Shetlander are questions of degrees and not absolutes. A younger respondent who had one non-Shetland parent described himself as *part Shetlander*. At the one end of the spectrum of opinion Shetlander was a clearly ethnic notion, while for others it was primarily a matter of choice, for example:

> This is like defining art. It is a question of degrees, not absolutes. Born here not necessarily, because Shetland parents' offspring born south would be considered Shetlander, and someone born in Shetland of south parents is not. Ancestry is more important, if parents and grandparents were born/lived here. To some extent surname even a factor; names through long establishment become Shetland. Up to 1980s dialect was greatest defining factor. Its undermining since then removes strongest point of differentiation, and conception of a Shetlander. Today's nebulous "anyone who lives here" idea of a Shetlander is the (meaningless)

[680] M. Tallack, 'Who are we?', *Shetland Life* (July 2007), p. 3.

> result. The attitude of Shetlanders is a definition too: reserved character, not very demonstrative, unwilling to speak out, but determined, not melancholy in contrast to the introspective Celtic character. (Male, 40-49)

Up to the 1980s dialect had been the greatest defining factor and this was believed to have removed the strongest point of differentiation, and conception of a Shetlander. Nevertheless, self-reported definitions often included both aspects of *being* and *becoming* Shetlander. Shetlander was either someone brought up in the isles or "incomer who has embraced and actively contributes to the distinct way of life" and "willing to adapt to the Shetland way of life or contribute to it positively". On the other hand, being Shetlander by choice was seen by one of the respondents to be enabled not only by how one feels but also by learning dialect:

> It's to do with how you see yourself, too. Someone born and brought up here might *not consider themselves* a Shetlander, if their parents were not from here, and they identify themselves strongly with their wider family on the mainland. But that would be their choice. I personally wouldn't quibble over calling people like that Shetlanders if they wanted to be called that. And <u>if they spoke</u> Shetlan no-one would quibble; they would automatically be assumed to be Shetlanders, and no-one would ask. (Female, 50-59)

A younger respondent pointed out that 'true' Shetlander is not a definition he has ever used, but that this is probably someone who has been born in Shetland and speaks broad dialect all the time. Another young respondent noted that one is part of the collective one is brought up in, and whose language one speaks. Therefore people are not Shetlanders because they identify with Shetland symbols such as Vikings, crofters and fishermen but on the basis of place and language, which is not a matter of choice.

In the views of some of the older respondents dialect was rated particularly prominent as the main marker of Shetlander. In fact

two respondents did not mention any other element as significant in their definitions of Shetlander. It was only the use of dialect that was believed to be really able to distinguish Shetlanders from people elsewhere. Had the results of this study been representative, the fact that ancestry was seldom mentioned and only seven responses included explicitly dialect in criterion for Shetlander could be taken to confirm a change towards more inclusive notions of Shetlander.

The notion of true Shetlander did not bring much difference to responses but remained more ethnic and language-centered and five Shetlanders explicitly disliked the term. One condemned the existence of people aggressive in their stances as true Shetlanders. Three persons stated that this is not a definition they have ever used, one felt that in Shetland, as everywhere else "all shades of human character exist" and one informant stated she dislikes the term and considers it racist and offensive. A younger contributor pointed out that perhaps Shetlander is anyone who stays in Shetland and who is very positive about the place, but that the current popularity of inclusive definitions of Shetlander are also a result of Shetland's insularity:

> There is a bit of confusion I think … 'Islander' would be used in my view by anyone staying on an island. However, I don't think if I moved to Liverpool I could 'become' a scouser' or to Birmingham a 'brummie' or London a 'cockney' – that wouldn't feel right! (Male, 38)

As the above quote shows, this respondent was willing to consider Shetlanders on the basis of place and language as a separate group, yet no different from other British places and British accents. It can be taken also as significant that the places and accents he mentions are English and not Scottish. The gathered evidence did not support the assumption that younger Shetlanders define more often Shetlanders on the basis of "anyone who lives here" as this was done in individual responses in all age

groups. There were Shetlanders in all age groups that defined themselves and others on the basis of birth and upbringing and/ or on the basis of choice and commitment to place. The role of dialect in definition of Shetlanders appeared to have weakened at the collective level, which was not surprising bearing in mind the extent of immigration to the isles. Nevertheless, when personal identification was in question or when its symbolic role for the region was considered, a different picture emerged.

Views on language

From the very beginning of discussion contributors to my project pointed to changes in the variety itself and the emergence of different concepts along a generational line. It was noted that the concept of what constitutes the Shetland dialect has changed – when younger Shetlanders today see themselves as dialect speakers they refer to a variety, which differs considerably from that spoken thirty years ago. The use of dialect was nevertheless a question of degree. It was pointed out that a 40-year old Shetlander from one of the north isles would be broader-sounding and would have retained more specific vocabulary in comparison to someone in the 50s from central Shetland. Shetlanders born after oil-era demographic and cultural impact were seen to speak mostly Shetland-accented English rather than dialect.[681]

The factor that was evaluated to have been most crucial for change in local varieties was the expansion of mass media, followed closely by the role of newcomers, while the school system was not seen a primary influence. In contrast, the school system was seen to have influenced linguistic distinctiveness in the sense that large number of teachers were non-Shetland speaking. Furthermore, the case of education was considered by some to have had the opposite effect. When dialect had not been

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[681] This opinion corresponded to the findings of latest linguistic research by Peter Sundkvist. See Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots*, p. 182.

taught 50 years ago, repondents claimed, dialect thrived. Part of the older respondents considered dialect to have declined to a significant extent, in particular among the young generation. A 30-year old respondent contributing to the study felt that he is of the first generation that had grown up with both and that he was switching between English and dialect without noticing and depending on who he is speaking to.

One informant noted that oil, incomers (emphasising that especially those from Lowland Scotland), the mass media, increasing mobility and the political situation in Scotland have all affected dialect. One of the interviewees to this project elaborated that in terms of vocabulary, nobody could argue that as many Shetland words are used now as formerly, but raised the question of whether this is a decrease in a wider linguistic sense, or simply the evolution of a language:

> Language seems to me to be able to absorb and incorporate different and new registers without losing particularly its identity. Also, the idea of a decrease implies some kind of "purity" that the language has moved away from. When one asks what this "pure" Shaetlan might be the argument becomes untenable. Some folk might say this pure Shaetlan was Norn, but that is pure fantasy, in my view. The Shaetlan I speak is no doubt different to what my great-great-grandfather would have spoken, but it is still Shaetlan. He might have required words for things in his sixareen whereas I (thankfully) have no use for such terms. But, today, I may use old words to describe things in the modern world. (Male, 30-39)

The latter viewpoint, supported also by other questionnaire respondents, saw a combination of factors as contributory to the diminishing use of dialect, but change was regarded as evolutionary process. In order to establish the extent to which Shetland dialect is considered to be a different and distinct entity from Scots, questionnaire respondents were also asked to consider whether they would use the term *Scots* for the local variety. Nearly

all respondents (26 out of 31) stated they would not use the term to describe Shetland dialect.[682]

Four informants considered *Scots* to be "something markedly different" and expressed this explicitly. In an informal discussion one respondent referred to Scots as dialect, which also showed that the notion of Scots as language is by no means widely accepted among the Shetlanders. For a Shetlander Scots may appear a dialect and Shetland dialect a language, depending on one's viewpoint. Those informants who stated they would use the term Scots were an obvious minority and referred to situations when an explanation is needed. Among these respondents one pointed out that if explanation were required she would say that Shetland dialect is a form of Scots with Norse elements.

Another informant elaborated that the term *Modern Shetlandic Scots* may be justifiable in an academic context, but that this term would not make sense in local contexts. He disliked both terms like *Shetlandic* (considered artificial) and the term *dialect*, which was considered to imply an inferiority vis-à-vis a language. Some locals referred to Shetland dialect as a language, although the term was not used in the meaning of official standard language. Interviewees considered Shetland dialect to be distinct and valuable on account of its cultural value for Shetland and respondents showed a coherent understanding of its significance for Shetland culture and self-understanding in personal or collective terms or both.

Considerations involved its expressiveness, its fluidity as a literary medium, its variation and ability to describe local life and environment. The dialect was described in terms of warmth and friendliness and it was noted that Shetland words are able to cover entire sentences in English. Here are some of the local viewpoints:

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[682] It is worthy of note that these opinions were recorded in March 2008 and perhaps do not reflect the present situation. For example, the website of *Shetland ForWirds* came into existence only in the following year. Furthermore, the 2011 Census includes a question on Scots language abilities and at the time of writing figures for Shetland are unknown.

> I like its softness, its cadence, its variety of words, its homeliness and associations to me as a Shetlander. (Female, 40-49)
>
> It is native and unique to us. It is our responsibility to use it or lose it. It is as much part of Shetland as the scenery, and more endangered than the wildlife. The poetry is often wonderful. (Female, 50-59)
>
> The fact that it makes Shetlanders feel at home. Its aptness to describe Shetland life, people and places. Its existence alongside English brings the gifts of bilingualism. (Male, 40-49)
>
> It is so rich in idiom, descriptive phrase and vocabulary (Male, 60-69)
>
> The dialect is more expressive. (Male, 63)
>
> Descriptive dialect words and place names, particularly where there is no English equivalent. (Female, 40-49)

The above views reflect a pattern familiar from other languages. Gaelic, for instance, has been stereotypically considered particularly melodic, descriptive and poetic.[683] Clearly, a local language or dialect is able to deal with cultural aspects of its environment more effectively than any imported language. This phenomenon is by no means specific to Shetland. But what was visible in this connection was that respondents' ideas of dialect were not dominated by its past. There were significantly fewer references to Norn than one might have expected. Only one respondent mentioned explicitly the Norn words in connection to descriptions of Shetland dialect, but also the existence of a long tradition was referred to including both Norn and spoken and literary traditions. The oldest respondent to this study described

[683] Prevailing perceptions and discourses regarding the role of Gaelic in contemporary Scotland are extensively discussed by Konstanze Glaser. See Glaser, *Minority languages and cultural diversity in Europe*, pp. 133-164.

Shetland dialect with one word – "hamely" and referred to it as language.

The view that Shetland dialect is unique or different was supported by respondents of all ages. From a dynamic perspective Shetland dialect was seen to be able to incorporate different features and variation and to have different meanings for the individual. Answers fell to a large extent into two categories: dialect was considered either in terms of descriptiveness and aesthetic characteristics, and superiority to English in particular contexts, or in terms of *identity*. It was stated that dialect gives people "a unique character" and that expresses a feeling of community and belonging together. For others it was primarily a matter of personal belonging and there was a tendency to associate Shetland dialect with either *identity* or expressiveness in all age groups:

> It is my language therefore part of my identity. It is unique. (Male, 50-59)
>
> In many ways it is unique and I like that – it gives a good point of difference and I feel proud about that. (Male, 30-39)
>
> It distinguishes me as a Shetlander. (Female, 20-29)

Informants of older age expressed the view that in their childhood speaking Shetland dialect was the local norm or local "standard" in the eyes of the locals. Some respondents referred to Shetland dialect as "the heart of identity" and it was stressed that many others share this view. It was claimed that if someone loses Shetland dialect, even after living elsewhere, this is very frequently commented upon. This tended to be seen as a rejection of their background. The amount of youngsters currently losing the dialect has been openly discussed and regretted by many. Shetland speech was seen to establish an immediate bond and to be a social leveller, which corresponded also to other ideas of

Shetland: lack of snobbery, egalitarianism, community spirit, the ability to pull together for important causes, the possibility to know a wide range of people and mix with all walks of life.[684]

Responses generated very few negative associations with the local variety and also these were simultaneously intertwined with appreciation of its role for distinctiveness. One respondent elaborated that dialect can make Shetlanders singled out as different when out of Shetland and speaking to strangers which can be attributed to the fact that in wider contexts one would compare it to standard English, while in the isles themselves speaking dialect is an immediate bond. From a personal perspective, this informant stated that in her youth dialect had made her feel very self-conscious. One informant of non-Shetland background mentioned that dialect can be exclusive at times, but the comments of dislike of two older informants were reserved for the current accent of young people, which was seen to have become more similar to that of Central Scotland.

Similar comments could be possibly registered among elderly residents throughout Scotland and England with regard to the speech of young people. Nevertheless, in this case such opinions were intermingled with perceptions of cultural difference from mainland Scotland and also for this particular reason worthy of attention. For example, Central Scots speech was seen as invasive by the respondent who mentioned a revival of the Shetland Movement in conjunction with distaste for the growing Scottish influence.[685] With the exception of four respondents who expressed their affinity with Shetland dialect but noted side effects of societal change there was nothing Shetlanders disliked about their speech. Furthermore, there was nothing to suggest that Shetland dialect within Shetland boundaries is in any way

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[684] As it can be observed from the responses, informants' reflections not only reproduced ideas of Shetland, but their descriptions also replicated almost completely the Scottish autostereotype. See e.g. McCrone, *Understanding Scotland,* pp. 90-100.

[685] See local views on politics presented in chapter 4.

regarded differently from language varieties denoted as languages. However, while affiliations were shared among the interviewees, opinions on dialect promotion were divided.

None of the participants in the survey was in favour of official use and language status for Shetland dialect and from this perspective the local variety was plainly seen as a dialect important from a cultural point of view and not a language variety in a need of official status. Interestingly, at the same time, a number of respondents clearly accentuated its role in public life in Shetland and saw as important the encouragement of local pride in it, which included also newcomers, visitors and the wider world. Others pointed both to the role of literature and the use of modern means to promote it in every possible way:

> It should be recorded in written and audio form. It should be encouraged in all areas of public life and in the home. (Female, 40-49)
>
> Above all in the speech of children, otherwise it will be gone very quickly. By helping incoming people understand it better. By encouraging more local pride in it. By using it in all modern media forms. Raise its profile. Promote the literature – it's well worth it. (Female, 50-59)
>
> Encouraging written dialect /encouraging young people to use /be proud to use. (Female, 40-49)
>
> By teaching it in schools, endemic Shetlanders not being ashamed to pass it on to rising generations, by fostering writing in the dialect, using more programmes in the dialect on local radio, encouraging more original dialect plays in the annual Drama festival, etc (male, 60-69)
>
> Use in schools, promoting to incomers and visitors and the wider world through every available means. (Female, 40-49)
>
> Spoken and written. Try to make it "cool" and minimise uptake

> of invasive Central Belt speech. (Male, 60-69)

On the other hand, those who were of the opinion that dialect constantly evolves and cannot be taught, accentuated the role of everyday use as opposed to active dialect policy:

> I don't think this is realistic. Dialect evolves. (Male, 50-59)
>
> It is important not to let it die out. It is not possible for people to keep up a large vocabulary of local words, however, because some things are not relevant to modern life. (Female, 50-59)
>
> It is essential that children are encouraged to use it. Otherwise it is lost. Dialect is learned in the formative years and cannot be taught later. (Male, 50-59)
>
> I don't think it should be preserved for the sake of it. It will take its natural course. For example Lerwick's old dialect was changed by migration of Scottish North-Eastern fish workers in the beginning of the twentieth century. (Male, 30-39)
>
> The outward push of the Gaelic language is nonsense. (Male, 30-39)

Opinions were roughly divided into two groups. Some informants described Shetland dialect as part of Shetland culture and heritage, to be used in poetry, drama, music and print and encouraged for example through night classes and education while others maintained that the best way to encourage a dialect is by using it. While a group of informants was in favour of active promotion, a second group of informants commented that revitalisation aims are probably not realistic, because dialect evolves. The oldest respondent to this study, referred to Shetland dialect as our language, but noted that it may be impossible for Shetlanders "to keep it if bairns don't speak it". Similarly, others maintained that if not used by the younger generation the dialect

will soon disappear. The notion of "preservation" of language was generally disliked. It was noted that:

> When the language becomes purely the property of the academics, linguists and antiquarians, it ceases to be a living language. That's not to say that the language shouldn't be studied by these people. I would advocate as much study as possible. What I'm saying is that, as long as people speak and, just as importantly write in the language (and I hear people speak it every day), then the language is in no need of preservation. (Male, 30-39)

Contrasts with Gaelic were employed occasionally in conversation as an example of unnecessary effort. In turn, in one of the questionnaire responses central Scots speech was seen as invasive and it was stressed that it is important to minimise its influence on Shetland speech. One of the younger respondents argued in favour of *Shaetlan* simply by stating that nobody would like to live in a monoculture. While for some of the older Shetlanders dialect loss was a very sad but perhaps inevitable process, one of the younger Shetlanders expressed the view that Shetland dialect is now better off than ever before. Another respondent of the same age group listed Shetland dialect along the Shetland flag – as something to be proud of and a "good point of difference".

Taken together the opinions of local informants confirmed the previously considered argument that Shetland dialect is seen as a dialect rather than a language. Nevertheless, this argument was true only from a technical point of view expressed in lack of desire for official status. Informants also appeared to support the opinion that those Shetlanders who desire development for Shetland dialect are in favour of treating it as a dialect and not a language. The claim that Shetland dialect is no longer seen as an entity closely associated with Shetlanders' self-understanding was not substantiated. What was visible, however, was a shift from dialect being a speech form rooted in everyday practices or ethnic notion

(in an exclusive meaning) to more clearly being a cultural symbol of the region.[686] Its role at the level of grand narratives had been strengthened, but this was not expected to create boundaries at the level of the individual in terms of group membership.

[686] Again, there are several similarities to Gaelic and its changed role. See Glaser, *Minority languages and cultural diversity in Europe*, pp. 247-270.

VIII. Region and nation

Due to oil-related developments Shetland experienced an economic boost. At the same time there were also political changes. Within this framework a dialect promotion movement emerged in Shetland and this only followed two language movements in national contexts. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, this was not surprising given the fact that language history had long been central for the reproduction of distinct self-understanding among the Shetlanders. Yet this was now to be related to recent developments in mainland Scotland as well. The Norse element of language history had been used since the nineteenth century to emphasise Shetland's difference from Scotland as part of wider narratives of Shetlanders' cultural distinctiveness.

In these narratives Norse history played an important part. With the emergence of new national contexts emphasis on dialect and language history seemed to produce a new form of unionist nationalism, this time expressed through a dialect movement. At no point, however, there was more than a marginal support for a language status for Shetland dialect. The purpose of discussion in this chapter is to clarify the roles of dialect and language history in Shetland by comparing the isles to two other regions – these of Åland and Tornedalen. The chapter is based primarily, although not exclusively, on secondary sources.[687]

The comparative cases

Åland is a group of islands geographically located between

[687] Primary sources on Åland included local articles and research literature, collected during fieldwork trips to Åland in 2007.

Finland and Sweden at the same latitude as Shetland at 60° North. Although Åland is part of Finland, the region is often described as a "state" within a state. The islands are an example of a virtual separation from the law of the state. Åland has a locally elected parliament with legislative power on issues such as education, language and local planning.[688]

It also has a locally elected government responsible for the local administration, and an independent legal system. At present, there are various iconographic events and symbols that can reproduce and reinforce feelings of collective consciousness among the Ålanders. The ability of a region to maintain ethno-cultural distinctiveness is dependent to a large extent on its possibilities and resources to develop a socio-cultural system on its own. With its own parliament (lagting) and regional government (landskapsstyrelsen), Åland acts in many respects as an independent state. The isles currently have a population of around 27,000.[689] In Åland incomes are higher in comparison to Finland and tourism, the shipping industry and the passenger-ship traffic to and from Åland are vital for Åland's economy.

Finnish is the mother tongue of more than 90% of Finland's population, while the Finland Swedes constitute only 6%. The figures for Åland are nearly the opposite: 93% of the population is Swedish-speaking, while almost 5% are speakers of Finnish. Many Ålanders live their lives exclusively in Swedish, especially as the language of instruction in all schools on Åland is Swedish and Finnish is only a voluntary subject.[690] In spite of Finnish being a voluntary subject over 90 % participate in Finnish language lessons and for over 80 % Finnish is the first choice of voluntary languages.[691] An appropriate level of knowledge of Swedish is a

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[688] Olausson, *Autonomy and Islands,* p. 43.

[689] *Åland i siffror 2010* (Ålands statistik- och utredningsbyrå, available at www.asub.ax, January 2011).

[690] K. Beijar, H. Ekberg, S. Eriksson and M. Tandefelt, *Life in two languages – the Finnish experience* (Jyväskylä, 1997), pp. 74-75.

[691] S.-E. Abrahamsson, 'Åländsk identitet – iakttagelser och reflexioner', *Radar* (1)

requirement for regional citizenship, reflecting also the fact that Finland has the legal obligation to respect Åland's monolingual language policy.[692] The region is officially monolingual in Swedish in contrast to mainland Finland, which is officially bilingual in Finnish and Swedish. There are different opinions on whether Åland dialect (*Åländska*) is closer to the Swedish spoken in Finland or the one spoken in Sweden. The dialects of the eastern islands seem to be related to the Swedish dialects spoken in Finland while those of the western islands appear to be more closely related to dialects in Sweden.[693]

The bilingual area of Swedish Tornedalen is located in the northernmost part of Sweden, in the province of Norrbotten, which has a population of around 270,000 inhabitants. It is possible to distinguish between three different ethnic groups in the Swedish Tornedalen on the basis of language: Finnish-speaking Tornedalians, Swedish-speaking Tornedalians and Finnish incomers from Finland. Tornedalen Finnish (*Meänkieli*) is spoken in five communes located in the most northern part of Norrbotten by some 25-35,000 people of Norrbotten's population.[694]

Meänkieli is a dialect of Finnish from a linguistic point of view, but it has been recently recognised as a separate language.[695] As the Swedish census does not include a question on language abilities, there are only estimates of the speakers of *Meänkieli*.[696]

(1997), p. 25.

[692] See L. Hannikainen, *Cultural, Linguistic and Educational Rights in the Åland Islands*, Publications of the Advisory Board for International Human Rights (5) (1992).

[693] Olausson, *Autonomy and Islands*, p. 119.

[694] B. Winsa, 'Defining an Ecological Niche: The use of 'dialect' or 'language'', *Current issues in language planning*, vol. 1 (2000), p. 431.

[695] L. Huss and A. R. Lindgren, 'Monikielinen Skandinavia', in M. Johansson and R. Pyykkö (eds.), *Monikielinen Eurooppa. Kielipolitiikka ja käytäntöä* (Helsinki, 2005), p. 257.

[696] Skutnabb-Kangas, 'Ireland, Scotland, Education and Linguistic Human Rights', p. 248.

The Swedish Tornedalen has a weaker economy than other areas in Sweden and lags far behind the average. Of all counties Norrbotten receives the highest economic subsidies and welfare payments from the Swedish government.[697]

At first glance, in opposition to the region of Tornedalen, the geographical islands of Shetland and Åland seem very similar, although Åland enjoys greater autonomy in relation to the mainland. Both regions are islands, similar in size of population and geographically located at the same latitude at 60° North, between two mainland nations. In both archipelagos islanders feel themselves to be primarily Ålanders or Shetlanders, and the island populations show a significant level of interest in, and knowledge of, their own history and traditions.[698]

Contemporary similarities between Shetland and Åland can be explained by their geographical insularity and the ways in which this has shaped relations between islands and mainland and islanders' identification with their region, but the aim of examination is to deepen understanding of the specific historical developments that have led to differences between them. On the other hand, there are similarities between Tornedalen and Shetland. In the late twentieth century both regions are characterised by language movements. Language and dialect revitalisation efforts can be seen as plainly rooted in the international ethnic revivals, the rise of regions and small-nation nationalisms, reasserted ethnic identities and minority languages, but there are no straightforward answers to explain similarities and differences between them.

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[697] See *Norrbottens län. Fakta och perspektiv* (Luleå, 1996).

[698] For example K. Häggblom, J. Kinnunen and B. Lindström, 'Ålänningarna och deras identitet', *Radar* (1) (1999), pp. 9-27; D. Anckar and B. Bartman, *Ett ramverk för ett självständigt Åland* (Mariehamn, 2000), pp. 76-78.

Language in politics

The border between *them* and *us* is neither unambiguous nor static, and ethno-cultural difference can be overstated or played down for collective advantage.[699] While national identities are constructed on the basis of similar components, nations are by no means arbitrary groups. In order to analyse and explain the different status and role of language in the contemporary regions of Shetland, Åland and Tornedalen it is necessary to compare the changing role of language as a historical process and the extent to which language has been part of autonomist movements or integrative nationalist policies. How did these regions respond to change and what was, if any, the role of language?

The reaction to wider societal change and national integration can take different forms: some groups strive for autonomy or independence while others accept inclusion.[700] The need for the use of language varies accordingly. In the context of the cases examined in this comparison, this would mean that for the Ålanders, in the period of 1917-1921, there were more advantages to be gained by opposing integration than by supporting the national cause. Also the Shetlanders initiated an autonomist movement, but at a markedly different point of time – in the 1970s. In contrast to Åland and Shetland, the Finnish-speaking group of Swedish Tornedalians never initiated a separatist movement or made institutional demands.[701]

In administrative terms the Shetlanders had enjoyed certain

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[699] On the other hand, nationalist thought is not interested in regional variation and particularities in the social composition of the nation, unless these are considered a 'barrier' to nation-building. See Paasi, *Territories, boundaries and consciousness,* p. 50.

[700] See e.g. G. Hálfdanarson, 'Old provinces, modern nations: political responses to state integration in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Iceland and Brittany' (Cornell University, 1991).

[701] The notion of Swedish Tornedalians can be somewhat misleading. It referred to speakers of Finnish who are citizens of Sweden.

degree of own administration since the late nineteenth century; by means of the Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1889 a county council was set up in the islands.[702] The 1960s had brought plans for amalgamation of local authorities, which could have meant the end of a separate Shetland administration and this was resisted both by the Council and in local public demonstrations. In 1962 the Zetland County Council sent a delegation to Faeroe in an attempt to examine Faeroese experiences of self-government, but considerations to grant a certain measure of autonomy to the isles were not developed further.

The formation of a new political entity, the Shetland Movement, founded in 1977, was an important expression of difference from the mainland but only followed the Zetland County Council Act passed by UK parliament in 1974, which granted the local government significant economic and developmental powers. The movement, while possessing characteristics of an opposition grouping was nevertheless an insider group, enjoying the support of almost half the Councillors on the Shetland Island Council.[703] As the movement did not develop a clear ideology and a more definite position for or against Scottish self-government, it was equally possible for Conservative and SNP supporters to stay with them.[704]

By the end of the twentieth century, with reassurances for further devolution for the isles, being part of Scottish

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[702] The late nineteenth century saw the emergence of a nationalist discourse in Shetland. Yet, the Udal League in the 1880s and 1890s was not interested in independence for Shetland. Instead, its focus was on ensuring that the rest of the UK's identity was aligned with the Viking spirit of Shetland. See also Silke Reeploeg, 'Nordic Voices in Scottish Literature – nineteenth and twentieth century literature from Shetland and Orkney' (paper presented to the University of Aberdeen seminar 'Nation-building, Nationalism and Scandinavism in nineteenth century Scandinavia', 30 March 2009).

[703] Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', p. 17.

[704] In Scotland, SNP and Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party are not necessarily at opposite ends of the political spectrum. Nevertheless, these are opposites on the issue of the consitution.

constitutional change came to be seen as a better deal. Certain aspects of history and language received a new importance, but were not used to any great extent in political demands. Shetland's remoteness and distinct aspects of history had enabled the development of separate discourses, albeit within an Imperial framework. This was also demonstrated through language. Within a British context, literacy in English had become important as connected to both political identification and modernisation, but there were other dimensions of language that had received a new importance within the context of wider societal change.[705]

In contrast to the case of Shetland, the national position of Åland and Tornedalen was affected by the dramatic events of the Russo-Swedish war of 1808-09, the emergence of new national borders and changing circumstances. In the treaty with Russia in 1809 the kingdom of Sweden was divided into two parts, Sweden and Finland. Sweden lost Finland to Russia in the treaty of Fredrikshamn in 1809 and Finland became an autonomous Grand Duchy within Russia.

In relation to Russia, Finland's position regarding its internal affairs was one of substantial independence.[706] Finland retained her Lutheran tradition and form of government as well as its Swedish system of civil and criminal law and Swedish as its official language. In addition to the Swedish-speaking and in many cases bilingual upper classes, there was a large amount of Swedish-speaking rural population. Tornedalen and Åland were the two regions most clearly affected by this division and by later nationalist developments in the two neighbouring countries. The Tornedalen region (as a geographical notion) was divided between Sweden and the semi-autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland. On the other hand, the Åland islands became part of the territory

[705] See chapter 3 of the thesis.

[706] See e.g. M. Klinge, *Runebergs två fosterland* (Helsingfors, 1983); M. Klinge, *Finlands Historia 3. Kejsartiden* (Helsingfors, 1996). On the role of history writing in politics, J. Mylly, *Kansallinen projekti. Historiankirjoitus and politiikka autonomisessa Suomessa* (Turku, 2002).

ceded to Russia along with all other parts of Finland. In order to clarify the consequences of change in terms of language, it is of value to consider the language situation in the old Swedish kingdom, and the change brought by nationalism. Towards the end of the eighteenth century state developments were leading to a closer integration and unity of all Swedish regions. Language had become a matter of identification among representatives of the social elite in particular.[707] Yet, their ideas on language and self-understanding were very different from the modern ones. The main purpose of language was still to understand and be understood. There were people who thought of language as something more than a tool of communication, but these were, at that time, a small number.[708]

Before the age of nationalism language had never served as a basis for identity construction. When Finland was part of Sweden and during the first decades after the Finnish war, two main languages, Swedish and Finnish, were spoken throughout the Finnish territory – nevertheless, language was simply a tool of mutual understanding and communication. Swedish was the language of the Swedish-speaking elite and the language used at the different levels of administration, while at the same time the majority of the population was Finnish-speaking. In the mid nineteenth century the Finnish nationalist movement began to promote a sense of language-based Finnish identity.

The new vision of language as the foundation of national identity led to changes in the situation of the two languages and, only in the nineteenth century, to language emancipation in the

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[707] J. Manninen, *Valistus ja kansallinen identiteetti. Aatehistoriallinen tutkimus 1700-luvun Pohjolasta* (Helsinki, 2000), p. 158; N.E. Villstrand 'The Finnish and Swedish languages as mouth, brain and heart', *Stiftelsen Riksbankens Jubileumsfond Annual Report* (2003), p. 61.

[708] Ch. Kuvaja, A. Rantanen and N.-E.Villstrand, 'Språk, självbild och kommunikation i Finland 1750-1850', in O. Kangas and H. Kangasharju (eds.), *Ordens makt och maktens ord* (Helsingfors, 2007), p. 48.

case of Finnish.[709]

With the emergence of new borders in 1809 Finland's relations with Sweden had become difficult and complex politically. The aim of the Russian government was to estrange Finland from Sweden and ensure loyalty and bonding with Russia, which, however, never happened. A significant issue for the Finnish national movement (the Fennomans) was the building of a stronger cultural connection between the upper class and the common people. The Finnish historian Alapuro points out that the main goal of the intellectuals representing nationalistic ideas was both populist and patriarchal. On the one hand, it was populist, because of entailing a sense of "love of the masses".[710]

On the other hand, it was patriarchal in the sense that the educated upper class had to "raise the nation to maturity". The concept of a unity of state and nation can be found in both lines of thought.[711] Nationalist demands were mainly cultural in character. The transition from one cultural language to another was necessary in order to achieve a sense of solidarity with the Finnish-speaking masses. A nation had to be created by replacing the Swedish-speaking upper class with a Finnish-speaking upper class. The development of a stronger Finnish culture was important also as a means of resistance to Russia's influence.[712]

It was thought that Finland, which is united in language and culture, would be in a better position to resist the dangers caused by its dependent situation.[713] The Finnish national movement also created myths and symbols that could be applied to a Finnish-

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[709] See R. Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), pp. 92-100.

[710] R. Alapuro, 'The Intelligentsia, the State and the Nation', in M. Engman and D. Kirby (eds.), *Finland: People, Nation, State* (London, 1989), p. 150.

[711] Alapuro, 'The Intelligentsia, the State and the Nation', p. 150.

[712] In the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century there were several unsuccessful Russification campaigns. O. Jussila, S. Hentilä and J. Nevakivi, *From Gland Duchy to a Modern State: A Political History of Finland since 1809* (London, 1999), p. 64.

[713] Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, p. 94.

speaking nation-state based on a Finnish-speaking *ethnie*, with mythology based on Finnish folklore and culture. Swedish nationalism and the cultural nationalism of Swedish-speaking Finns, on the other hand, orientated itself to Scandinavism and the Viking Age mythology and symbolism. The two newly-emerged nationalisms affected the ethnic content in the national belonging of the Ålanders and Tornedalians but in different ways; it is therefore of value to consider the specific events that led to the establishment of Åland as an autonomous and monoligual Swedish-speaking region and the absence of separatist movement and the appearance of new language in Tornedalen in the late twentieth century to signify ethnic difference.

Prior to the beginning of the nineteenth century the question of the national belonging of the Ålanders and the Tornedalians was irrelevant as Finland was an integral part of Sweden. The concept of Finland existed, but simply as a geographical and not a political notion.[714] For Åland, due to the central geopolitical position of the isles, bonds with both Finland and Sweden were equally strong.[715] In trade and communication significant regional differences existed within Finland itself. Differences not only concerned production practices and social structures, trade organizations and distinct conditions, but also exchange with other regions and different level of interest in them on part of the Swedish state.

With this in mind, Åland's position did not differ to any significant extent from that of mainland Swedish-speaking regions; yet the islands were both in the center of the kingdom and in the center of the Swedish-speaking cultural area, integrating influences from both directions. After the establishment of the new borders Åland's central position changed, although many of the earlier links between the different

[714] Kuvaja, Rantanen and Villstrand, 'Språk, självbild och kommunikation i Finland 1750-1850', p. 35.

[715] N.E.Villstrand, 'Åland – mellan Finland och Sverige. En kommentar till aktuell åländsk litteratur och debatt', *Finsk Tidskrift* (6-7) (1984), p. 332.

areas forming now Sweden and Finland remained.[716] The sea had previously connected the different regions of the kingdom, but now formed a border between two nations.

While the islands had become strategically important, in terms of language Åland's position was becoming increasingly peripheral. As a result of the character of Finnish nationalism, the islands found themselves between the new Sweden in the west and the new increasingly more Finnish Finland in the east.[717] In the beginning of the twentieth century the situation of Finland and the position of Swedish on the Finnish mainland were changing. But originally there were no obvious grounds to assume that the emancipation of Finnish could in any way affect the position of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland. This is visible in the fact that a Finland-Swedish national awakening did not emerge until the 1860s; the reason for this was that language was not seen as a decisive factor at first.

Strong feelings of Åland consciousness developed in conjunction with the Åland movement, which in the beginning of the twentieth century attempted at uniting Åland with Sweden, both because of the Swedish language as well as for political reasons.[718] Three reasons for Åland's desire to become part of Sweden were named: Åland's central position in the Baltic (the argument here was that the new Finnish state was less capable to protect Åland from military actions in the region); the issue of language, and finally, being part of Sweden was more likely to guarantee better times for Åland in the future.[719] The political situation in Finland was unstable in contrast to that in Sweden and the issue of language was initially of a secondary importance.

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[716] Villstrand, 'Åland – mellan Finland och Sverige', p. 333; N.E. Villstrand, 'Stormaktstiden 1613-1721', *Finlands historia* 2 (Esbo, 1993), pp. 132-134.

[717] Villstrand, 'Åland – mellan Finland och Sverige', p. 333.

[718] G. Högman, 'Ålänningarna och Ålandsfrågan', in S. Jungar and N. E. Villstrand (eds.), *Väster om Skiftet. Uppsatser ur Ålands historia,* Åbo Akademi Historiska Institutionen (8) (1986), p. 123.

[719] Högman, 'Ålänningarna och Ålandsfrågan', p. 124.

Furthermore, several important figures on Åland (including the leaders of the Åland movement) had their background in Finland. Carl Björkman was from the mainland and Julius Sundblom was in his early writings patriotic in his views concerning Finland. Prior to the dramatic period of 1917-21 it was common for Swedish-speakers to celebrate the same events and to share similar concerns and ideas. The Swedish language united islanders and Swedish-speaking mainlanders and Ålanders' views on Finland and Finland's future did not differ to a significant extent.[720]

The Åland movement emerged only some months before Finland's declaration of independence in December 1917 and its timing is in itself significant. In December 1917, within a week, more than 7,000 Ålanders signed a mass address to be presented to the Swedish government as a wish to be united with Sweden.[721] In Finland, Finland Swedish circles became particularly concerned about Åland's situation and it was feared that Åland's separation from Finland would weaken the national position of the Swedish-speaking minority. The spring of 1918 saw also the creation of an Åland committee in Helsinki. Members included persons with close relations to Åland and many of them were Åland-born.[722]

The committee attempted to influence public opinion in the islands to accept a compromise – self-governed Åland within Finland. The newspaper *Ålands Posten*, published for only five

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[720] For a recent account of the relation between Swedish-speaking islanders and mainlanders at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, see Ch. Kuvaja, M. Hårdstedt and P. Hakala, *Det åländska folkets historia. 4, Från finska kriget till Ålandsrörelsen 1808-1920* (Mariehamn, 2008). From a contemporary perspective, the Åland movement with its leaders Sundblom and Björkman serves as an important focus for the reproduction of a collective consciousness. See e.g. H. Skogssjö and J. Wilén, *Skotten i Tornvillan. Historien om Ålands självstyrelse* (Mariehamn, 1997), pp. 6-14; A. Bergman, 'En guidetur genom det åländska landskapet', in Y. Lindquist (ed.) *Tradition och turism på Åland. Att använda kulturarvet* (Helsingfors, 2008), p. 226.

[721] See e.g. K. Lindh, *Det åländska samhället* (Saltvik, 1998), p. 336.

[722] Högman, 'Älänningarna och Ålandsfrågan', p. 134.

months in 1919, endeavoured to balance the views supported by the newspaper *Åland*. This was nevertheless ineffective in changing Ålanders' opinions, with the majority showing preference for union with Sweden in a referendum held in 1919.[723] In May 1920 the Finnish parliament passed the Åland Self-Government Act; this was nevertheless followed by islanders' new appeal to Sweden.

During the dramatic period of 1917-21 Sweden supported the cause of the Åland movement by asserting that Åland should be allowed to join Sweden on the basis that it was a region with a Swedish language and culture that had belonged to the old Swedish nation. The conflict situation, which developed as a result of the dispute over the islands, was resolved by the League of Nations in the summer 1921.[724] Åland remained part of Finland on condition of guarantees concerning military neutrality and the preservation of the Swedish language. Although historically similar to other Swedish-speaking regions on the mainland, for example to the region of Ostrobothnia, in the beginning of the twentieth century the islands differed in language from the majority of the Finnish population and the Finnish mainland *as a whole*. Åland benefited from its insular and central geopolitical position, but Ålanders' feelings of separateness were fueled by the circumstances on the Finnish mainland, especially in the context of ongoing civil war. Finland's declaration of independence on the 6th of December 1917 and subsequent civil war were followed by constitutional debates and Finland was established as a bilingual country with two official languages.[725]

Although in connection with Finland's independence separatist ideas existed in several regions of the country, it was on Åland

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[723] Högman, 'Älänningarna och Ålandsfrågan', p. 136.

[724] See e.g. D. Nordman,'Historiker kämpar om Åland. Om de svenska och finländska historikernas argumentering i Ålandsfrågan 1917-21', in S. Jungar and N.E. Villstrand (eds.), *Väster om Skiftet. Uppsatser ur Ålands historia.* Åbo Akademi Historiska Institutionen (8) (1986), pp. 141-142.

[725] Beijar, Ekberg, Eriksson and Tandefelt, *Life in two languages*, p. 29.

that nationalism took on a stronger political role and led in the end to the establishment of Åland as an autonomous region. By the summer of 1922 Ålanders' consciousness had changed. It was then that the Swedish language became closely intertwined with Åland patriotism as shown in the lyrics of Åland's unofficial anthem *Älänningens sång.*[726]

The Swedish language, Swedishness and shared history with Sweden were at that time fundamental for Ålanders' self-understanding. There was an obvious continuity between Ålanders' past as part of the Swedish-speaking *ethnie* and the centrality of Swedish language and culture in Ålanders' separatist movement. There was a clear line of continuity between the history of the old kingdom and new national state also in the case of the Swedish Tornedalen. In 1809 the Tornedalen region was affected by the division of the kingdom into two parts. Prior to the war, similarly to Åland and Finland as a whole, Tornedalen was part of the old Swedish kingdom: Torneå was linguistically and culturally a Swedish town, surrounded by areas with Finnish-speaking population.[727]

As the new national border was drawn along the Torne River, the parishes in the valley were divided into two equal parts. In this way each part ended up in a different projects of nation-building and modernization. Both modernisation and the change of ethnic content in the national identification found expression not in a separatist movement, but in the change from Finnish to Swedish as the every-day language.[728] In Sweden, after the Finnish

[726] The lyrics are often quoted in books on Åland, for example in Y. De Geer-Hancock, *Åländskhet. Nationsbygget på 'Fredens Öar* (Mariehamn, 1986).

[727] On the history of Tornedalen see e.g. O. Hederyd, Y. Alamäki and M. Kenttä, *Tornedalens Historia I: Från istid till 1600-talet* (Haparanda, 1991); O. Hederyd and Y. Alamäki, *Tornedalens Historia II: Från 1600 till 1809* (Haparanda, 1993); M. Lähteenmäki, *Kalotin kansaa. Rajankäynnit ja vuorovaikutus Pohjoiskalotilla 1808–1889* (Helsinki, 2004).

[728] The presentation of school policy in this section is based on L. Elenius, *Både finsk och svensk. Modernisering, nationalism och språkförändring i Tornedalen* 1850-1939 (Umeå, 2001) and A. Nihtinen, 'Cultural consequences of the Finnish War –

war, there was at first no need of politicisation of the language question, because Swedish continued to have its domination within the state. Indeed, during the first half and well until the 1870s there were no attempts to introduce a school policy, which could be perceived as assimilatory or integrative in terms of language. The period 1850-1875 was characterised by a Finnish-speaking educational system in the Swedish Tornedalen, Finnish schoolbooks and Finnish-speaking teachers. The Swedish Tornedalians continued to speak Finnish, in a similar manner as within the unitary state. The school system changed towards ethnocentric and Swedish-speaking teachers and schoolbooks were introduced after 1876.[729]

It is worth of note that this became necessary primarily as a response to the language-based Finnish nationalism in neighbouring Finland. This situation continued until 1916 and was paralleled by a modernisation process, which also affected the use of Finnish in Tornedalen. The question of the national belonging of the Tornedalians was raised in conjunction to the Åland question. In connection to the Swedish opinion, which demanded that Åland should be allowed to join Sweden, there were demands from Finland that the Swedish Tornedalen should be given to Finland in that case.[730] The same arguments were used as those employed by the Swedes, i.e. that it concerned a region that by

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regional identities in Tornedalen and Åland' (paper presented to the conference 'Europe in Upheaval: the Era of Napoleonic Wars', 21-23 February 2007). For further discussion of Finnish-speaking minorities and minority languages in a comparative Nordic perspective see L. Elenius, *Nationalstat och minoritetspolitik: Samer och finskspråkiga minoriteter i ett jämförande nordiskt perspektiv* (Lund, 2006).

[729] The change in school policy did not cause any protests among the Tornedalians. Instead, the Fennomans in Finland were the ones who protested against it. See N.E. Hansegård, *Den Norrbottensfinska språkfrågan. En återblick på halvspråkighetsdebatten* (Uppsala, 1990), pp. 19-28; K. Tarkiainen, *Finnarnas historia i Sverige 2. Inflyttarna från Finland och de finska minoriteterna under tiden 1809-1944* (Helsingfors, 1993); pp. 287-292; Ch. Kuvaja, 'Kieliraja Länsipohjassa Ruotsin ajan lopussa / Språkgränsen i Västerbotten i slutet av svenska tiden', in H. Nordberg (red.), *Tornionlaakson vuosikirja, Tornedalens årsbok 2008–2010* (Haparanda, 2010), p. 355.

[730] Elenius, *Både finsk och svensk*, pp. 248-256.

tradition had a Finnish language and Finnish culture. However, there was no support from the Swedish Tornedalians for the Fennoman idea, which was for them a new nationalist idea with no relevance to their feelings of national belonging. Within the Swedish kingdom Swedes and Finns shared the same rights and Finnish-speakers had been fully integrated. Therefore, the Finnish language had meaning for the Tornedalians in the formation of ethnicity, but not in terms of national loyalty.

To summarise, the present section pointed to two major conclusions regarding language, regions and nationalism. Firstly, the different role of language in the three different regions revealed the interconnectedness of regional and national developments. Secondly, where the issue of language became important this was only as a result of particular and specific circumstances. It was observed that while the reaction to wider societal change and national integration can take different forms, the need for the use of language for political means varied accordingly. Language was more of a means for the achievement of particular ends than a reason for particular developments. The next section deepens this discussion by moving on to the emergence of a new ethnic content and the use of history.

New ethnic content

From the examination of Shetland discourses it became clear that both Norse history and the history of Norn have provided useful tools for cultural autonomy in the case of Shetland but they were not used for political or linguistic autonomy to any greater extent. In the 1970s and early 1980s the Norse aspects of history appeared to provide Shetlanders with tools to reaffirm their cultural separateness, while towards the beginning of the twenty-first century other aspects of history and language history were emphasised and discourses in Shetland and mainland Scotland appeared to converge. In any case history-based and language-

based arguments of difference had been used since the nineteenth century and language history had been simply part of the wider narrative of Shetland's otherness from mainland Scotland. With the emergence of new language movements in the late twentieth century Shetland also received a dialect movement, but most notably, the arguments presented on Shetland language history in the isles and mainland were similar.

As other aspects of history language history was used to strengthen Shetlanders' feelings of cultural autonomy, but played a relatively marginal role in terms of linguistic separation. From this perspective, Shetlanders' otherness was based on the use of history, within which language history played a particular role but this was not used for political aims. The change in ethnic content was visible in the reduced use of Norse history and presentation of Shetland culture as a combination of influences but at the same time it was possible to attribute changes in images to the need for modernisation and issues such as social inclusion.[731] While Shetlanders felt now more often also Scottish, they nevertheless retained a coherent understanding of cultural individuality.[732]

Ålanders and Tornedalians ended up being caught in two different national projects and their responses to national integration were different. This situation was not surprising when one takes into account the circumstances: the Tornedalians remained Swedish albeit within a new national state, and were Finnish-speaking, whereas the Swedish-speaking Ålanders became a part of a new national mostly Finnish-speaking state. Within the politicised atmosphere of the 1920s and around the Åland question the use of history became particularly abundant. The period between 1917 and 1921 was a dynamic period in Åland's history. For four years Swedish and Finnish historians had been expressing different views on Åland history and searching for argumentation to support opposite stances. Swedish historians

[731] See chapter 4 of the present study.

[732] These issues were considered also in chapters 5 and 6.

wanted to show why Åland should be allowed to join Sweden. Finnish historians on the other hand provided arguments for the reasons why Åland should remain with Finland.[733] Apart from being ceded to Russia together with Finland Åland had belonged to the county of Åbo and Björneborg before 1809.[734]

The differing opinions of Swedish and Finnish nationalists were based on their different views as to whether Finland constituted a separate entity within the old Swedish kingdom and to what extent Åland could have claimed a relatively autonomous position within the kingdom, as the isles had been connected to Finland in administrative sense.[735] In Tornedalen the use of history also assumed ideological importance in connection to the rise of nationalist discourses and in conjunction to the Åland question. The ethnocentric policy of Swedish education was held by the Fennomans as an expression of national oppression of the Finnish minority in the Swedish Tornedalen. For that reason, the Swedish nationalists attempted to reinterpret the history of Swedish Tornedalians. They claimed that Swedes had been living in Tornedalen before the Finns, that the medieval traders in the Valley, called 'birkarlar' were of Swedish descent and the Finnish language had taken over areas previously Swedish.[736]

Swedish nationalists used the long continuity of the Tornedalians in the Swedish nation-state to strengthen

[733] Nordman,'Historiker kämpar om Åland', p. 142; p. 150.

[734] In the early medieval period Åland belonged to Linköpings diocese, but was transferred to that of Åbo in 1309. In 1634 Åland's administrative position changed and Åland became part of the county of Åbo and Björneborg.

[735] Nordman, 'Historiker kämpar om Åland', pp. 143-5.

[736] The question of language boundaries became particularly important in conjunction with the introduction of integrative school policy in Sweden. In the beginning of the twentieth century several scholars and influencial figures in Sweden believed the first inhabitants of Tornedalen to have been Swedes who later became speakers of Finnish. This theory was rejected in the early 1960s by Hugo Tenerz and in the 1980s and 1990s various scholars studied migration patterns to Tornedalen. See Kuvaja, 'Kieliraja Länsipohjassa Ruotsin ajan lopussa / Språkgränsen i Västerbotten i slutet av svenska tiden', p. 356.

Tornedalians' perceptions of national belonging to Sweden by connecting the Swedish Tornedalians to an ethnic territory with continuity stretching beyond the emergence of the national state. This narrative enabled separate identification on part of the Swedish Tornedalians in relation to Finland and Finland Finns. Within the framework of the Åland question and because of the claim of Finnish nationalists that Tornedalians should have defended their mother tongue the Swedish history writing was acceptable from the point of the Tornedalians.

The Finnish-speaking Tornedalians, in the Swedish state, had always been Swedes in the meaning that they had perceived themselves as simply part of the Swedish nation-state. For the bilingual Tornedalians it was a matter of course that they were part of the Swedish nation.[737] While in theory the group of Swedish Tornedalians could have claimed shared Finnish identity and culture with the Finns in Finland, they had no sympathy for the newly emerged Finnish nationalism. It was difficult to express difference from Finland and Finland Finns through religion as this was shared. Instead, it was possible to learn Swedish and assert their different ethnicity through language. As a group they saw no reason to oppose the national cause and were looking for ways to express their Swedishness while simultaneously distancing themselves from Finland. It was only in the late twentieth century that Tornedalians' otherness needed a new expression and this was achieved through language emancipation.

Åland's political autonomy led in turn to the emergence of the Ålanders as a separate group. Among the initial occasions with the ability to foster a new, stronger collective consciousness were the first local elections, held in Mariehamn in 1922.[738] Ålanders used an own flag at the occasion and a song comparable to a national anthem, *Ålänningens sång*, was sung during the

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[737] See e.g. Ö. Groth, *Ur Norrbottens historia* (Luleå, 1984); Elenius, *Både finsk och svensk. Modernisering, nationalism och språkförändring i Tornedalen 1850-1939*, p. 259.

[738] Since then the 9th of June is celebrated every year as the day of Åland autonomy.

celebrations. Images and perceptions on Åland had shifted and this was visible in the book *Sångfesten på Åland 1922*, built exclusively on history presentations of Swedish authors.[739]

The historical debate surrounding the Åland question and its rhetoric left a visible trace in the isles.[740] The official history writing on Åland began to describe the isles in terms of age-old Swedish population, medieval self-rule and historical consciousness that can be traced back to ancient times. Åland authors claimed that Åland had always been Swedish and supported the view that the desire for Union with Sweden was not a new sentiment. This sentiment, they claimed, had been present in Åland ever since the partition of the kingdom in 1809.[741] To find evidence in support of this claim has not been possible.[742]

In the search for legitimacy the rhetoric of 'the old Motherland' became central for official presentations of Åland, while the existence of earlier links eastwards was downplayed and this trend continued until comparatively recent times. All historically important connections or influences were to be found westwards.[743] Åland autonomy was extended over time and the "ålandisation" of society was built step-by-step until in the 60s it had grown into a full-size campaign for autonomy consciousness.[744] The first history book for school children written from an Åland perspective *Åland och ålänningarna* appeared in

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[739] P. Hakala, 'Trohet mot det svenska fäderneslandet – folkresningen 1808 i åländsk historieskrivning', in S. Holm, T. Petterson, H. Holm, R. Palmgren and H. Silen (eds.), *Åländska Identiteter* (Helsingfors, 2006), p. 43.

[740] P.O. Sjöstrand, 'Det användbara förflutna – Ålands självstyrelse och historien', *Radar* (3) (1998), p. 45.

[741] See e.g. J. Salminen, *Ålandskungen* (Mariehamn, 1979). Other authors with similar views included Matts Dreijer, Thorvald Eriksson, Valdemar Nyman and Martin Isaksson. For a recent discussion of their views see Hakala, 'Trohet mot det svenska fäderneslandet', pp. 40-55.

[742] Villstrand, 'Åland – mellan Finland och Sverige', pp. 335-337; Nordman, 'Historiker kämpar om Åland', p. 158.

[743] See e.g. Villstrand, 'Åland – mellan Finland och Sverige', p. 337-338.

[744] De Geer-Hancock, *Åländskhet. Nationsbygget på 'Fredens Öar*, pp. 118-126.

1943.[745]

The book was written by Åland historian and archeologist Matts Dreijer, who played a major role in local history writing. He was also the editor of the magazine *Åländsk Odling* from its beginning in 1938 well until 1972.[746] In the 1960s a variety of books were produced, some of which in several languages, and this time the intended audience included both Ålanders and wider circles. At the same time as 'national' history writing was gaining in strength the new Åland symbols, ranging from flag to regional citizenship, turned Åland into a society that was even more similar to a nation-state.[747] An important part of this process was the use of national terminology to describe Ålanders as a separate group of people.[748]

The search for distinctiveness culminated in a theory relocating the Viking-age port of Birka to Åland. The name of Matts Dreijer became closely associated with this controversial claim. He presented a scenario where religious impulses had reached first Åland, which he believed to have been Ansgars' Birka in apparent contrast to earlier evidence.[749] In the 1970s and 1980s Dreijer marketed extensively his theory in various books and presentations on Åland history. Because the theory was based on

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[745] M. Dreijer, *Åland och ålänningarna* (Mariehamn, 1943).

[746] Hakala, 'Trohet mot det svenska fäderneslandet', p. 45.

[747] In 1984 Åland was granted the right to issue own post stamps. In 1993 the word 'Åland' appeared also on passports issued in the islands. The introduction of a new concept, *Åland hembygdsrätt*, was a result of the revised Åland Self-Government Act of 1951. Intended to preserve the Swedish character of the region, according to the original principles of autonomy, Åland regional citizenship is a requirement for land ownership and eligibility to vote in local parliamentary elections. Since the Autonomy Act of 1991 television and radio matters are also part of Åland's autonomy. See e.g. E. Tudeer, *Det åländska folkets historia 1920-1990* (Mariehamn, 1993); Lindh, *Det åländska samhället*, pp. 161-168.

[748] See e.g. M. Dreijer, *Det åländska folkets historia: Från stenåldern till Gustav Vasa* (Mariehamn, 1979).

[749] In his Vita Anskarii, Rimbert, Ansgar's successor to the archiepiscopal see of Hamburg-Bremen, mentions Birka as one of the ports Ansgar visited already in the ninth century. Several scholars have shown that Birka was Björkö i Mälaren.

interpretation of scarce evidence (a limestone-cross found in Sund) and related to distant times it was a hypothesis hard to prove. The theory met almost immediately with criticism by both Finnish and Swedish scholars and it has been discredited in more recent local history writing.[750]

In contemporary books on Åland such as *Ålandsboken* (2000) only a description of the limestone-cross is included as an interesting artefact.[751] With the extension of Åland autonomy and change of actors also the need to foster myths of a distinct Åland past weakened.[752] From this example it can be seen that in a similar way as Shetland also Åland developed separate discourses in relation to the respective mainland, but in contrast her relations with mainland Finland were influenced by series of nineteenth century political events and changing circumstances during the age of nationalism. In conjunction with early twentieth century events most Ålanders wanted to become part of Sweden and both language and history played a role.

Unlike in Shetland, however, it was the achievement of autonomy that created a basis for development of own culture and a separate sense of belonging. The Ålanders desired unification with Sweden but the resolution of the Åland question ended with the establishment of Åland autonomy where Ålanders' own culture, and not a Swedish culture could develop with Swedish as the language of education and communication.[753] The consequences of the character of nineteenth century Finnish nationalism are clearly discernable in the cases of Åland and Tornedalen. The Tornedalians had been Finnish-speaking within

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[750] For example by Villstrand and Sjöstrand. See Villstrand, 'Åland – mellan Finland och Sverige', pp. 338-339; Sjöstrand, 'Det användbara förflutna – Ålands självstyrelse och historien', p. 45.

[751] M. Korhonen, 'Åland som turistmål', in Y. Lindquist (ed.) *Tradition och turism på Åland. Att använda kulturarvet* (Helsingfors, 2008), pp. 40-43. Similar interpretation has been given also in other connections, see Lindh, *Det åländska samhället*, p. 336.

[752] Hakala, 'Trohet mot det svenska fäderneslandet', p. 53.

[753] O. Erland 'Den svåra närhistorien', *Radar* (1) (1997), p. 50.

the unitary state and for that reason a new ethnicity (both Finnish and Swedish) emerged in the new national state. They did not desire separation and dominant national narratives were able to strengthen their identification with Sweden and ensure distance from Finland and Finland Finns.

Within the unitary state Ålanders had been simply part of the Swedish-speaking *ethnie*. Nineteenth century nationalism affected in a dramatic way the position of Åland as central region with economic and cultural significance, and from a meeting point of influences from both directions it turned into a base for strategic operations and political arena of conflicting interests. After the achievement of autonomy, to find real differences between Åland and surrounding regions was problematic as both language and history were shared. Against this background it was necessary to imagine Åland as a historically autonomous and self-sufficient insular group with a particular historical value and importance for the Baltic region. Close to both Finland and Sweden, sharing past with both parts of the old kingdom, Åland needed historical arguments as a defense strategy on part of the new autonomy. It was difficult to find solid arguments in nearer history as this was shared; it was therefore politically expedient to search for them in ancient times.

Dialects and languages

In the end of the twentieth century the global minority movement increased its activities in language emancipation and many languages were brought to public awareness. Undoubtedly, contemporary language revitalisation movements in Shetland and Tornedalen are rooted in contemporary international developments, the rise of regions and reassessed ethnic identities and minority languages. Yet they have their own specific national contexts, which are reflected in their contemporary situations. In June 2000 Sweden ratified the European Charter for Regional or

Minority Languages (part III) and Sweden received a new language, *Meänkieli*. Ratification of the Charter guaranteed the support of *Meänkieli* in media, education, administration and culture.[754] Bearing in mind Shetland history and the contemporary desire for differentiation from the mainland, one has to ask the question of why Shetland dialect remains considered a dialect and why standardization has not received greater popularity.

Comparisons with Tornedalen are revealing, because the Finnish language of Tornedalen can be defined as a dialect of Finnish from a linguistic point of view. But while it is related to the dialects spoken in the Finnish part of the region, it is now defined to be a different language. The question which must be addressed is: apart from general change in international atmosphere and emergence of new language movements what factors created the need for recognition of Tornedalen Finnish as *Meänkieli*, a language in its own right? The answer lies in the combination of distinct self-understanding and twentieth century developments. Emigration from Finland to Sweden was extensive and this ultimately led to the formation of two different groups of Finnish origin in Sweden. Standard Finnish could not be the language of the Tornedalians, because of the emergence of a separate Tornedalian ethnicity, which, as noted in previous sections was both Finnish and Swedish.

In comparison to the Finns in Finland, and recent emigrants, the Swedish Tornedalians had contact with standard Finnish by listening to radio programs or by contact with Finland's Finns. But Standard Finnish had never been their language. The Swedish Tornedalians had always been Finnish-speaking citizens of Sweden and never Finns in the sense of belonging to the Finnish

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[754] The ratification of part III of the Charter corresponds to the same level of recognition to which the UK bounded itself in relation to Scottish Gaelic in 2001, although Gaelic is institutionalized and promoted in Scottish contexts on a national rather than regional level. The recognition of Scots only extends to Part II of the Charter, which is very general, while Gaelic can count on practical commitments in education, administration, media and culture.

nation. The recognition of *Meänkieli* became part of the process of distinction of two different minorities in Sweden with their respective languages. These developments are interesting for two reasons: first, until the beginning of the twenty-first century both groups of Finnish speakers spoke varieties of the same language; second, Tornedalians and Sweden Finns had shared the same past within the Swedish kingdom prior to 1809 and both groups were speakers of a language that had existed in Sweden for a long time.[755]

Linguistic research reveals a rather different picture of perceptions of dialect in comparison to that experienced in Shetland. While his view on Tornedalians' history is based on the long continuity of the Tornedalians as Finnish-speaking Swedes Birger Winsa emphasises that feelings of cultural inferiority were common in the Swedish part of Tornedalen.[756] The Tornedalians undervalued their collective local identity and overvalued their national (Swedish) identity.[757] Many of the informants' opinions quoted in his work show that even in recent times Tornedalians considered identification with Sweden to be an issue of primary importance. Some of the arguments presented by Winsa are characteristic for language movements with assimilation and oppression being one of the main arguments.

In reality, language shift can be described as both imposed by the state and a voluntary act, determined by more or less conscious strategies and thereby interpreted as both an abuse of power and an emancipatory act, depending on from which viewpoint it is regarded.[758] In the case of Tornedalen it has been

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[755] L. Huss and E. Wande, 'Emancipation i vardande? Drag i tornedalingarnas och sverigefinnarnas språkpolitiska utveckling', in M. Junila and Ch. Westin (eds.), *Mellan majoriteter och minoriteter. Om migration, makt och mening.* (Helsingfors, 2006), p. 230.

[756] B. Winsa, *Language attitudes and social identity. Oppression and revival of a minority language in Sweden* (Canberra, 1998), p. 118.

[757] Winsa, 'Defining an Ecological Niche: The use of 'dialect' or 'language'', p. 432.

[758] Elenius, *Både finsk och svensk*, p. 424.

rather difficult to evaluate the process, because the modernisation and the assimilation processes were taking part simultaneously.

The Tornedalians received their education in Swedish and achieved the same or similar abilities in Swedish as the Swedish-speaking majority.[759] Due to general recession in Sweden and high unemployment a significant number of individuals and families returned to their home villages in Tornedalen in the 1970s and 1980s. Some of the returning families had spent, however, long periods of time in monolingual environment and among their children language did not change back to Tornedalen Finnish after their return. According to Winsa, children in families with middle class background were more disposed to becoming monolingual in Swedish.[760] Winsa reports that most associations with Finland were avoided and experienced as a burden. Tornedalians wanted to feel Swedish, not a minority. Nonetheless, their experiences did not translate automatically into an argument in favour of a new language. Until recent times, the Finnish aspect of their ethnicity had a secondary importance within the new national state and also therefore there was simply no need for a new language culture until the end of the twentieth century.

According to Huss and Wande, the debate surrounding *Meänkieli* in the 1980s led to the development of a stronger language-based ethnic consciousness among many of those who were active in the language movement or were sympathetic to the movements' objectives.[761] The change of terminology from Tornedalen Finnish to *Meänkieli* ('Our language') in the 1990s marked a new phase and twenty years after the language debate *Meänkieli* was recognised and supported by the Swedish government.[762] To develop further the point of comparison it is also important to note that the aims of the language movement in Tornedalen were rather different than these in Shetland. The

[759] Winsa, *Language attitudes and social identity,* p. 143.

[760] Winsa, *Language attitudes and social identity,* p. 143.

[761] Huss and Wande, 'Emancipation i vardande?', p. 240.

[762] Winsa, 'Defining an Ecological Niche: The use of 'dialect' or 'language'', p. 431.

Swedish Tornedalians' Association (*Svenska Tornedalingars Riksförbund – Tornionlaaksolaiset*) was founded in 1981. The view of the association was that Tornedalen Finnish should be regarded as a language in its own right, because of the existence of the Swedish Tornedalians as a separate minority group.

The movement, similarly to other movements, led to a growing amount of activities, publications in Tornedalen Finnish such as literature, grammars and magazine, plays, films, radio programs and the teaching of the language in schools. The main aim of the group was to maintain a bilingual society and its particular culture in the Swedish Tornedalen. To achieve this end the society demanded of the Swedish government in 1983 the following:

- Education for all pupils in the Finnish-speaking area in Tornedalen Finnish, Finnish, and the culture and history of the Torne Valley
- Compilation and production of a dictionary in Tornedalen Finnish and teaching aids in Tornedalen Finnish/ Finnish
- Further education for preschool and school teachers so they can work actively with Tornedalen Finnish and can transmit knowledge of the history and culture of the Torne Valley.[763]

Here differences between the language movement in Tornedalen and the dialect movement in Shetland became particularly obvious. Education and the compilation of dictionaries are part of the agenda of both movements, but in Tornedalen the lobby for the achievement of these aims was directed at the Swedish government. The Shetlanders, on the other hand, directed their efforts primarily towards cooperation with the Shetland Islands Council and local enterprises with the purpose to create a dialect policy for the whole of Shetland. Not only that, but the Shetland dialect movement shared common features also with the place branding project and wider modernisation of images. The activities of Shetland ForWirds also demonstrated a process of

[763] Winsa, *Language attitudes and social identity*, p. 143.

adjustment to the new national circumstances, because dialect activists participated at the same time in national campaigns.

From all this it can be seen that Shetland, in contrast to Tornedalen, is lacking two of the main elements, which made the recognition of *Meänkieli* not only possible but also necessary. First, whilst there is a linguistic and ethnic sense of Shetlandness, Shetland comes closer to the concept of a civic region where belonging is expressed through residence and attachment to place. Second, Shetland dialect is lacking a narrative of perceived oppression of the kind that *Meänkieli* has, as connected to changed borders and nineteenth century nationalism. With regard to the first point presented above, my examination of local discourses demonstrated that essentialist ethnic narratives are increasingly disliked in contemporary discourses in Shetland as a result of the change of Shetland society. Oil-related developments not only changed local communities, but also enhanced support for Shetland culture and expressions of Shetlandness. In 1974 the Shetland local government was granted significant economic and developmental powers. Simultaneously as the isles became the new home of incomers from Britain and various parts of the world, subsidiary trusts and funds enabled the reproduction of Shetlandness and invigorated civil society.

The promotion of dialect as somewhat different from mainland Scots was in Shetland part of a wider socio-economic project rather than a nationalist one. In a sense it fitted clearly into the Scottish national discourse. Most Scottish academics and writers had held the view that a straightforward and clear-cut division between Scots and Scottish Standard English along the existing dialect continuum was not to be had; instead, some authors and academics had suggested that there are good arguments that the search for such division or 'purity' was misplaced.[764] In relation to Shetland Tait commented that:

[764] See e.g. McLeod and Smith, 'Resistance to monolinguality', p. 22.

> When Faeroe revitalised her mother tongue, she had the example of Iceland to follow. We, on the other hand, are obliged to follow the example of Lowland Scotland. Of course, there are many different opinions about Scots in Scotland. But the view of most of the academic and literary establishment is that written Scots has a place in creative writing, but English must be used for everything else. This is of course the opposite of the approach which has been effective in places like Faeroe.[765]

While Tait criticised Shetlanders' unwillingness to embrace the idea of a standard, the fact that Shetland's approach to language was similar to that in Scotland as opposed to other cases revealed the interconnectedness of existing discourses. Even the Scottish Gaels have been reluctant to engage in contemporary minority discourses, while on the other hand Scottish Gaelic has been considered a distinct language in Scottish contexts.

My second point, the observation of the present work that Shetland dialect is lacking a narrative of perceived oppression of the kind that *Meänkieli* has, as connected to changed borders and nineteenth century nationalism was valuable for elaborating the differences between the two cases. The existing narratives of perceived stigma towards Scots have been mostly connected to class issues and associated with mainland Scotland and urban varieties rather than with the islands. The perceived threats to dialect during the oil era were arising from social changes and cultural homogenisation, speeded up by oil-related developments.

Yet Shetlanders had by no means felt that their dialect is inferior in relation to mainland Scots, also due to the absence of a Scots standard. If anything, some of them had felt that their dialect is "superior" to mainland dialects or at least that it had several advantages in comparison to the dialects on the mainland, being better preserved. This situation in turn can be seen to have a parallel in the preservation of Swedish on Åland in comparison to mainland Finland, in this case as connected to the existence of

[765] Tait, 'Shaetlan is daed – lang live dialect', p. 34.

monolingual policy.

While discourses of decline and promotion resemble minority language movements, Shetland dialect is considered to be an important part of both Shetland's past, spoken and literary tradition, and sense of belonging. It matters to contemporary Shetlanders because it is one of the essential elements that reproduce a distinctive Shetland culture and separate consciousness. The case of Åland is enlightening as it is both similar *and* different from the case of Shetland. Similarly to Shetland and Tornedalen, Åland is also affected by emigration and immigration and in local contexts this is considered to affect the language situation.[766]

In the case of Åland, the isles are affected by constant emigration to Finland and Sweden, and constant immigration to Åland from Finland and Sweden. By estimation the numbers of emigrants from, and to Åland are roughly the same, as are the shares of Finland and Sweden in both emigration and immigration, in addition to immigration from other countries.[767] The centrality of Swedish is plainly visible in the contemporary political agenda of *Ålands Framtid*, a political party the aim of which is an independent microstate.[768]

Central for party's arguments are practical concerns arising from Åland's official language policy and the diminishing use of Swedish within Finnish contexts since the vast majority of Finland has Finnish as their mother tongue. For the authorities of Åland it has become in practice more problematic to communicate with Finnish authorities in Swedish, and this, as the party points out, was a right that the isles were once guaranteed. The practical consequences of language policy have been visible also in a growing external orientation from 'eastwards' to 'westwards'. One

[766] Hannikainen, *Cultural, Linguistic and Educational Rights in the Åland Islands*, p. 14.
[767] Hannikainen, *Cultural, Linguistic and Educational Rights in the Åland Islands*, p. 15.
[768] See the official website of Ålands Framtid, www.alandsframtid.ax (retrieved February 2007). Regarding independence see for example D. Anckar and B. Bartman, *Ett ramverk för ett självständigt Åland* (Mariehamn, 2000).

area affected by change has been academic education: whereas in the 1950s it was still uncommon for Ålanders to study in Sweden, today it is uncommon for Ålanders to study in Finland. In 1997 approximately two thirds of all Ålanders were studying in Sweden. Similarly, an increasing number of employees in the local government are graduates of Swedish universities.[769] In terms of self-understanding, however, there is evidence of similar attitudes to dialect as exist in Shetland also on Åland.[770] Absent on Åland are the images of decline, which have been widespread in Shetland, both because of Shetland history and socio-economic change.

As in Shetland Åland dialect never played a political role on Åland. A movement to support its recognition as a separate language would not have had a legitimate function, in spite of the fact that *Åländska* is closely associated with Ålanders' self-understanding. Similarly, dialect revitalisation or promotion movement could not have been meaningful in the case of Åland. In contrast, the role of language in the emergence of modern Shetland culture is reflected in the usages and central role of language history.

Concluding remarks

The purpose of discussion in this chapter was to clarify the roles of dialect and language history in Shetland by comparing the isles to two other insular regions – these of Åland and Tornedalen. Shetland, Åland and Tornedalen are all examples of cases where changes in the national context were paralleled by wider societal change, yet reactions to change were different in all three cases. Present-day territorial and ethno-cultural aspirations have different content in different cases, but the ability of territorial

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[769] Abrahamsson, 'Åländsk identitet – iakttagelser och reflexioner', p. 23.

[770] B. Lönnqvist, 'En icke ålänning', *Åländsk Identitet* (Mariehamn, 1997), p. 16; Interview of Bertil Johansson, *Åländsk Identitet*, pp. 129-132; Interview of Helena Westberg, *Åländsk Identitet*, pp. 229-232.

communities to maintain their unity depends to a large extent on their possibilities and resources to produce links to a golden age and to create a distinct socio-cultural system of their own. The use of history provided an effective means in creating boundaries of otherness and belonging for Shetlanders and Ålanders and to a lesser extent for the Tornedalians and also the effectiveness of language as an expression of otherness took different forms. The extent to which history, language history and language have been effective in boundary creation varied in all three cases. The functional roles of language and history in the examined regions can be summed up as follows:

Table 5: Sameness and non-belonging

Region	Distance from:	Similarities:
Åland	Finland, Finns, Finland Swedes	Sweden, (Sweden) Swedishness
Tornedalen (ambivalent)	Finland, Finnish	Finland and Sweden, Finnish
Shetland (ambivalent +)	Scotland, Lowland Scots, Celts	Norse, Scots, Vikings

Table 6: Effectiveness of history, language history and language in creating otherness

Region	History	Language history	Language or dialect
Åland	+ +		+ + +

Tornedalen	+		+ +
Shetland	+ +	+	+

For the Ålanders and the Swedish Tornedalians language was able to provide a clear-cut ethnic division, as two distinct languages Swedish and Finnish had been spoken in the unitary state with Swedish as the language of administration. Their responses to national integration were nevertheless different because the regions became parts of two distinct national projects. In Shetland even the initial historical contact had been between closely related languages, nevertheless, had the national project been different it would have been possible to transform Shetland dialect into a separate language.

Both Norse history and the history of Norn have been long considered to both create and express the otherness of Shetland. Growing feelings of non-Scottishness were recorded in the beginning of the oil era. Within this context the uses of history remained useful as expressions of cultural autonomy, but history was not used to any greater extent for political or linguistic autonomy. Åland's autonomy was based on difference in language and ethnicity from mainland Finland and the use of history was a necessary tool for creating cultural difference and defending the new political autonomy. Tornedalians received a new language in the beginning of the twenty-first century to express their different ethnicity from Finland Finns, whereas Shetlanders movement was merely concerned with the effects of modernisation and immigration on diminishing use of Shetland dialect and Ålanders never initiated a language movement.

Scottish nationalism, in the strict sense of desire for independence for Scotland, has had little connection to the language cause, overt or otherwise. While the desire for political autonomy in Scotland has been growing steadily, the idea of greater linguistic autonomy has not received wider popularity.

Similarly, albeit closely associated with local life and culture, Shetland dialect was seen in the 1970s as now as something to cherish and support but not to use for political aims.

From all of these comparisons one can see a connection between regions' different reactions to change and the character of nineteenth century Finnish nationalism and respectively Scottish / British nationalism. Unlike on Shetland, on Åland and in Tornedalen language played a political role. As recently demonstrated by Lindgren and Huss, there are obvious similarities between the emancipatory processes in Finland during the period of Finnish nationalism 1860-1920 and in connection to the language revitalization in Tornedalen between 1960 and 2003.[771]

In the first case representatives of the elite changed their language from Swedish to Finnish and the result of the language conflict was in the end the establishment of Finland as a bilingual country. In the second case restoration of both Finnish and Meänkieli was connected to the existence of two minority populations of Finnish origin in Sweden. In both cases the emancipatory movement began within a small group of well-educated people who created a new language culture. Common features for both movements were also the choice of central domains where the languages were introduced and the fact that in both cases minorities were striving for highly developed bilingualism and not monolingualism in the minority language.

Although Åland was part of Russia together with Finland, the islands did not follow the same path of change regarding language. In fact Åland consciousness only strengthened as a result of the nature of nineteenth century Finnish nationalism, which was indeed cultural in character and in which the importance of language was an issue of major significance. The original reason for different and diverging developments was in

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[771] See A.-R. Lindgren and L. Huss, 'Antingen –eller eller både –och? Språklig emancipation i Finland och Sverige', in O. Kangas and H. Kangasharju (eds.), *Ordens makt och maktens ord* (Helsingfors, 2007), pp. 187-216.

both instances the same event: the war of 1808-09, which led to the creation of new borders and changed discourses in Finland and Sweden. In both cases of Tornedalen and Åland particular cultural manifestations of Åland consciousness and respectively Tornedalian consciousness were a result of the creation of new borders and the character of Finnish nationalism.[772]

In the early twentieth century Ålanders' feelings of closeness to Sweden's Swedishness strengthened and originally equally strong bonds with Finland were, at least at the official level, consciously marginalized in identification. In conjunction with the global minority movement, a new linguistic awareness was created in Tornedalen and this became necessary only as a result of the establishment of new borders and subsequent separate developments. As demonstrated, discourses intertwining language and ethnicity were not the appropriate framework of examination in the two insular cases of Shetland and Åland. Perceptions of ethno-cultural difference were in these cases meaningful when considered from a regional, insular point of view.

For Shetland, the main issue in the cultural sphere was "coming-to-terms" with the Norse influences on Shetland's culture and its perceived non-Scottishness. Discourses of resistance to cultural homogenisation are present and region's cultural heritage is appreciated as separate from the national. But these issues were, and remained, cultural. As a result, the rise in local consciousness was not paralleled by a stronger desire for linguistic autonomy. One reason for this state of affairs lies in the character of Scottish and Shetland nationalism, another – in the mainstream intellectuals' support for regional differences and lack of standard for Scots. By the beginning of the twenty-first century dominant discourses had changed, modifying the roles of Norse heritage and Shetland dialect accordingly.

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[772] Nihtinen, 'Cultural consequences of the Finnish War – regional identities in Tornedalen and Åland', p. 10.

IX. Conclusions

Shetlanders and Scottish?

Since the 1970s Shetland has been affected by the oil industry developing in the North Sea, which became an essential part of not only Shetland's, but also the UK's economy. In the 1970s oil-related developments were seen to provide a counter-narrative or anti-narrative to the perceived "Shetland way of life". During the first years of the oil era it was believed that oil was destroying Shetland's traditions and distinctive culture and incomers from the mainland were treated with distrust.

As Shetland Island Council was able to deal directly with the oil companies, resources and influence began to flow into the local economy. The local council invested widely in the infrastructure of the islands, and efforts were directed towards discouraging rural depopulation.[773] Recent research by Abrams argued that the oil industry provides no link to the past and has not fitted into the myth system of Shetland.[774] Instead, it is still regarded as an alien or foreign element. Recollections of the oil industry were rarely incorporated in a positive way into people's narratives. Abrams implied, however, that this may be changing in the early twenty-first century and opinions of contributors to the present study suggested such a change.

The discovery and exploitation of oil in the 1970s, and the resulting influx of construction and oil workers, also contributed to growing awareness and knowledge of Shetland history among the Shetlanders and beyond the islands. The oil industry was

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[773] Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots*, p. 182.

[774] Abrams, *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World*, p. 15.

perceived as a threat at first, but led in fact to strengthening perceptions of cultural separateness. The boost in self-understanding was linked to the changes in local life, but notions of distinct culture and dialect decline had existed long before the oil era.[775]

At the same time there were also political changes in the isles and the country as a whole. The nationalist movement in Scotland was growing in strength in the 1970s and although there were many reasons for this, the discovery of oil was one of the most significant. Shetlanders, on the other hand, had their own reasons, to protect the interests of their own community and oppose any loss of political individuality. Within this framework attitudes in the isles were seen by scholars to have evolved from being centred on distinct culture to being centred on ethnic separatism. Prevailing attitudes in the islands were described as pro-Scandinavian and at times anti-Scots.[776]

Research in the 1980s emphasized the existence of pro-Scandinavian feelings among the Shetlanders. For example, the linguist Gunnel Melchers researched language attitudes in Shetland during the spring of 1983.[777] Melchers based the tentative claims of her study on years of fieldwork, which included interviews and participant observation. She argued that a dominant feature of Shetland identity at that time was a strong sense of affiliation with Scandinavia. Her fieldwork in the 1980s showed that this was present in both culture and everyday life on the islands. At that point Shetland dialect was still perceived as being a direct successor of the old Norn and although it was no longer the main element of the language itself it constituted a major element in Shetlanders' linguistic awareness.[778]

In the end of the nineteenth century Shetlanders had relied

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[775] This was visisble for example in the letters published in *Shetland News* in the early 1940s, see chapter 3.

[776] For instance Renwantz, 'From Crofters to Shetlanders', pp. 290-337.

[777] Melchers, 'Language attitudes in the Shetland Islands', pp. 87-100.

[778] Melchers, 'Language attitudes in the Shetland Islands', p. 91.

upon their Norse heritage to differentiate themselves from other groups within Britain and now there was again interest in Norse language, law and festivals.

Two strands of thought emerged – one emphasising the political aspects (separatism) and another emphasising the institutional aspects (protection) of insular government.[779] My examination of pro-devolution discourses in the 1990s suggested a turn in local politics and Shetlanders' views on Scottish devolution. Towards the end of the century Shetland became part of Scottish constitutional change and the strengthening of political dimension of language discourses paralleled these developments. Bearing in mind the simultaneous transformation of the economy and political discourses, the dissertation sought to examine how recent developments and changes in prevailing discourses have affected Shetlanders' self-understanding in relation to Scottishness and the role of language in this process. One hypothesis of the thesis was that with the change in political circumstances Shetlanders expressed their belonging to the new national contexts also by initiating a dialect movement and not a language movement. Yet this assumption was not sufficient to explain why Shetlanders needed a separate dialect promotion movement in the first place.

An essential part of the new national context has been the reassessment of history, particularly language history, and the role of the region in Scottish contexts. In recent years it has become increasingly widely accepted, within Scottish contexts, that the Union of 1707 had little direct impact on the lives of the mass of Scotland's population and initially also on the elite. The development of the British single market was essentially an economic event and its social and cultural impacts were of less significance at least in the early stages of the new state. Centralising forces began to impact on Scotland (and Shetland as part of it) from the mid-eighteenth century. This process coincided

[779] Macartney, 'The Scottish Islands Debate', p. 9.

with the development of centralised schooling and the elite slowly adopted anglified speech and culture. This was not a widespread or accepted process and the Northern Isles retained their specific characteristics for much longer. Notions about Scotland as a "failed state" had become increasingly widely accepted and the belief that the country required improvement was widespread, a view which has been revised in recent years. Within the framework of pessimistic interpretations of Shetland and Scottish histories, if taken separately, language played a role and this role has been given an increasing attention in recent decades.

The present study is a contribution to the deconstruction of national narratives from both a British perspective and a Scottish perspective. Influential accounts such as Linda Colley's *Britons* paid scant attention to internal debates within Scotland, which was essentialised as a single monolithic entity. Similarly, language discourses in Scotland were more complex than it has been often suggested. Several commentators had ignored the issue of Scots as a distinct element of national identity in Scotland. Furthermore, Scots too was understood and presented as a single entity in part of the existing language discourses whereas others underlined Shetland particularism. The Northern Isles did not play an important role neither in the formation of Scottish identity nor in the development of the state. Since their inclusion in the Scottish kingdom in 1468-69, the islands played a marginal role in Scottish contexts. This minor role was reflected in history writing – until recent times Scottish historians of the mainland regarded Shetland as remote and of less concern than the Highlands. In recent years, however, this has been rectified.[780]

The cultural attributes of Shetlanders as a separate group of people developed during the age of nationalism but this took place within both Scottish and British contexts. Furthermore, the fact that Shetlanders shared constitutional monarchy with other

[780] See Øien, 'The Northern Isles – Between Two Nations', p. 90. One of the important contributors to this process was the historian Gordon Donaldson, who wrote several articles and books about the islands.

groups did not mean that Shetlanders felt simply British. Shetland's remoteness and distinct aspects of history enabled the development of separate discourses, albeit within an Imperial framework. It was a number of local individuals that wished Shetlanders to engage in a revived Norse culture though reading books, novels, dialect poems, and through the encouragement of lessons in Shetland Norse history as part of school curriculum. In subsequent periods a more contemporised Shetland culture emerged, but the Norse elements of history assumed a new importance in the beginning of the oil era.

To an extent the cultural demarcation of Shetlanders as a separate group can be challenged. Shetland's difference is strongly based on historical and (partially also) contemporary links with Scandinavia; yet Scotland as a whole has been influenced by intense interaction with Scandinavia.[781] As shown in chapter 2 of the thesis, the nineteenth century self-perceptions of distinctiveness in Scotland were diverse and divided between Celtic and Norse, with the Norse representing the strong, Empire-building Scots.[782] Furthermore, Shetland has been often defined in terms of difference from the Celtic heritage of Scotland, while the extent to which Scotland is Celtic has been debated on the mainland itself.

The view that Shetlanders are less Celtic and more Teutonic than a Scot was shown to fall into the mythology of the Celtic Romantic movement while ignoring the disconnect between certain romantic manifactured images and everyday self-images and the shifting nature of these identities. But self-consciousness in Scottish and Shetland contexts within the British was also connected to the rise of separate discourses and can be examined on equal terms. Shetlanders are a group "inherited from the past",

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[781] For historical connections between Scotland and Scandinavia see e.g. G. Simpson (ed.), *Scotland and Scandinavia 800-1800* (Edinburgh, 1990); D.J. Waugh (ed.), *Shetland's Northern Links: Language and History* (Edinburgh, 1996).

[782] See Newby and Andersson Burnett, 'Between Empire and "the North": Scottish Identity in the Nineteenth Century', pp. 37-56.

which, similar to the inhabitants of Guernsey, Jersey or Cornwall "given the impulse of economic circumstance and intellectual cultivation, could easily be promoted as independent nationalities".[783]

By examining the aims of the Shetland movement and subsequent developments I demonstrated that issues of culture and language were somewhat separate from the presented political arguments and did not become instrumental for constitutional change. Shetlanders' desire for constitutional change was based on Shetlanders' wish to protect their immediate interests. A similar movement could not have emerged in the 1920s for example, as there were no reasons to oppose the national cause at that time. However, although the devolution rhetoric in both Scotland and Shetland was based on economic grounds, increasing importance of cultural distinctiveness paralleled this rhetoric. Within this framework, comparisons to other regions (e.g. to the Faeroe Islands) were considered useful as examples Shetland may wish to follow. As I demonstrated in chapter 7, similar comparisons and considerations were employed also in language debates. Correspondingly, in Scottish contexts, references to both Norden and individual Nordic states have been increasingly common in political discourse.[784]

One of the main arguments of this study was that different individuals participate in the definition of boundaries in different ways. Their identification with their region and with changes in national contexts was not necessarily the same as the images

[783] K.R. Minoque, 'Nationalism and the Patriotism of the City-States', in A.D. Smith (ed.), *Nationalist movements*, (London, 1976), p. 54.

[784] In the aftermath of devolution in 1997-99, Åland and the Faeroe Islands were employed often as examples for autonomous Scotland. However, I questioned this approach by comparing similar in size political units such as Shetland and Åland. On the use of Norden in political discourse and a discussion of Åland as a comparison to Scotland see also Newby, ''In Building a Nation few better examples can be found'': Norden and the Scottish Parliament', pp. 307-329. On the use of comparisons in language discussions see my analysis in chapter 7 of the dissertation.

produced at the level of grand narratives. It was therefore important to distinguish between region's identity as a construction and the life histories of its inhabitants. As the experiences, perceptions and stories of an individual exist within the culturally available repertoire of narratives, these were on the other hand offering an additional insight into the ways in which boundaries were defined and discussed. Towards the end of the century Shetland appeared more integrated in the new national contexts and at the same time wider economic and social change had affected what was seen as traditional aspects of Shetland culture and Shetlanders' self-understanding, but views on culture and national belonging were far from monolith.

In the present study it was shown that language was a key element of regional consciousness in Shetland and closely intertwined with Shetlanders' self-understanding. On the basis of a variety of sources it was possible to distinguish the existence of two competing paradigms. The first paradigm considered boundaries to have become more blurred or ambivalent in recent years and dialect decline played an important role in this process. This paradigm produced narratives of cultural decline. The second paradigm was dynamic: this acknowledged the role played by Shetland dialect (and Norn elements as part of it) and the role of Shetland tradition, but it was more inclusive.[785] These same standpoints were reproduced and maintained also by contributors to this study. Perceptions of decline of cultural distinctiveness were entangled with ideas of decline in linguistic difference. In contrast those who had adopted a dynamic approach to Shetland culture considered Shetland dialect in terms of evolution rather than decline and understood Shetland culture primarily in the meaning of ethnically marked cultural and artistic pursuits and products.

[785] While the political context is different in Shetland and Shetlanders retain a dialect and not a language, somewhat similar considerations regarding language and group membership and perceptions of decline and evolution apply also to Gaelic. See Glaser, *Minority languages and cultural diversity in Europe*, pp. 304-310.

As stated elsewhere, cultural practices are not only about difference, but also about reflection on community's history and all cultural dimensions (local events, products, linguistic discourses and so forth) are assumed to have a plausible connection to history. While the intended modernisation of images had partly shifted the focus of the region's image from the past to the present, elements of the past continued to be used in interpreting the experience of previous generations. These were also employed as traditions in cultural life and heritage centres and were present in tourist material and journalism.

When the issue of dialect was examined in more detail contributors to my project pointed to changes in the variety itself and the emergence of different concepts along a generational line. Part of the respondents considered dialect to have declined to a significant extent, in particular among the young generation, but others were of the opinion that it is still widely spoken. Respondents' attitudes towards the dialect or language appeared to be to a great extent reflexive or self-reinforcing and reproduced prevailing narratives. While affiliations were shared among the interviewees, opinions on dialect promotion were divided. Not all respondents defined dialect as a vital part of Shetland culture or being Shetlander; in fact some respondents did not include dialect in their reflections.

When asked about its relevance, however, interviewees considered Shetland dialect to be distinct and valuable on account of its cultural value for Shetland. Shetland speech was seen to establish an immediate bond and to be a social leveller, which corresponded also to other ideas of Shetland such as lack of snobbery, egalitarianism and community spirit.[786] These closely resembled contemporary ideas of Scotland as a whole, which are often reported by Scottish informants to distinguish Scotland from England. For example, in their study of heritage consumers

[786] This self-perception maps almost perfectly onto the autostereotype of the Victorian Scots. See e.g. A.G. Newby, 'A Mere Geographical Expression'? Scotland and Scottish Identity, c. 1890-1914' (Forthcoming, 2011).

McCrone, Morris and Kiely report similar statements of Scottish informants on the differences between Scottish and English heritage as different sets of core values.[787] The interviews showed, in turn, that contributors to this study considered values such as egalitarianism and community spirit to distinguish the isles from mainland Scotland or Britain.

The impact of societal change and immigration to the isles was most visible in issues such as modernisation of images and social inclusion. Informants of all age groups defined themselves and others on the basis of birth and upbringing and/ or on the basis of choice and commitment to place, but for some informants definitions remained more ethnic. This observation was confirmed through examination of local articles. The role of dialect in the defining of the Shetlanders as such appeared to have weakened at the collective level, but when personal identification was in question or when its symbolic role for the region was considered, a different picture emerged. The opinion that Shetlanders of earlier generations identified above all with Shetland was prevalent. There was a relatively clear division between Shetland and Scottish events and symbols, but this was underlined by Shetland's insularity. Only two respondents felt that islanders' feelings for their region have not changed significantly, but, markedly, they both felt that Shetlanders of previous generations identified above all with Shetland and that contemporary Shetlanders continue to do so. Some saw Scottish convergence as a factor in diminishing distinctiveness, while others considered primarily a wider change in the isles and islands' population as well as general long-term cultural and economic transformation to have affected ethno-cultural boundaries.

Another important result of the study was the observation that the actors involved in language activism in Shetland were not the persons who were involved in political discourse in Shetland.

[787] McCrone, Morris and Kiely, 'The heritage consumers. Identity and affiliations in Scotland', pp. 73-88.

Similarly, views on evolution and decline of language did not reveal differences between island and mainland actors, if such a line can be drawn at all. Instead, it was possible to observe differences between viewpoints presented by historians and sociolinguists, and between creative writers and promoters of orthography and official status. These discourses by no means separated Shetland and Scotland. Instead, these were closely intertwined and interdependent.

An essential point to emerge from local writings and statements was that Shetland is undergoing an inter-generational identity shift. Some of the older respondents expressed dislike of the behaviour of young Shetlanders, who have adapted habits from the mainland and maintained that Shetlanders had had a clearer picture of themselves at earlier times. Regardless of identification with Shetland, Scotland and/or Britain as a whole, cultural commitment to Shetland was important to all. The dissociation of views on politics and views on culture was on the other hand reinforced by a large number of replies emphasising the value and importance of Shetland culture and distinctiveness, but making no comments on politics at all. Similarly, while the political climate had changed, images of cultural difference remained. In the twenty-first century Shetland dialect was promoted as clearly a regional rather than ethnic notion. Yet it was still connected primarily, although not exclusively, with the local rather than the national scene.

The role of language

An important strand of new consciousness in Shetland and Scotland alike was the issue of language: a separate language is not a prerequisite for ethnicity or cultural difference, but those groups which have inherited a distinct dialect, or language, tend to emphasise its role as a creator of boundaries. There are two reasons for this: first, linguistic boundaries are more concrete and

socially isolating than borders defined by values and traditions; second, because of the promotion of language-centred concepts of culture during the emergence of European nation-states, the argument that different languages generate different cultures has been influential and widespread in common discourses.

Similarly to Scottish nationalism, Shetland consciousness based its appeal almost entirely on economic arguments and avoided cultural nationalism in favour of a civic and non-ethnic based approach to regional consciousness. It was observed that there were certain patterns that were traceable to the age of nationalism and subsequent developments. On the one hand, difference from mainland Scotland was occasionally based on language arguments; on the other, a written tradition in Shetland dialect had emerged, in the third instance, the vast majority of Shetlanders continued to speak a form of Norse-influenced Shetland dialect. English and Shetland dialect had been traditionally considered as somewhat separate varieties, in fact also Shetland dialect and Lowland Scots were regarded different. Thus Shetland was perceived as linguistically different from Scotland in two ways: first, through the absence of Gaelic tradition; second, through perceptions of Shetland dialect as somewhat different from mainland Scots dialects. Shetland dialect featured in literature in the nineteenth century but it was mainly understood as the language of the home and sentiment, a feature which it shared with other Scottish regions.

Contemporary language discourses were traceable back to the 1920s and especially to the post-war period. By the 1920s national discourses had changed and writers of the Scottish literary renaissance attempted to demonstrate the possibilities of Scots as a national concept. The debate about the type of language Scottish writers should use was embedded within discussions about national identity, but did not mobilise Scots speakers around a political language agenda.[788] In contrast, the aim of Shetland

[788] See e.g. Finlay, 'Gaelic, Scots and English: the politics of language in inter-war

writers was nevertheless to assert and represent Shetland culture and forms of Shetland dialect and I showed that this was a main characteristic of the post-war cultural revival. Cultural promotion was greatly advanced by the oil trusts and funds, but only towards the beginning of the twenty-first century there have been signs, within Scottish contexts, of change towards asserting national identity in political terms as combined with language activism.[789]

Manifestly it was the new reassertions of Scottishness and the wide provision for the Gaelic movement that fed debates on Scots in the 1990s. For the Shetlanders, however, the main focus of concern continued to be entangled with both the local tradition and contemporary societal situation. Contemporary cultural figures, as demonstrated in my study, were also willing to represent Shetland dialect speakers and Shetland tradition. They also connected the continuation of oral and written tradition to the region as a whole in an inclusive manner. Apart from examination of Shetland discourses in relation to their national counterparts, another method of clarifying the case of Shetland was the introduction of comparisons to other regions and nations. Åland and Tornedalen were selected as contrasting units of comparison for two reasons: first, their geographical insularity and respectively linguistic difference; and second, the fact that taken together these regions provided a different Nordic perspective. The comparative chapters had some common ground with recent research in the social sciences, but also challenged their approach and I was able to confront some of the widespread popular assumptions regarding languages, dialects and boundaries.

Recent research by Ackrén had demonstrated that there are two different routes leading towards territorial autonomy. The first indicated that ethnic diversity in combination with small size leads to territorial autonomy, while the second indicated that a

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Scotland', pp. 133-141.

[789] Hance, 'The Scots language movement', 8 May 2009.

combination of historical strategic importance, together with long geographical distance, was sufficient for autonomy.[790] Pär Olausson studied the relation between islands and autonomy by the use of several dimensions applied to autonomous and non-autonomous islands. The main question posed by his study was: what factors contribute to the fact that some islands enjoy autonomy while other remain integrated parts of the motherland? Whereas cultural difference alone was shown to be neither a necessary nor a sufficient factor to explain autonomy, cultural difference was identified using three aspects of culture; difference in language, in ethnicity, or in religion. By definition, whenever one or more of these criteria were considered fulfilled, the island group was said to display a difference in culture in relation to the mainland.[791]

From this perspective language and ethnicity were seen as intertwined and in cases such as Shetland no major cultural difference from the mainland was found. Therefore, comparisons between Shetland and Åland as geographically insular regions were considered of value, because these could also help to clarify and challenge some of the myths surrounding the relation between island groups and cultural distinctiveness. For instance, a revealing comment on the atmosphere of oil-related threats to Shetland culture was provided in an article by Grønneberg. According to the article, in the 1970s some Shetlanders were saying that there ought to be some statutory restriction on incomers. It was argued, however, that whatever Shetland's origin is in cultural terms, it would be difficult to claim that the isles are sufficiently different from the rest of the country to justify considering imposing such restrictions on incomers.[792]

When the issue of language was taken into consideration, the case of Åland was considered helpful in clarifying cultural

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[790] See chapter 1 of the thesis.

[791] Olausson, *Autonomy and Islands,* p. 9.

[792] Grønneberg, 'Into the future', p. 11.

distinctiveness, because Åland shared language not only with her neighbours in the west but also with her closest neighbours in the east. Cultural difference had been overestimated at times while underestimated at others. A similar motivation concerned research on dialects becoming languages, which – as noted in the introduction – often described the path *from dialect to language* as a model that, ultimately, all culturally distinct groups would desire to follow. I demonstrated that Shetland, Åland and Tornedalen were all examples of cases where re-evaluation of culture and history became necessary as a result of change in societal circumstances and led to new expressions of ethno-cultural difference.

Comparisons with Åland and Tornedalen were enlightening not only in elaborating the emergence of new ethnic content as a result of nationalism, but also revealed the significant share of language history for Shetlanders' cultural distinctiveness. The use of history provided an effective means in creating boundaries of otherness and belonging for Shetlanders and Ålanders and to a lesser extent for the Tornedalians and also the effectiveness of language as an expression of otherness took different forms. The extent to which history, language history and language have been effective in boundary creation varied in all three cases. Åland and Shetland appeared to be similar in some respects, while different in others. Culturally and economically dissimilar, in a different relationship with the respective mainland, the two island groups reacted similarly to societal change by initiating political movements, but their aims were different. Similarly, Tornedalians received a new language *Meänkieli* to express their different ethnicity from Finland Finns, whereas Shetlanders' dialect movement was merely concerned with the effects of modernisation and immigration on diminishing use of Shetland dialect and Ålanders never initiated a language movement.

In short, the thesis suggested at least three significant considerations. Firstly, I argued that different individuals participate in the definitions of boundaries in different ways and

that boundaries are dynamic and negotiable. Shetland identity has tended to be presented as rather homogeneous and it was important to distinguish between region's identity as a construction and the life histories of its inhabitants.

Perceptions of distinctive dialect and culture were informed by long-standing discourses and images, but individuals defined boundaries in relation to (mainland) Scotland in different ways. Secondly, I presented some general reflections on language, regions and nationalism and showed the interconnectedness and interdependency of regional and wider national discourses. I showed that even in regions regarded as different on the basis of language, such as Åland and Tornedalen, the use of language in boundary creation was a product of specific developments and these cases have been often misunderstood. The role of language has been judged on the basis of contemporary situations and such identifications which did not correspond to the situation existing today remained unnoticed.

Thirdly, and finally, the thesis demonstrated that Shetlanders' self-understanding has been presented and understood as more ambivalent than it is in reality because of the perceived centrality of language in defining ethnicity or cultural difference as opposed to dialect and other cultural markers. One of the arguments of this work was that the meanings given to the past change with time. What elements of this history are overstated, what elements downplayed and to what effect was dependent on the changing circumstances. History-based and language-based arguments of otherness had been used since the nineteenth century and language history had been simply part of a wider narrative of Shetland's otherness and had carried different overtones at different times. In this conception language was simply one aspect alongside other aspects of history and culture. With the emergence of new language movements in the late twentieth century Shetland also received a dialect movement, but most notably, the arguments presented on Shetland language history in the isles and mainland were similar.

Towards the beginning of the twenty-first century Shetland appeared to be more integrated in a new national context, yet retained distinctiveness. The reassessment of history, which could be assumed to support greater convergence with Scottish discourses, related as much to Scottish discourses as to local developments.

It was nonetheless dialect that had carried occasionally ethnic overtones. In the beginning of the twenty-first century history and language history were seen more clearly as combination of influences. Language history was used to strengthen Shetlanders' feelings of cultural autonomy, when necessary, but played a relatively marginal role in terms of linguistic separation. Furthermore, there was no meaningful political role for dialect in devolution debates, which showed the interconnectedness of island and mainland discourses. For Shetland, the main issue in the cultural sphere was "coming-to-terms" with societal change. These developments produced a new form of unionist nationalism, expressed among others through a dialect movement. Images changed as part of a socio-economic project and to an extent by political change. But in essence Shetland symbols remained the same, denoting continuity and belonging.

Sammanfattning

I de senaste decenniernas historieforskning kan man urskilja en tydlig förskjutning från essentialistiska till funktionella och konstruktivistiska (relativistiska) angreppssätt. I det essentialistiska angreppssättet betraktas begrepp och sociala kategorier som objektiva, fasta enheter, medan man ur det relativistiska perspektivet uppfattar både sociala och kulturella begrepp som konstruerade, flytande och förhandlingsbara. De sätt på vilka etniska och nationella identiteter tidigare har uppfattats och konceptualiserats har förändrats.

Det är allmänt erkänt att nationalstaternas betydelse har minskat under de senaste årtiondena och att de har ersatts av en ökande decentralisering, men likväl fortlever vissa former av nationalistisk ideologi och nationella stämningar starkt. Att nationalstaternas reella makt kan ha minskat för inte av nödvändighet med sig att deras betydelse har minskat i folkets ögon. Det sena 1900-talets intresse för hur nationella gemenskaper konstrueras har fört med sig att man i ökande grad har börjat undersöka också regioner ur ett konstruktivistiskt perspektiv. De existerande teorierna om nationalstaten kan lika väl tillämpas på regioner.

Den här avhandlingen tillämpar nationalismforskningens teorier på regioner och ett tvärvetenskapligt angreppssätt på studiet av språk och dialekter. De flesta politiskt aktiva etnisk-kulturella grupper i dagens Europa gör anspråk på att ha ett distinkt språk. Där man kan peka på att distinkta språk existerar, framhävs detta med stor sannolikhet i samtida uttryck för kulturell autonomi. Detta har lett till att man i forskningen under senare tid snarare än på regionerna i sig har fokuserat på etniska grupper, en term som ofta används som synonym till ordet minoritet. Min utgångspunkt är att regioner, i likhet med nationalstater, är konstruerade, flytande och förhandlingsbara.

Den här undersökningen fokuserar empiriskt på de sätt på

vilka de senaste årtiondenas politiska och ekonomiska utveckling har påverkat synen på språkets roll på Shetlandsöarna och shetländarnas uppfattningar om sig själva som shetländare och som skottar. Öarna utgör en av 32 självstyrda regioner (*unitary council region*) i Skottland, och redan före 1970-talet upplevde befolkningen på öarna att de själva och regionen på vissa punkter skilde sig från det skotska fastlandet. Ett särdrag som betonades var det fornnordiska arvet, som man historiskt ansåg ha haft en stor betydelse för regionen. Det var ändå först i slutet av 1900-talet som shetländarna tog initiativ till en rörelse som eftersträvade politisk autonomi för Shetland. I början av 2000-talet växte därtill en dialektrörelse fram på öarna.

En hypotes i den här undersökningen är att de förändringar som skedde i den politiska situationen fick shetländarna att uttrycka sin tillhörighet till den förändrade skotska kontexten genom att initiera en dialektrörelse i stället för en språkrörelse. Hypotesen är dock inte tillräcklig för att förklara varför man på Shetland över huvud upplevde att det fanns ett behov att lyfta fram den regionala dialektens betydelse. Under de senaste fyra årtiondena har shetländarnas självförståelse utvecklats i en riktning där de i högre grad har börjat uppfatta att de skiljer sig från skottarna på fastlandet, och denna utveckling har påverkats av politiska och ekonomiska förändringar både på öarna och i Skottland generellt. Från 1970-talet framåt kom Shetland att få en nära koppling till utvecklingen av oljeindustrin i Nordsjön.

Då man började leta efter olja i Nordsjön reagerade man i Shetland snabbt på de möjligheter den nya situationen erbjöd. På öarna lyckades man hindra regionen från att bli närmare inkorporerad i en större administrativ enhet med de ”gaelisk-talande” regionerna, och genom en av det brittiska parlamentet år 1974 godkänd lag (*the Zetland County Council Act*) fick de lokala myndigheterna full kontroll över all utveckling på öarna. Detta möjliggjorde under de följande åren grundandet av betydande oljefonder.

Parallellt med att oljefynden i Nordsjön började utnyttjas pågick en politisk förändringsprocess som berörde både Skottland och Shetland. Den nationella rörelsen i Skottland blev starkare under 1970-talet, och även om det fanns många orsaker till att rörelsen växte är det rimligt att hävda att oljefynden var en av de viktigaste. På Shetland igen grundades på 1970-talet Shetlandsrörelsen (*the Shetland Movement*), ett parti som förespråkade autonomi för regionen. I forskarnas tolkningar har man lyft fram att attityderna på Shetland försköts från en centrering kring en distinkt kultur mot en centrering kring etnisk separatism. Redan i slutet av 1800-talet hade man på Shetland vänt sig till det fornnordiska för att särskilja sig från andra regioner i Storbritannien, och nu återupplivades intresset för det fornnordiska språket, den fornnordiska lagen och de fornnordiska festivalerna.

Två åsiktsriktningar uppstod i fråga om hur Shetlandsöarna skulle administreras. Den ena betonade politiska aspekter (separatism) och den andra institutionella aspekter (protektion). Min undersökning av de 1990-talsdiskurser som stödde decentraliseringen av Skottland tyder på att det skedde en förskjutning i den lokala politiken och i shetländarnas syn på den skotska decentraliseringen. Mot seklets slut kom Shetland att ingå i den process som ledde till en konstitutionell förändring i Skottland, och parallellt med denna process kom språkets politiska dimension att inta en mera framträdande roll i språkdiskurserna på öarna.

En omvärdering av historien, särskilt språkhistorien, har utgjort ett centralt inslag i diskussionerna om den nya nationella kontexten och om Shetlands historiska betydelse i den skotska kontexten. I den skotska kontexten har uppfattningen att 1707 års union i mycket begränsad omfattning direkt påverkade det dagliga livet för den stora majoriteten av Skottlands befolkning blivit allt mer accepterad. Till en början påverkades också samhällseliten endast i begränsad omfattning. Upprättandet av en brittisk enhetsmarknad var i grunden ett ekonomiskt beslut, som

åtminstone i den nya statens tidiga skede hade ett mycket svagt inflytande på sociala och kulturella förhållanden.

Centraliserande krafter började påverka Skottland (och Shetland som en del av Skottland) först från 1700-talets mitt. Processen sammanföll med att ett centraliserat utbildningssystem utvecklades, vilket bidrog till att samhällseliten så småningom anpassade sig till ett angliserat språk. Ur ett skotsknationellt perspektiv började man i historieskrivningen så småningom tolka unionen mellan Skottlands och Englands parlament år 1707 pessimistiskt, genom att man ansåg att unionen hade inneburit ”slutet” för Skottlands historia. Under senare år har man i forskningen börjat revidera de pessimistiska tolkningarna av Skottlands historia. Exempelvis G. Morton har påvisat att de skotska särdragen inte gick förlorade i 1800-talets brittiska kontext utan snarare anpassades till förändrade förhållanden.

Sedan 1970-talet, och särskilt sedan 1990-talet, har man i allt högre grad börjat fästa uppmärksamhet vid språkets betydelse för Skottlands och Shetlands historia. De kulturella attribut som använts för att markera att shetländarna utgör en särskild befolkningsgrupp utvecklades under nationalismens tidevarv i slutet av 1800-talet, dels i en skotsk, dels i en brittisk kontext. Det faktum att shetländarna delade den konstitutionella monarkin med andra grupper i Storbritannien innebar inte att de uppfattade sig själva enbart som britter. Shetlands geografiska avlägsenhet och de distinkta aspekterna av öarnas historia möjliggjorde utvecklingen av särskilda diskurser inom det brittiska imperiets ramverk. Ett antal lokala individer hoppades väcka shetländarnas intresse för den fornnordiska kulturen som man ville återuppliva med hjälp av läroböcker, romaner och dikter skrivna på dialekt. Man uppmuntrade också skolorna att inkludera undervisning i Shetlands fornnordiska historia i sina läroplaner.

Från 1940-talet började man i högre grad betona de mera samtida aspekterna av kopplingen mellan den skandinaviska och den shetländska kulturen, men då oljeepoken inleddes på 1970-talet återgick man till att betona den fornnordiska historiens

betydelse. I avhandlingen argumenterar jag för att man till en viss grad kan ifrågasätta uppfattningen om att definitionen av shetländarna som en separat grupp bör förstås kulturellt. Shetlands särdrag baserar sig i hög grad på historiska och (delvis även) samtida kopplingar till Skandinavien.

Skandinavismen och kontakterna till Skandinavien fick på 1800-talet ett visst inflytande på det skotska nationella medvetandet. I Skottland hade man sedan tidigare en relativt klar uppfattning om ett nationellt särdrag som baserade sig på från England separata institutioner (kyrka, utbildnings- och domstolsväsende). Under 1800-talet kompletterades den självbild som vilade på de institutionella särdragen med uppfattningar om kulturella särdrag. Den keltiska romantiska rörelsens och skandinavismens parallella framväxt resulterade i att man på Shetland kom att betona något andra särdrag än på det skotska fastlandet.

Inom det brittiska ramverket kan Shetland betraktas på två olika sätt. Det första sättet är att se Shetland i en skotsk kontext, varvid allt som sker på Shetland primärt tolkas som beroende av det som sker i Skottland. Det andra sättet är att betrakta Skottland och Shetland som två relativt separata enheter i ett brittiskt ramverk, varvid enheterna kan analyseras utifrån en jämlik utgångspunkt. Med min undersökning av Shetlandsrörelsens målsättningar och de följder dess verksamhet fått, visar jag att de argument som anknyter till kultur och språk har något annorlunda betoningar än de politiska argumenten. I den diskurs där en starkare politisk autonomi är målsättningen hänvisar man i huvudsak till ekonomiska argument som anknyter till frågor som exempelvis fiskepolitik, miljön och den europeiska integrationen. I politiska frågor knyts alltså den nationella eller regionala identiteten till civila eller icke-etniska aspekter snarare än till kulturella och språkliga aspekter.

Undersökningen visar att vissa mönster kan spåras tillbaka till nationalismens tidevarv och dess följder. För det första markerade shetländarna tidvis en skillnad i relation till det skotska fastlandet

med utgångspunkt i språkliga argument och för det andra uppstod en skriftlig tradition på den shetländska dialekten. Den övervägande majoriteten shetländare fortsatte att tala en variant av shetländskan som var influerad av fornnordiskan. Traditionellt hade man uppfattat den shetländska dialekten som en språklig variant som i någon mån skilde sig både från engelskan och från lågskotskan. Shetland kunde alltså lingvistiskt särskiljas från Skottland på två olika sätt; dels genom avsaknaden av en gaelisk tradition, dels genom att den shetländska dialekten uppfattades som skild från de skotska dialekterna på fastlandet. Den shetländska dialekten förekom inom litteraturen på 1800-talet, men den uppfattades i första hand som ett hemspråk och ett känslospråk, ett särdrag som den delade med andra skotska dialekter.

Rötterna till dagens språkdiskurser kan spåras tillbaka till 1920-talet och särskilt till tiden efter andra världskriget. På 1920-talet förändrades de nationella diskurserna, och företrädare för den skotska litterära renässansen försökte föra fram möjligheten att använda det skotska språket som litterärt språk på ett nationellt plan. Debatten om vilken språkform skotska författare borde använda kom att bli en del av diskussionerna om den nationella identiteten, men man lyckades inte mobilisera dem som förespråkade skotskan kring en politisk språkagenda. För de shetländska författarna blev målet tvärtom att lyfta fram och representera den shetländska kulturen och den shetländska dialektens olika former, vilket som jag visar var den efterkrigstida kulturella väckelsens främsta kännetecken på Shetland.

Oljefonderna stödde i hög grad kulturfrämjandet, men det är först mot början av 2000-talet som man i den skotska kontexten har kunnat se tecken på att det skett en förändring i en riktning där den språkliga aktivismen kombineras med diskussionerna om den politiska nationella identiteten. För shetländarna kom tyngdpunkten dock fortfarande att ligga på den lokala traditionen och den samtida samhälleliga situationen. Som min undersökning visar var samtida kulturpersonligheter också villiga att

representera den shetländska traditionen och dem som talade den shetländska dialekten. De värnade om den muntliga och den skriftliga traditionens kontinuitet och kopplade dialekten till regionen som helhet på ett inkluderande sätt. Tillgången till den shetländska dialekten och rätten att använda den förbehölls alltså inte infödda shetländare, utan också inflyttade ”utomstående” uppmanades att lära sig den.

I undersökningen har jag urskilt två paradigm i hur utvecklingen på Shetland har tolkats. Min analys utgår från ett varierat material som består av skriftliga källor, personliga vittnesmål (frågeformulär) insamlade genom fältarbete och en noggrann prövning av de kommentarer som experter inom ämnesområdet gett i individuella samtal och i samband med konferenspresentationer. Inom det första paradigmet anser man att den etnisk-kulturella gränsdragningen mellan shetländarna och skottarna på fastlandet (som den uppfattas av shetländarna) under de senaste åren har blivit mindre tydlig och mera ambivalent, och att dialektens minskade betydelse har spelat en viktig roll i denna process. Detta paradigm har bidragit till att producera ett narrativ om en kulturell nedgång.

Det andra paradigmet är mera dynamiskt. Inom paradigmet erkänner man den betydelse som den shetländska dialekten och den shetländska traditionen haft (och fornnordiska element som en del av dessa), men man förhåller sig mera öppet till influenser utifrån än i det första paradigmet. Den lokala dialekten uppfattas visserligen som en viktig del av det regionala medvetandet, men dess syfte är inte att skapa en social gränsdragning gentemot ”utomstående”. Ståndpunkter som motsvarar de två paradigmen upprätthölls och reproducerades också av de personer som lämnade bidrag till undersökningen.

Undersökningens huvudsakliga slutsatser kan sammanfattas i följande punkter. För det första argumenterar jag för att olika individer deltar i definierandet av gränser på olika sätt, och att gränserna är dynamiska och förhandlingsbara. Man har tenderat att presentera den shetländska identiteten som monolitisk och

homogen, men det är viktigt att göra en skillnad mellan regionens konstruerade identitet och dess invånares livshistorier. Uppfattningarna om en distinkt dialekt och kultur har präglats av långlivade diskurser och bilder, men på det individuella planet har gränserna i förhållande till det skotska fastlandet definierats på olika sätt. Undersökningen visar att de aktörer på Shetland som var involverade i språklig aktivism inte var de samma som de som var involverade i den politiska diskursen.

Man kan inte heller se någon skillnad mellan aktörer på Shetland och på fastlandet vad angår synen på språkets utveckling och nedgång. Man kan med fog ifrågasätta möjligheten att över huvud göra en gränsdragning mellan shetländare och fastlänningar, eftersom en del av dem som är aktiva på Shetland är födda i Skottland och vice versa. Däremot är det möjligt att se en skillnad mellan de åsikter som förs fram av historiker och sociolingvister, liksom mellan skönlitterära författare och dem som förespråkar att skotskan bör få en ortografisk norm och officiell status. Det fanns också några aktivister som hade som målsättning att ge shetländskan officiell status. Gränserna mellan diskurserna går alltså inte mellan Shetland och Skotland, utan de är tvärtom tätt sammanflätade och avhängiga av varandra.

För det andra visar avhandlingen att shetländarnas självförståelse har uppfattats och presenterats som mer ambivalent än den i realiteten är. Orsaken till detta är att man har fokuserat på språkets betydelse för definitionen av etniciteten eller det kulturella särdraget, snarare än på dialekten och andra kulturella markörer. För det tredje presenterar jag några reflektioner kring språk, regioner och nationalism och pekar på hur regionala och nationella diskurser är kopplade till och beroende av varandra. Också i sådana regioner där den språkliga situationen utgör en särskiljande faktor, som på Åland och i Tornedalen, används språket för att skapa gränsdragningar som ett resultat av en specifik utveckling, vilket ofta har lett till misstolkningar. Språkets roll har bedömts utgående från samtida förhållanden, medan identifikationer som inte stämmer överens

med dagens situation har förbisetts. Ett av de centrala argumenten i denna undersökning är att de betydelser som det förflutna tillskrivs förändras över tid. Förändringar i de samtida förhållandena styr vilka element i historien som överbetonas, vilka som tonas ner och vilka konsekvenser detta får.

Historiska och språkliga argument har använts för att markera Shetlands särdrag sedan slutet av 1800-talet, och språkhistorien har ingått i ett vidare narrativ om Shetlands specifika karaktär. Betoningarna har dock växlat över tid, och i narrativets föreställningsvärld har språket utgjort bara en aspekt vid sidan av en mängd andra historiska och kulturella aspekter. Då nya språkrörelser började framträda mot slutet av 1900-talet uppstod på Shetland en dialektrörelse, men det är värt att notera att de argument med anknytning till Shetlands språkhistoria som fördes fram inte skilde sig från de argument som fördes fram på det skotska fastlandet.

I början av 2000-talet gick Shetland i riktning mot en högre grad av integration i den nya nationella kontext som uppstod med etableringen av det ”nya Skottland” på 1990-talet, men samtidigt fortsatte öarna att hålla fast vid sina särdrag. En omtolkning av historien, som kan antas leda till en högre grad av överensstämmelse med skotska diskurser, anknöt lika mycket till de skotska diskurserna som till den lokala utvecklingen. Det var hur som helst den shetländska dialekten som tidvis hade tillskrivits etniska övertoner. Som denna avhandling visar kan språkets roll på Shetland förstås på ett korrekt sätt endast genom sin funktion som en territoriell symbol för tillhörighet.

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The Shetland Islands in the far north of Britain are today often described as distinctive in their linguistic and cultural heritage. During the last forty years Shetlanders' self-understanding as different from mainland Scotland has been influenced by both economic and political change in the isles and Scotland as a whole. Although there is a considerable perceived difference between Shetland and mainland Scotland and Britain, Shetland's cultural difference has been emphasised at times while downplayed in other contexts.

This interdisciplinary study looks at the place of language in the wider fields of cultural studies, socio-linguistics and regional history within the Shetland Islands. Drawing on a wide range of primary and secondary sources, field-work in the form of the collation of personal testimony and close examination of the personal and conference comments of subject specialists, the author identifies and analyses a variety of competing views and partly overlapping identities.

The study shows that the role of language in Shetland can be properly understood only through its function as a territorial symbol of belonging.

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