

# RELIGION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY SCOTLAND: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF CATEGORISATION IN THE SCHOLARLY AND SCOTTISH POPULAR IMAGINATION<sup>1</sup>

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## *INTRODUCTION*

Students of Scotland have the difficult task of attempting to understand the identities of a population increasingly divided by values and beliefs. While this could be said of any population, identifying what Scots have or hold in common can be difficult. The Scots lack both a state<sup>2</sup> and many important cultural bulwarks like language which demarcate other nations.<sup>3</sup> Those factors which have been used to define the Scots seem especially prone to shift even when agreed upon, especially exemplified by ‘religion’. In this article I address the theoretical issues surrounding the relationship between ‘religion’ and ‘national’ identity in contemporary Scotland. To this end, the theoretical literature of religious studies and nationalism studies is examined, to find an analytically fruitful means of discussing this topic. This will include the distinction between general (*emic*) and scholarly (*etic*) application of these terms and as well as the question of how to define them.

The scope of this article is necessarily quite limited in two ways. Firstly, because it takes a particularly broad perspective on religion in Scotland to relate this data to comparative theoretical debates and secondly because it is concerned with contemporary Scotland rather than earlier periods of Scottish history. It will attempt to provide a broad overview of different Scottish communities and refer to historical developments to account for the contemporary religious landscape. However, it cannot

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a paper presented at the Scottish Religion and Cultures Network conference held at Tulliallan police training college, 24-25 October 2014. It reflects an immediate post-referendum context and does not address subsequent issues such as the impact of the referendum on UK withdrawal from the EU (‘Brexit’) in 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Though Scotland was not stateless for most of its history. It was an independent kingdom before the Act of Union with England in 1707. The matter of Scotland’s ‘statelessness’ is complicated not only by the reestablishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 but the fact that several distinctive state-like institutions were maintained after union such as a separate education system, civil service, legal system (Scots Law) and, most importantly for our purposes, a distinct established church – the Church of Scotland. See Thomas M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A Modern History* (London: Penguin, 2012), pp. 3-16. See below for a discussion of Scotland’s ‘statelessness’.

<sup>3</sup> David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 174. The population of Scotland is overwhelmingly anglophone but there are two traditional languages of the country: Scots Gaelic and Lallans Scots or more commonly Scots. Scots Gaelic is a Celtic language largely found in the Western Isles and West Highlands, with 59,000 self-reported speakers. Lallans is closely related to English (sometimes described as a dialect) with 1.5 million self-reported speakers (though its porous boundary with Scottish English makes it difficult to enumerate) spoken largely in the south and east. See National Records of Scotland, *2011 Census: Key results on Population, Ethnicity, Identity, Language, Religion, Health, Housing and Accommodation in Scotland – Release 2A* (Edinburgh: Crown Copyright, 2013), p. 3.

claim to do full justice to any of the religious groups discussed, their history or to broader national history.

I argue that religious and national identities in Scotland can be treated as quite separate despite the fact that they both refer to social groups. This is partially because 'religious' and 'national' affiliations are treated as separate classifications of an individual's identity according to the secular and pluralist discourses prevalent in contemporary Scotland. This is facilitated by the fact that national symbols and historic memory are related to and appropriated selectively by actors at a time when religious symbols and historic memory have lost their once overwhelming significance. While boundary markers are significant for all social groups, when these are no longer 'religiously' defined, Scottish national belonging can be combined with diverse religious affiliation.

The distinctiveness of the characteristics and constitution of such categories mean that they often do not or cannot compete and can be readily combined. Religious affiliation is often more global in scope while national identity is restricted to a limited territory and demographic. These distinctions lend themselves to modern discourse that treats these as distinctive, non-overlapping categories. While scholars should challenge this rigid distinction, I argue that there are grounds for treating them as distinctive comparative scholarly classifications as well.

### *IDENTITIES IN CONTEMPORARY SCOTLAND*

Such ambivalence about identity among the Scots was arguably reflected in the referendum on Scottish Independence held on the 18 September 2014 with 55% voting against and 45% voting for independence.<sup>4</sup> Despite this disagreement about the institutionalisation of Scottish national identity, there is actually evidence of wider agreement about nationality. Complicated issues can be obscured by the mutually exclusive and dualistic categories which referendums impose. The referendum could be mischaracterised as a competition between 'Scottish' and 'British' national identities, but the 2011 census tells a different story: under 'nationality' 83% of respondents identified as 'Scottish'. Notably, while the correlation cannot be taken to be absolute, 83% claimed Scottish birth,<sup>5</sup> suggesting that growing up in Scotland imbues *some* form of Scottish national identity (though this article is concerned with the population resident in Scotland rather than those born or raised in Scotland which could include substantial emigrant populations).

As a scholar of religion, I am interested in how 'religion' affects assertion and perception of 'Scottishness'? What do Scots think the place or role of religion is in contemporary Scotland? What impact do specific religious affiliations (including affiliation as 'non-religious') have? How are different identities jostled, separated or intertwined? How do Scots relate to Scotland's long religious history or to the contemporary religious landscape?

The Church of Scotland continues to form the established national church and its Presbyterian brand of Protestantism was once considered a pillar of Scotland's stateless

<sup>4</sup> 'Scottish Independence Referendum: Final Results in Full', *The Guardian*, 19 September (2014). At: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/ng-interactive/2014/sep/18/-sp-scottish-independence-referendum-results-in-full>. Accessed 15 June 2015.

<sup>5</sup> National Records of Scotland, *2011 Census*, p. 3.

national identity after the union with England in 1707. Though a substantial Roman Catholic minority persisted in the country after the Reformation, especially in some rural areas, the Catholic community in Scotland was bolstered by Irish and to a lesser extent Italian and Lithuanian immigration from the nineteenth century onwards. Unfortunately, this also led to persistent sectarian tensions which made confessional identities particularly salient.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of this long religious history, Scotland is increasingly secular despite the historic predominance of Christianity in the country. Whatever they think it entails, Scots overwhelmingly claim a common national identity but not a common religious affiliation. According to the census only 32% of respondents now identify with the Church of Scotland while 37% identify as having 'no religion'. Only 54% of respondents identified as 'Christian' overall which includes the 16% of respondents claiming Roman Catholicism. These figures are rounded off by 1.4% 'Muslim' and 0.7% shared between 'Buddhist', 'Hindu' and 'Sikh' respondents, and around six thousand (0.1%) Jewish respondents.<sup>7</sup>

Scotland's non-Christian religious minorities have a greater impact than these figures would suggest and the discourse of a 'multi-faith' society is significant. This is partially because members of these communities have visibly engaged with public life in Scotland which has a big impact in a 'wee country'. Alongside this, religious minorities are concentrated in the cities<sup>8</sup> which are centres of power, business and media. Many urban Christians or Atheists are likely to have more contact with their Muslim or Sikh neighbours than with the Free Presbyterians of Lewis on the country's 'Calvinist fringe' despite the fact that Free Presbyterian churches once represented a substantial proportion of Scots across the country who seceded from the Church of Scotland, especially after the Great Disruption of 1843.<sup>9</sup> This is not to suggest that the urban population should be taken as more important or representative than the rural population, merely that the manner in which 'religion' in Scotland is perceived is highly situational.

The increasing religious diversity of Scotland is apparent when the 2011 census is compared to the previous census in 2001. It coincides with the decline of formal Christian affiliation and increasing adherence to liberal and secular values. The relative predominance of these values, however, has not gone without challenge from certain quarters. The Christian Solas Centre for Public Christianity continues to assert the significance of Christianity in Scottish public life in its campaigns.<sup>10</sup> The former head of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland Cardinal Keith O'Brien, vocally challenged liberal-secularist thinking on issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage. His threat

<sup>6</sup> Devine *The Scottish Nation*, p. 379, pp. 486-500. See also Steve Bruce, *No Pope of Rome: Anti-Catholicism in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> National Records of Scotland, *2011 Census*, p. 4. When these figures are aggregated 5.9% of the population is unaccounted for. For an analysis of the Scottish Muslim population see Stefano Bonino, 'Scottish Muslims through a Decade of Change: Wounded by the Stigma, Healed by Islam, Rescued by Scotland', *Scottish Affairs* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2015): pp. 78-105

<sup>8</sup> National Records of Scotland, *2011 Census*, p. 2. For a sociological analysis of minority communities and diversity in the 2011 census see Ross Bond, 'Minorities and Diversity in Scotland: Evidence from the 2011 Census', *Scottish Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2017), pp. 23-47.

<sup>9</sup> See Devine *The Scottish Nation*, pp. 370-378.

<sup>10</sup> Solas Centre for Public Christianity. At: <http://www.solas-cpc.org/>. Accessed 15 June 2015.

to deny communion to Catholic Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) who voted against Catholic teachings<sup>11</sup> was regarded as an intrusion by many, but he has left something of a vacuum since his resignation in the light of revelations of sexual improprieties against trainee priests.<sup>12</sup>

Regardless of the specifics of how Scots categorise themselves in terms of 'nationality' and 'religion', these classifications are important. Yet we should not treat this as given, as natural or universal, simply because it is familiar. National and religious identities are part of inculcated patterns of thought and learned behaviour; in a census, questions are asked and answers given. Individuals have learned to classify themselves in multiple ways which fit into broader, separable systems of classification, 'national' and 'religious'. When filling in the census, individuals classify themselves according to specific collective identities, such as 'Christian' or 'Scottish', and know which is 'religious' and which 'national'. These names for groups themselves are 'first order' classifications and the general classifications of these classifications are 'second order' classifications or 'names of names'.<sup>13</sup>

### *EMIC AND ETIC*

The understanding, terminology and definitions which people in a social group operate with are 'emic', while those employed by scholars to classify, analyse and explain are 'etic'. These are used for a very different purpose; while the emic and the etic may overlap considerably (or even use the same word), etic terms are stipulative, defined and explicated for the purposes of the study.<sup>14</sup> As Jonathan Z. Smith argued scholars 'imagine religion' through their works,<sup>15</sup> they play a crucial role in constructing the definition of 'religion' as distinctive in their text and disseminated to their audience. The definition of 'religion' used in a study may match common understandings of the term, or it may be idiosyncratic, but must play the role of highlighting and analysing something identifiable.

The concept of 'religion' that Western scholars work with, like concepts such as 'nationality', 'ethnicity', 'culture', 'society' and so on, is not universal but rather a product of a specific Western history of ideas, although increasingly transported (and often indigenised) around the world. This does not mean that many of the *features* classified by these terms are absent in cultures other than the West, but rather there were no equivalent *concepts* which exactly matched those familiar to us. Some scholars

<sup>11</sup> Dan Bell, 'Two Dunblanes a Day: Scots Cardinal Attacks Abortion "Massacres",' *The Guardian*, 1 June (2007). At: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2007/jun/01/health.religion>. Accessed 15 June 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Catherine Deveney, 'UK Top Cardinal Accused of "Inappropriate Acts" by Priests', *The Observer*, 23 February (2013). At: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/23/cardinal-keith-o-brien-accused-inappropriate>. Accessed 15 June 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Classification', in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds.), *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London: Continuum, 2000), p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), pp. 63-65.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. xi.

advocate not using the term ‘religion’ at all,<sup>16</sup> but if one is interested specifically in the features which are usually identified as ‘religion’, and one wishes to use the data comparatively then it remains useful. Whether an explicit definition is offered or not, scholars always impose their perspectives on the data, and may have an implicit idea of ‘religion’ which affects their presentation and analysis of data.<sup>17</sup> Adopting a specific working definition ensures clarity and openness; one can either impose one’s own folk categories implicitly or specialised categories explicitly.

The term ‘emic’ refers to any folk-category, understanding or usage outside of the narrow scholarly purview. Traditionally in religious studies the prevailing terms were ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’, distinguishing the categories and perspectives indigenous and alien to specific religious traditions. The problem with this distinction as opposed to the more general emic-etic distinction, is that the former may lead to the reification of traditions as static and monolithic, exaggerate boundaries and replicate the perspectives of a privileged segment.

I believe that tentative distinctions between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ discourse can be useful if the fluidity and diversity of religious groups are recognised. For example, a nineteenth century Scottish missionary society would describe itself as ‘religious’ (insider-emic) as would a Scottish historian studying them in an analytical rather than confessional sense (insider-etic). The society might have sent its missionaries to an Indian village where a variety of beliefs and practices were referred to by them as ‘religious’ (‘outsider-emic’) and by the locals as ‘Dharma’ (insider-emic). This historical situation will most likely be described and analysed by the historian in terms of the meeting of two ‘religions’ (outsider-etic).<sup>18</sup>

Does any of this matter in the case of Scotland? The Scots are largely anglophone Western Europeans, for whom these concepts are indigenous. However, what if some of the Indian villagers whose practices had acquired the labels ‘Hindu’ and ‘religious’ began to emigrate to Scotland? They may employ these terms in order to be understood by their neighbours but also because the label ‘religious’ conveyed respectability. The term would also be significant for joining local and national networks of ‘religious’ or ‘interfaith’ groups.<sup>19</sup> In other contexts, the label ‘religion’ may have negative connotations, and practitioners may prefer to stress ‘Dharma’ or perhaps ‘philosophy’ or ‘way of life’. Different members of such a community may stress different labels at

<sup>16</sup> Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Jan G. Platvoet, ‘To Define or Not to Define: The Problem of the Definition of Religion’, in Jan G. Platvoet and Arie L. Molendijk (eds), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion: Contexts, Concepts and Contests* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 252-253.

<sup>18</sup> Kim Knott, ‘Insider/Outsider Perspectives’, in John R. Hinnells (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 243-258. For a study of Scottish missionaries in nineteenth and early twentieth century India see Phillip Constable ‘Scottish Missionaries, “Protestant Hinduism” and the Scottish Sense of Empire and Early Twentieth Century India’, *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (2007), pp. 278-313. For a study of a Hindu community in Edinburgh see Malory Nye, *‘A Place for Our Gods’: The Construction of an Edinburgh Hindu Temple Community* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> See Liam T. Sutherland, ‘Unity in Diversity: Representations of Religious Minorities in the Literature of Interfaith Scotland’, *Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religion*, Vol. 20 (2018), pp. 145-168.

different times for their own reasons and scholars cannot always mirror this because their aims are different, to describe and analyse a social group.

### *DEFINING RELIGION*

In religious studies defining 'religion' and the degree to which 'religion' can be treated as something universal and separate from other social factors is a perennial concern. In general, the idea of religion as an independent or *sui generis* factor has been critiqued; many of the key social scientific thinkers such as Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud argued that religion was merely a reflection of socio-economic, political or psychological factors. Though few contemporary theorists would go this far, few would recognise religion as *sui generis*.

The fact that 'religion' would seem to refer neither to a universal concept or even an independent factor creates seemingly interminable difficulties with defining religion. However, I would argue that the problem can be overcome by approaches which are neither theological nor over-extensive. In the social sciences, definitions of religion have often followed one of two major paths the 'substantive' and the 'functional', forged by the founders of social anthropology and sociology, Edward Burnett Tylor and Émile Durkheim, respectively. Substantive definitions relate to content while functional definitions relate to role.<sup>20</sup> Tylor described his definition as 'minimal' because it allowed him to compare very different cases, simply defining religion as 'belief in spiritual beings'.<sup>21</sup> Definitions which refer to 'gods', the 'supernatural' or the like in a comparative and social scientific manner rather than stipulating the actions of 'the divine' theologically, follow this path.

Durkheim however defined religion differently as 'a unified set of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things.'<sup>22</sup> 'Sacred' here refers to anything which is of overwhelming significance to a group of people. Their 'religion' is the system of institutions, symbols, behaviours and beliefs surrounding these sacred things. The problem with this approach is that it could potentially include almost anything, including the 'nation', indeed Durkheim himself made this comparison.<sup>23</sup> This would certainly render any discussion of the relationship between 'religion' and 'national' identity utterly meaningless, one could discuss 'Christianity' and 'Scottish nationalism' but both could be categorised as 'religion'.

In order to model the changing relationship between religion and national identity in Scotland, I would argue that a Neo-Tylorian definition of religion would be more useful. For me then, *religions are groups with a set of socially inculcated beliefs and practices at least nominally or partially based around claimed extra-natural beings,*

<sup>20</sup> William E. Arnal, 'Definition', in Braun and McCutcheon (eds), *Guide to the Study of Religion*, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom*, Vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 424. See also Paul François-Tremlett, Liam T. Sutherland and Graham Harvey (eds), *Edward Burnett Tylor, Religion and Culture* (Oxford: Bloomsbury 2017).

<sup>22</sup> Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. by Carole Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 [1912]), p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, pp. 332-333.

*forces or realms*.<sup>24</sup> While the role such claims play may vary or change it is these factors which make a group 'religious', the very fact that groups or institutions may become more or less religious in this way means that a restricted definition is all the more useful to model this shift.

### *DEFINING NATIONS AND NATIONALISM*

'Nationalism' can also be a problematic term, largely because it is often associated with racism, xenophobia, chauvinism and violence, and is often used pejoratively to describe political opponents: during the independence referendum, campaign representatives of both sides used it in this way. The problem is that usage can slide from a general sense, referring to overt expressions of national identity especially when tied to some political goal to the more specific, negative sense indicated above. As with religion, scholars must 'imagine' nations and nationalism in a manner that is conducive to their aims.

In this case emic and etic usages differ, far more so than with 'religion'. Scholars of nationalism are interested in explaining the rise of the movements which transformed the world into a system of 'nation-states', rather than empires, feudal kingdoms or city-states (defined partially by the shift from indirect to direct rule in the former cases) from the late eighteenth century onwards, and the diffuse ideology which underwrites this.<sup>25</sup>

There is an unavoidable controversy regarding whether nations are modern or have older antecedents. Some scholars, including Scottish medievalists, have found national sentiment expressed in earlier writings.<sup>26</sup> This article does not seek or claim to settle the thorny debate on the modernity or antiquity of nations, but undeniably there was a specific wave of movements which gained ground from the eighteenth century onwards, whether novel or not. Those movements sought to preserve and disseminate what they saw as their nation's cultural heritage.<sup>27</sup> They became increasingly political and Janus-faced, relating to a romanticised view of past history, but also looking forward to new unified or independent states bound by national belonging.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Liam T. Sutherland, 'Tylor and Neo-Tylorian Approaches to the Study of Religion: Re-evaluating an Important Legacy in the Theorisation of Religion', *Paranthropology: Journal of Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2012), p. 53. At: <http://paranthropologyjournal.weebly.com/home.html>. Accessed 15 June 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Craig Calhoun, *Nations Matter: Culture, History and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 18. See also Liam T. Sutherland 'Theorizing Religion and Nationalism: The Need for Critical Reflexivity in the Analysis of Overlapping Areas of Research', *Implicit Religion*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2017), pp. 1-21.

<sup>26</sup> Fiona Watson, 'The Enigmatic Lion: Scotland, Kingship and National Identity in the Wars of Independence', in Dauvit Broun, Richard J. Finlay and Michael Lynch (eds), *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-Making of Scotland Through the Ages* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishing, 1998), p. 31.

<sup>27</sup> Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations*, trans. by Ben Fowkes (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000 [1985]), p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (Edinburgh: New Left Books, 1977), pp. 348-349.

Ernest Gellner defined nationalism as ‘a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent’.<sup>29</sup> It is unclear, though, whether this would include only pro-independence movements, such as Yes Scotland or whether this net could be cast much wider. I would argue it should, and therefore define ‘Nationalism’ as:

the principle that the world is made up of nations, peoples on whose behalf the right to self-determination — to decide their political or constitutional status — is claimed whether this entails independence or not. ‘Nations’ can be distinguished from other groups by this sense of sovereignty whether statehood is achieved or sought.<sup>30</sup>

Yet these nation-states cannot be the exclusive focus, as a sense of peoplehood and self-determination had to be disseminated and maintained before and after their foundation. In answer to the question ‘Why do we never forget that we are members of a nation?’ Michael Billig opines national belonging and the principles on which it rests are reinforced by ‘banal nationalism’; symbols such as flags, currency, and discourses which reinforce national belonging continually, especially as they go largely unnoticed, being part of the shared environment.<sup>31</sup>

My usage of ‘state’ here conforms to the concept of ‘sovereign state’ prevalent within the discipline of international relations, Dunne and Schmidt offer a definition based on Max Weber’s seminal definition: [a state is] a legal territorial entity composed of a stable population and a government; it possesses a monopoly over the legitimate use of force; its sovereignty is recognised by other states in the international system.<sup>32</sup> As Scotland did not become independent in 2014 it does not meet this definition of a ‘state’, and can still be described as a ‘stateless’ nation alongside other cases such as Catalonia, Quebec and numerous others.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1983), p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> This definition owes a debt to various United Nations formulations. See, for example, UNESCO, ‘Nation-State’, *Learning to Live Together* (2017). At: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/nation-state/>. Accessed 15 January 2019.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), pp. 6-8.

<sup>32</sup> Tim Dunne and Brian C. Schmidt, ‘Realism’, in John Baylis and Steve Smith (eds), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 180.

<sup>33</sup> Obviously, different stateless nations must be treated as quite different cases. They relate to different forms of nationalist movements, depend on different boundary markers and have different relationships with the sovereign states which encapsulate them. However, various scholars have found it fruitful to study these cases in comparison. See, for example, Michael Keating, *Plurinational Democracy: Stateless Nations in a Post-Sovereignty Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and James Kennedy, *Liberal Nationalisms: Empire, State and Civil Society in Scotland and Quebec* (London: McGill-Queens University Press, 2013). Unsurprisingly, nationalist movements from stateless nations have also forged their own connections. The Catalan independence movement has found strong support among Scottish independence supporters, especially exemplified by the pro-independence newspaper *The National*. After the suppression of the Catalan independence referendum, declared illegal by the Spanish government in 2017, one of the ex-ministers of the Catalan government, Clara Ponsanti, sought refuge in Scotland. Andrew Learmonth ‘Catalan Ex-Minister Clara Ponsanti Will Fight to Stay in Scotland’, *The National*, 26 March (2018). At: <https://www.thenational.scot/news/16115336.catalan-ex-minister-clara-ponsanti-will-fight-to-stay-in-scotland/>. Accessed 15 January 2019.



### THE CASE OF SCOTLAND

Stateless nations such as Scotland form an interesting case. The fact that they are both defined as nations and as stateless would seem to contradict the prevalence of the value of national self-determination. Stateless nations are however vital to the study of nationalism because most nation-states were initially stateless nations. Scotland certainly did not lack the kind of romantic cultural movements discussed above. Indeed, the romanticism of James Macpherson, Walter Scott and others, and the invented traditions of modern tartan kilts and Highland games is sometimes considered an especially prominent and even prototypical case,<sup>34</sup> contemporary with similar movements around the globe.

It could be argued that contemporary stateless nationalism shows late blooming, Scottish political nationalism has gained ground from the late twentieth century onwards. In his study of the politicisation of national movements, Miroslav Hroch argues that such cases were politicised too late after the transition to industrialism and liberal democracy to use their momentum to attain statehood.<sup>35</sup> Yet Graeme Morton has challenged the idea of Scotland's 'missing' nationalism, arguing that a Scottish political nationalism did develop in the nineteenth century, exemplified by the reverence for William Wallace. Wallace was revered because he fought against the conquest of Scotland, which for these Scots laid the foundation for the Treaty of Union.<sup>36</sup> This was depicted as a union of equal sovereign nations in which Scotland was not dissolved;<sup>37</sup> this notion that the Scots *assent to the union* can be regarded as Scottish *unionist* nationalism. Arguably it is the competition between Scottish unionist and Scottish separatist nationalisms which defined the referendum and Scottish politics in general.

This is not the only distinction in Scottish nationalism, however, and religion has played a crucial role here. These nineteenth century cultural movements differed according to the parts of the Scottish past that they related to. So, for some the Presbyterian identity of the nation and the history of the Scottish Reformation was the most significant. This was not significant to all, however, and this could explain the wider appeal of the medieval past,<sup>38</sup> and the traditions described by Tom Devine as 'Highlandism.'<sup>39</sup> This is arguably easier for multiple groups to appropriate as

<sup>34</sup> Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>35</sup> Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival*, p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> Graeme Morton, 'What If?: The Significance of Scotland's Missing Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century', in Broun, Finlay, and Lynch (eds.), *Image and Identity Image and Identity*, p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> Morton, 'What If?: The Significance of Scotland's Missing Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century', p. 165.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Lynch, 'A Nation Born Again? Scottish Identity in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in Broun, Finlay, and Lynch. (eds), *Image and Identity*, p. 82.

<sup>39</sup> Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, p. 233.

exemplified by the creation of Jewish,<sup>40</sup> Muslim,<sup>41</sup> Sikh<sup>42</sup> and Samyé Sangha (Tibetan Buddhist)<sup>43</sup> tartans. As the significance of Presbyterianism itself has declined it is hardly surprising that the significance of Presbyterian collective memory has faded for many if not all, while other narratives remain or became more significant.

### *RELIGION, MEMORY AND SYMBOLISM*

Ernest Renan famously argued that nations were as much subject to collective amnesia as collective memory.<sup>44</sup> As Anthony Smith pointed out, national communities have so much historical background it is hardly surprising that individuals are selective<sup>45</sup> and should not be assumed to be simply naïve or dishonest. People will select things which they can relate to and from which shared myths, memories, symbols and values can be constructed. After all, would any modern Scot who relates to Scotland's medieval past either advocate the political and religious characteristics of the era or be unaware of them? The narratives, symbols and references derived from the Scottish past arguably form a 'shared culture'.

The banal symbolism discussed by Billig arguably has wider applications than nationalism, to all manner of norms in a given society, such as religion. Given the ubiquity of Christianity in Scottish history as reflected in symbols and other influences, this makes an interesting case for the power of the banal. Christian symbolism could be described as a victim of its own success, having faded into the background so much it has lost the power to reinforce its 'message'. However, symbols and narratives are also not *sui generis*; they are dependent on the people in question. So, it would not be accurate to say that the Christian past and its symbols are completely ignored, but their meaning has shifted according to how people relate to them. This is perhaps best exemplified by the way that contemporary Scots relate to the saltire of St Andrew. This is a banal symbol par excellence but one that is now primarily a national symbol widely used by Scots of all religious affiliations. It could certainly be described as Christian in origin, representing the cross of a Christian saint. What is interesting is both its current status, coupled with the fact that its religious origins are widely known.

Arguably, religion provides a different means of relating to the past because religion involves claims about extra-natural beings, forces and realms; but these elements can be combined with national ones. Christians can relate to the saltire as both a 'national' and 'religious' symbol, reflecting Christian heritage and, for some, the nation's spiritual protector. In this case it relates both to a wider Christian identity and a specific national identity. Presbyterians may relate to John Knox or the Covenanters not only as specific

<sup>40</sup> Official Scottish Jewish Tartan. At: <http://www.jewishtartan.com/>. Accessed 15 June 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Islamic Tartan. At: <http://www.islamictartan.com/>. Accessed 15 June 2015.

<sup>42</sup> *The Scottish Register of Tartans*. At: <https://www.tartanregister.gov.uk/tartanDetails.aspx?ref=3785>. Accessed 15 June 2015.

<sup>43</sup> 'Tartan Details – Samye Sangha #2', *The Scottish Register of Tartans*. At: <https://www.tartanregister.gov.uk/tartanDetails.aspx?ref=5917>. Accessed 15 June 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, second edition (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 30.

<sup>45</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1986) p. 177.

figures of national history, but also those that established the nation's relationship with God. Prehistoric sites such as Callanish can be used to assert claims to primordial indigeneity, but for Neo-Pagans they may still be home to the same spirits worshipped by the ancients with whom they can relate. This latter case should be regarded as no more peculiar than the fact that modern Scots Christians claim to relate to the same saints or the same God as their medieval forebears.

The coupling of religion and national identity in this way shows that specific national senses of belonging can be asserted that provides a local context for wider religious discourses, applying them to a specific country and its people. In this way specific national belonging is placed in the wider cosmos postulated by the specific religious group. Non-religious Scots also have their wider worldview into which *their* Scottishness fits, including systems of norms such as secularism and claims about reality such as naturalism (both of which many religious share alongside norms and claims specific to them). The fact that actors can jostle such different identities is almost certainly because they relate to different things, the specific sense of shared peoplehood can be combined with very different claims about the cosmos.

### *IMAGINING SOCIAL GROUPS*

Despite this article's focus on terms and concepts, I am still primarily concerned with identifiable groups of people. Those groups are not only subject to distinct emic classifications but can also be distinguished according to etic criteria which I have imposed on them. They are, however, all social groups and modelling their relations necessitates acknowledgement of shared characteristics as much as divergent ones. Obviously, as the census indicates, respondents are capable of juggling 'membership' of a variety of such groups partially because they are classified distinctly and partially because they can be fitted together in various ways.

Scottish national identity is bound up with the territory of Scotland itself in which various religious affiliations exist and which can no longer be monopolised by any of them. In another sense, however, Scotland is part of the international networks defined by these religious groups, especially widespread, universalising and proselytising religions such as the Roman Catholic Church. Non-proselytising religions, however, such as Judaism also form a larger network along with similar diasporic communities, who may juggle Scottish national identity with a diasporic ethnic or national identity and even 'vicarious nationalism' for the homeland.<sup>46</sup> They may form a minority within Scotland, but they form part of a larger community worldwide.

As Benedict Anderson has argued one of the distinctive features of nations is the fact they are 'at once limited and sovereign.'<sup>47</sup> In a sense, Scottish national identity does not compete with these identities on a global (and indeed cosmic) stage and no religious group is currently capable of monopolising Scotland and Scottishness. All of these groups however conform to Anderson's definition of nations as 'imagined communities' that is groups defined by imagining oneself part of a large and anonymous body of people who one will mostly never meet. Anderson did not mean that such communities are fake, inauthentic or unreal but rather defined by an act of the

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>47</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 6.

mind which would certainly entail social inculcation<sup>48</sup>. To a large extent the characteristics and relations between such imagined communities depend on how they are imagined by actors, which are then subject to the imagination of scholarship.

One of the most crucial factors here is the characteristics of the boundaries between groups. Frederik Barth argued that ethnic groups depend on the conscious identification of members and should be defined largely by the factors used by members to demarcate the boundaries of the group rather than 'objectively' identifiable features<sup>49</sup>. I would argue that this approach is useful for our understanding of the interaction of many types of social groups. Crucially Barth argued that the boundaries were more important than the 'personnel' within them, some of whom would migrate between these bounded groups<sup>50</sup>. Similarly, Craig Calhoun has described these as large, social categories which for him should best be viewed *as categories* rather than 'organic' communities defined by 'face to face' interaction or kinship.<sup>51</sup>

Arguably what allows individuals to be members of such different bounded imagined communities is the fact that their boundaries largely do not conflict and are defined differently, facilitated by contemporary discourses of 'religion' and 'nationality' as distinct classifications. That is not to say that individuals do not integrate their identities in various ways, leading to the formation of composite and novel social categories such as 'Scottish Muslim'. The composite and novel characteristics of such a category does not make it any less of a real part of the lives of many individuals, a bounded and imagined community as valid as any other.

## CONCLUSION

The relationship between 'religion' and 'national' identity in Scotland is informed by the fact that in contemporary discourse these are treated as completely distinctive categories. Classifying oneself in such a manner is part of the prevalent way of thinking and talking about the interaction and convergence of these social groups and collective identities which individuals may participate in. 'Religion' and 'nation' are insider-emic categories in Scotland but I would argue that some of the distinctive features of these social groups means that they can also be transformed into successful etic categories and the relationship between them modelled. The fact that the boundaries demarcating 'national' and 'religious' groups largely do not conflict, and that Scottish national identity is no longer defined by 'religious' factors helps to explain the fact that individuals can juggle Scottish national identity with a plurality of religious affiliations.

<sup>48</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>49</sup> Frederik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Bergen: Scandinavian University Publishing, 1969) pp. 14-15.

<sup>50</sup> Barth, *Ethnic Groups*, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> Calhoun, *Nations Matter*, pp. 160-161.