

**RACISM IN SCOTLAND:
A MATTER FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION?**

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Introduction

Almost without exception, analyses of the expression of racism in Britain refer in fact only to England so that the Scottish dimension is completely ignored. Yet there is reason to at least initially doubt that conclusions drawn from the English situation necessarily apply to Scotland because of the specific nature of Scottish history and culture, the dependant nature of the development of capitalism in Scotland,⁽¹⁾ and different patterns of migration. But if we look to academic research within Scotland to throw some light on these issues and their relevance to the expression of racism, both historically and in the current period, we find that very little work has been done. This absence allows the widespread commonsense view that Scotland has 'good race relations because there is no racism here' to go unquestioned. It is the intention of this paper to challenge this commonsense definition by recounting evidence which demonstrates that racism has been generated and expressed in Scotland. Our focus is primarily historical and our minimal objective is to offer sufficient evidence to support our contention that much more attention should be given to this question than has been given to date. Consequently, our analysis is more speculative than definitive, and has the aim of stimulating further research and debate.

It is common for analyses of racism to pay particular attention to locating the origin of racism in colonial activity.⁽²⁾ And even if it is denied that the origin of racism can be found in an absolute sense in European expansionism from the sixteenth century,⁽³⁾ there is little doubt that the ideology of racism was given a particular content and political significance by a combination of colonial settlement, the development of the slave mode of production and trade.⁽⁴⁾ The first strand to our argument will concern Scottish involvement in British colonialism, and will note specifically the importance of colonial trade to the development of industrial capitalism in Scotland. But outlining Scottish involvement in colonialism is insufficient by itself. Hence, the second strand to our argument is the location of

evidence which shows that racist ideas were generated and reproduced within Scotland in connection with Scottish involvement in the British Empire. Third, we shall consider whether the ideology of racism has been expressed in Scottish politics. Racism can be expressed in many different contexts, including the colonial situation itself, but our focus here will be on the expression of racism in response to the arrival in Scotland of migrant labour, i.e. of migrants whose migration is stimulated by the demand for labour within Scotland.

Scotland and Empire

The Act of Union, 1707, opened English colonial markets to Scottish merchants and made it possible for Scots to play a role in the construction of the British Empire. Concerning the latter, some nationalist writers have urged Scots to be proud of their contribution: Andrew Dewar Gibb's book *Scottish Empire* (1937) is the best known celebration of the historical record, but there are other more restrained accounts.⁽⁵⁾ An exhibition organised by the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh in 1982 on *Scotland and Africa* demonstrated the extensive contacts between these two parts of the world through the medium of Scottish explorers, missionaries, traders, administrators and soldiers over several centuries. The earliest recorded contact with Africa by a Scot was in the second decade of the seventeenth century, recorded by William Lithgow in his book *A Most Delectable and True Discourse, of an admired and painefull Peregrination from Scotland, to the most famous Kingdomes in Europe, Asia and Affricke*, first published in 1614 with four subsequent editions in the following thirty years. James Bruce of Kinnaird (1730-1774), Mungo Park (1771- 1806), Hugh Clapperton (1788-1827) and Alexander Gordon Laing (1794-1826) were all Scots who were prominent in the early exploration of Africa.⁽⁶⁾ Their accounts of their explorations would constitute a useful starting point for an analysis of the imagery of the African peoples with whom they established contact. But it would be more difficult to evaluate their influence in Scotland. Their books all seem to have been published in London. Moreover, although Bruce and Park both returned to live in Scotland for a while, Hibbert⁽⁷⁾ records that it was in London that most of the interest in their activities was expressed.

Exploration was rarely conducted for its own sake. Mungo Park's travels were sponsored by the African Association. He hoped that he would render the 'geography of Africa more familiar to my countrymen' and that he would open up 'to their ambition and industry new sources of wealth and new channels of commerce'.⁽⁸⁾ Laing's exploration was authorised by the Governor of Sierra Leone, partly with a view to developing trade.⁽⁹⁾ And

within Scotland, Africa was viewed as a location for commercial activity by merchants by the early nineteenth century. In 1820, schemes for trade in northern Africa were under discussion as the Niger was explored. Thus, the territories developed by the Imperial British East Africa Company eventually became the colonies of Kenya and Uganda. This company was founded by Sir William Mackinnon who had achieved commercial success in India as a merchant and shipowner. The same was true for the British South Africa Company which was chartered in 1889 to operate in what is now Zimbabwe. There was substantial Scottish influence in both these companies.⁽¹⁰⁾

Throughout the colonial history of Africa, numerous Scotsmen are to be found amongst the soldiers and governors who served there. Gibb⁽¹¹⁾ cites the role of the Black Watch in the Ashanti War of 1873-4. In South Africa, there was a history of Scottish soldiers becoming settlers prior to the beginning of organised emigration from Scotland in 1812. The situation in India was similar, with large Scottish representation amongst the military, trading companies and administrators. Gibb's comment on the nineteenth century is that:

“Throughout these years ... in war and in peace, the Scotsman is usually to be found wherever the wind of great events stirs in the pages of Indian history.”⁽¹²⁾

Three Scots were particularly prominent: Thomas Munro, John Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone. All three were employed by the East India Company. Munro was appointed Governor of Madras, while Malcolm later succeeded Elphinstone as Governor of Bombay. In addition, individual Scots and Scottish companies became heavily involved in merchant trade in India. Before 1707, there were initiatives to develop trade between Scotland and India and after the Union, Scots became involved in the activities of the East India Company and as free merchants in the local trade in India. In the nineteenth century, Scots were well represented amongst the growth of managing agents who gained control of the production and distribution of tea, coffee, jute and indigo. Parker has concluded and explained:

“By the end of the Victorian era Scots firms had attained a controlling position in key sectors of the economy of British India. This ascendancy was in great measure attributable to the success of their predecessor in firstly establishing a foothold in the East and secondly in contributing to the defeat of the East India Company.”⁽¹³⁾

The evidence of Scottish involvement in the Empire is more extensive in the case of North America and the Caribbean. Sheridan⁽¹⁴⁾ has summarised much of the evidence for the Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Scots were prominent amongst those who settled in Jamaica, on the islands ceded to Britain in 1763 and in Guyana and Trinidad. They went in a number of different capacities: as indentured servants, as doctors, clergymen and other professionals, and as free ‘seekers of fortune’.⁽¹⁵⁾ Sheridan⁽¹⁶⁾ records that many Scots first worked as book-keepers and overseers on the sugar plantations, and some went on to become shop owners, attorneys and plantation owners, a number of the latter returning to Scotland as absentees. Adamson⁽¹⁷⁾ records the role played by Scots in the consolidation of the plantations in British Guyana in the 1840s and 1850s. Scots were particularly prominent amongst settlers in Jamaica and some played key roles in the development of the colonial economy. To cite just one example, Alexander Barclay rose from being a poor book-keeper to attorney and then plantation owner and was a key figure in the attempt to bring African indentured labour to Jamaica after the abolition of slavery.⁽¹⁸⁾

The involvement of Scots in the Caribbean and North American colonies had real effects on the development of the Scottish economy. Following the Union, it was the tobacco trade with North America which established Glasgow as a major colonial port⁽¹⁹⁾ although there was a small trade with North America before 1707.⁽²⁰⁾ Scottish imports of tobacco rapidly increased from about 2.5 million pounds in 1715 to 47 million pounds in 1771. By 1762, tobacco accounted for 40% of all Scottish imports (excluding England) and 52% of exports,⁽²¹⁾ and only a few years later the Clyde equalled the imports of tobacco to London and the other English ports combined.⁽²²⁾ North America and the Caribbean provided welcome markets for Scottish products, as can be seen in the case of linen. There was a dramatic rise in the production of linen in Scotland between 1730 and 1775, and attention has focussed on identifying the markets which absorbed this increased output. A number of writers have dismissed the export market as of little significance but Durie⁽²³⁾ has re-evaluated this relationship, claiming that a substantial proportion of exported ‘British’ linen was in fact produced in Scotland. On the basis of his calculations, the percentage of Scottish-made linen exported from Britain after 1747 rarely fell below 20-30%, and on occasion reached 35-40%. The colonies provided the most significant overseas market for linen, with 90% of all linen exported from Scottish ports going to America and the Caribbean. Virginia and Jamaica took the largest single amounts, with Jamaica's share rising to 40% of all Scottish linen exports in 1777 following the collapse of the Virginia market. These markets were also an important stimulus to

diversification and innovation in the industry.

The examples of the tobacco and linen trade (and one can add the sugar trade)⁽²⁴⁾ all imply a link between the development of trade and the development of manufacturing activity in Scotland. But, historically, this is by no means a clear-cut relationship and much debate has focussed on the origin of the wealth that was transformed into industrial capital to constitute the foundation for the rise of industrial capitalism in Scotland.⁽²⁵⁾ It is the case that the wealth accumulated by merchants does not by definition or necessarily become capital. In order to claim that the profits of merchant capital served as a source of primitive accumulation in the case of Scotland, it is necessary to show that it was used to invest in industrial manufacturing and to employ wage labour. The work of Devine⁽²⁶⁾ demonstrates this relationship. He has estimated⁽²⁷⁾ that between 1770 and 1815, well over half of all Scottish merchants held shares in manufacturing enterprises in Scotland. He claims:

“In ... (West-central Scotland) ... which was the major focus of rapid economic growth in eighteenth century Scotland, entire industries were dominated by the capital of ‘tobacco lords’ and West Indian merchant princes.”⁽²⁸⁾

Colonial merchants played a significant role in the development of the ‘heavy’ industries in the eighteenth century by financing two of the three malleable ironworks in Scotland. They also invested heavily in a wide range of linen manufacturing and bleaching concerns. For example, one of the most successful bleaching and printing companies in Scotland was William Stirling and Sons, whose family fortune originated from the tobacco trade. Additionally, colonial merchants had complete control over the leather-tanning, glass and sugar industries.⁽²⁹⁾

The direct impact of colonial trade upon the development of manufacturing by means of converting merchant profits into industrial capital seems to have been limited to a specific historical period for the last two decades of the eighteenth century show a decrease in the importance of investment from merchant sources. Insofar as nineteenth century capitalist developments were dependant upon the rise of the cotton industry, the direct link between merchant capital and industrial capitalism breaks down. The investment of merchants in the cotton industry was limited: it seems that they never held more than a minority share in any company.⁽³⁰⁾ Even during the early stages of the cotton industry, merchants did not represent a major source of capital, and, increasingly, the development of the industry was financed from within the developing manufacturing sector

of the Scottish economy.⁽³¹⁾

The development of the British Empire involved more than the settlement of English and Scottish men and women in far away lands and the establishment of a system of military and administrative domination over the indigenous populations. It also meant the establishment of new sets of production relations to produce goods destined for processing and marketing in Britain. In the case of the production of sugar and cotton, slave relations of production were established, and this required, in turn, a trade in human beings in order to supply a labour force in the Caribbean and North America. The port of Glasgow played only a minor role in the latter for only a few ships engaged in the slave trade.⁽³²⁾ This illustrates the “complementary rather than the competing character of Scottish economic development during the eighteenth century”.⁽³³⁾ Thus:

“... the specialisation of rival English ports like Liverpool in more profitable ventures like the slave trade left the Glasgow merchants virtually a free hand to consolidate their supremacy in tobacco.”⁽³⁴⁾

Nevertheless, the dependence of the Scottish merchant class and the early industrial bourgeoisie on the slave trade and the slave mode of production in the Caribbean and North America was considerable. It was also a dependence that was visible in Scotland, and not only in the rise of manufacturing industry. It was also visible in the conspicuous consumption of the colonial merchants, in their mansions, and in the streets to which they gave their names and their trading destinations: Buchanan Street, Miller Street, Virginia Street, Jamaica Street etc.⁽³⁵⁾ The enslaved African was therefore known in Scotland, along with the African peoples ‘discovered’ by Scottish explorers and the Indian populations subjected to British rule as exercised by Scottish administrators and soldiers. What now needs to be considered is the knowledge and imagery that was generated and reproduced about these colonised people in Scotland.

The Ideological Legacy

Given that our concern is with the generation and reproduction of racism in Scotland we must consider not only the scale and diversity of Scottish involvement in British colonialism and its relationship to the development of Scottish capitalism, but also its ideological legacy. There is a substantial body of evidence which shows that in the case of England racism was a central component of that legacy.⁽³⁶⁾ We wish to offer evidence to suggest that the same processes which took place in England also occurred in Scotland. Just as the economic benefits of the slave mode of

production were manifest in Scotland's expanding manufacturing industries, so too were images of the colonial 'races' reproduced in Scotland. These images were not static but were continually being restructured and developed. We do not present here a detailed analysis of the processes by which racism was generated and reproduced in Scotland. Rather, on the basis of preliminary work on the historical material available we argue that there is little reason to expect that Scotland differed greatly from England. As a result of Scottish involvement in the British Empire there existed a mechanism by which racism could be, and was, reproduced in Scotland.

First, we wish to cite as evidence the case of Scottish missionaries. This example is important not simply because of the influence of their ideas in religious circles, but also because of their wider influence. A popular philosophy of the time was that 'civilisation' could only be introduced to Africa by commerce and Christianity working together. By the 1840s, "the dual concept of missionary and commercial enterprise had taken shape in the minds of the men in Glasgow".⁽³⁷⁾ According to a Scottish missionary to Africa:

"Believers in missions, however, may still hold to their belief that the one hope, or at least the chief hope, for the regeneration of the African continent is the Gospel of Jesus Christ ... Two other gospels have been long, often, and strongly recommended by which a new Africa will arise. These are the gospel of Work and the Gospel of Commerce. Both of them are excellent and necessary ..."⁽³⁸⁾

The need for missionary activity had been identified and Scots were prominently involved from an early date. The Glasgow Missionary Society and the Scottish Missionary Society were both founded in 1796 although neither commenced work in Africa until the late 1820s. However, this was an enterprise "in which the zeal of individual Scots outstripped the official undertakings of Scottish organisations",⁽³⁹⁾ and some of the best-known Scottish missionaries – Robert Moffat, John Philip and David Livingstone – began their work with the London Missionary Society which was active in Africa much earlier. Of a later generation of missionaries, Hargreaves has concluded:

"Missionaries like Hetherwick, Laws and MacKay thus helped to make the great expansion of the British empire in Africa which took place during the 1890s acceptable to the British public."⁽⁴⁰⁾

Of particular importance here are the ideas and the images of the

colonial 'races' presented by the Scottish missionaries. Although ministers of the churches engaged in missionary activity took up the missionary theme in the pulpit, the content of these sermons is difficult to assess. The task is easier in the case of the periodicals published by churches involved in missionary activity. In addition, missionaries recorded their life work in books, some of which were published in Scotland. Throughout such material there are references to 'race' to describe the people amongst whom they were working, although no definition of the term was thought necessary. This reflected the commonsense usage it had already achieved by the late eighteenth century.⁽⁴¹⁾ This usage attributed significance to certain phenotypical differences which were regarded as indications of innate characteristics, in terms of inferiority and superiority. However, certain 'challenges' to such assumptions were made. In the Free Church Missionary Record in 1848, we find the following claim:

"Neither the Hottentots nor the Caffres are of the proper negro race ... Both, however, have the woolly hair of the ordinary negro. Why the Caffres should be so superior to the Hottentots is an ethnological puzzle. Some ... suppose that the Arabs may have made their way also to Caffaria, and by intermarriages, improved the Caffre race ... If so, then the fact must be accepted that it is possible for a race of semi-negro organisation to manifest intellect of an order which we are too apt to consider as the exclusive possession of the Aryan and Semitic families of mankind."⁽⁴²⁾

We go on to cite some examples from the records of Scottish missionaries to demonstrate the way in which racist stereotypes were drawn upon and contributed to the development of an ideology of racism in Scotland.

David Livingstone is the best-known Scottish missionary and explorer and is recognised as a vociferous anti-slavery campaigner. However, his views were not static and despite arguing that the presence of Europeans in Africa had negative effects on Africans and their cultures, in the 1850s he was of the view that the 'civilisation' of Africa required "a long-continued discipline and contact with superior races by commerce".⁽⁴³⁾ In the same period he wrote:

"Barbarism or savageism is the effect of ages of debasement and vice. And agriculture, fisher, hunting, manufactures as of iron, brass etc. or the nomadic life afford no criterion whereby to judge the civilisation of a people. Neither of these pursuits raises certain tribes in this land from the lowest forms of barbarism, as evinced in the perfect nudity of the men and the mere pretence at covering the

private parts in women. They possess neither courage, patriotism, natural affection, honour, nor honesty. They have no stimulus for mental improvement. Most of their thoughts are concentrated on eating and drinking, smoking wild hemp and snuffing tobacco.”⁽⁴⁴⁾

Hope Masterton Waddell worked as a missionary in Jamaica between 1829 and 1845 and later in Africa. In his writings he presented a child-like image of the slaves on the West Indian sugar plantations, identifying the church as a force of benevolent direction. His portrayal of the African was, in parts, more clearly as the barbaric savage:

“At this day the negro race stands before the world in a condition disgraceful to itself and humanity. Divided into innumerable tribes and languages – without literature, laws or government, arts or sciences – with slavery for its normal social condition, and the basest and bloodiest superstition for religion ... it has sunk so low to be regardless alike of conscience and of shame ... and to practice cannibalism not from want, but revenge, and a horrid lust of human flesh.”⁽⁴⁵⁾

Circumstances forced Waddell to interrupt his work and spend over a year in Scotland. Like other missionaries, he dedicated himself to fund-raising in this period. Although we have no record of what was said at these meetings, there is little reason to expect it would have differed greatly from his written texts.

A similar theme is pursued in the work of Donald Fraser,⁽⁴⁶⁾ missionary in Africa, and author of a book which was intended as a text-book for missionary discussion issued by the leading missionary societies in Scotland. *The Future of Africa* offered a ‘typology’ of the ‘races’ of Africa:

“The Bushmen, or pygmies, were the original inhabitants of Africa. They are identified by some with the pre-historic savage of Europe. In the museum at Brussels one can see stone implements and drawings of the dwarfish cave-dwellers of Europe which are exactly similar to the implements and drawings of the Bushmen.”⁽⁴⁷⁾

A description of the ‘beliefs and customs of Paganism’ followed, which included infanticide, cannibalism, polygamy, drunkenness and sacrifices. He concluded that even the “lowest type of human savage” had the need for some alternative, which is identified as Christianity.

James Stewart, a missionary in Africa in the nineteenth century, dwelt

on the true character of the African ‘race’. He argued that “we of the higher and civilised races claim too much when we assume that we have possession of all the higher instincts, susceptibilities, and capabilities of the human race”.⁽⁴⁸⁾ While claiming to reject many of the popular stereotypes he nevertheless believed it possible to describe the character of the African ‘race’:

“There is in the African a curious mixture of childlike simplicity and obstinacy, of openness and duplicity, which makes it difficult to sum up his character briefly. He is at once affectionate and gentle, yet sometimes savage in his rage: almost always loyal, and seldom or never treacherous, like some of the Eastern races.”⁽⁴⁹⁾

While he accepted the possibility of ‘advancement’ and certain negative consequences of contact ‘with the higher races’, he urged caution:

“In the advance of the African races there is one danger ahead. It is the over-confidence and satisfaction with themselves displayed by so many of those who have been partially educated; and the entirely wrong impression many of them seem to entertain, that it is possible for them to reach in one or two generations the level which other races have taken long centuries to reach. From this fallacious conclusion they are apt to claim an equality, political and social, for which *as a race* they are not yet prepared ... The safety of the black man, and the guarantee of his progressive higher future, lie in the harmonious working with the white man, especially in those regions where a humane and just British administration exists.”⁽⁵⁰⁾

These images were increasingly articulated through the language of scientific racism: by claiming the mantle of science, such theories of ‘race’ were to gain even greater legitimacy. A Scottish contribution to the development of scientific racism can be identified. For example, Lord Kames, who was a practising lawyer, published *Sketches in the History of Man* in 1774 in Edinburgh. In this four volume work, he claimed to have ‘proven’ the inferiority and lower intelligence of the ‘negro’ and amongst his descriptions we find:

“The black colour of negroes, thick lips, flat nose, crisped woolly hair, and rank smell, distinguish them from every other race of men.”⁽⁵¹⁾

George Combe, an Edinburgh lawyer, published *System of Phrenology* in 1825 following the appearance of several of his essays in a Scottish

periodical and he subsequently became the main populariser of phrenology throughout Britain.⁽⁵²⁾ A Phrenological Society was established in Dundee in 1826 and acquired the relevant apparatus to measure skulls. It was on the basis of these sorts of measurements that Combe attempted to order hierarchically different 'races':

"The brains of the different European races differ considerably from each other, but a common type characterises them all, and distinguishes them from those ... (others) ... They are decidedly larger than the Hindoo, American Indian and Negro heads; and this indicates superior force of mental character ... In short they indicate a higher natural power of reflection, and a greater natural tendency to justice, benevolence, veneration, and refinement than others."⁽⁵³⁾

There were other contributors to the debates that surrounded these sorts of argument, including Robert Knox,⁽⁵⁴⁾ and the Scottish philosophers David Hume and Thomas Carlyle. Although their works were published in London, their general prominence ensured that their writing was known in Scotland.

When considering the ideological legacy of Empire, attention must also be given to the struggle against slavery. Scotland had an active anti-slavery movement⁽⁵⁵⁾ which was given philosophical support by some of the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment, amongst whom James Beattie, Francis Hutcheson and John Millar were particularly prominent. The writings and lectures of these Scottish academics were reproduced in popular journals of the late eighteenth century, and their campaign increased the awareness of Africa amongst the Scottish population.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Their influence extended well beyond Scotland:

"To an extraordinary degree ... the conception of the Enlightenment came to the English speaking colonies through the Scottish philosophers. All of them, with the possible exception of David Hume and the very definite exception of Henry Home, Lord Kames, at one time or another took standpoints which had an impact on and could be turned to good use in the campaign against slavery."⁽⁵⁷⁾

However, their influence in providing an alternative to the racist imagery cited above is unclear: as was shown in the case of David Livingstone, anti-slavery campaigners or those providing a philosophical basis for this position did not necessarily reject racist stereotypes or the idea of the human species being naturally divided into discrete 'races'.

As yet, we can make no substantive claims about the extent to which these ideas and images were accepted and reproduced by different classes in Scotland. This would depend, to a certain extent, upon the degree to which different classes were open to religious influence. However, it is clear that Scottish missionary activity provided a mechanism by which knowledge about Empire and racist imagery could be reproduced within Scotland. We argue that Scottish involvement in the British Empire stimulated attempts both to legitimate that involvement and to describe and explain the peoples with whom contact was made. In order to do so, the idea of 'race' was utilised, and perceived phenotypical differences were identified negatively with supposedly innate cultural and biological differences. There is evidence to show that those on the fringes of the ruling class in Scotland were relatively well acquainted with the debates on 'race' though a variety of 'scientific' and literary periodicals published in Scotland and read by doctors, lawyers, politicians and clergy (e.g. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*).⁽⁵⁸⁾ Thus, Curtin's claim that "the vast majority of the educated public appears to have accepted at least some aspects of the new racial doctrine, if only as a vague feeling that science supported the common xenophobic prejudice"⁽⁵⁹⁾ can very likely be applied to Scotland.

Racism and Migration to Scotland

To this point, we have shown that racism was generated in Scotland in the context of Scottish involvement in the formation and maintenance of the British Empire. The focus has been upon the formation and expression of racism within what might be called the Scottish intelligentsia, and the objects of their attention were populations outside Scotland. We now want to consider whether this racist ideology was drawn upon to identify groups within Scotland. In particular, we want to consider whether it was used to identify and denigrate groups which migrated to Scotland. Scotland is traditionally, and correctly, regarded as a society of emigration,⁽⁶⁰⁾ but there have been large-scale internal migrations (from the Highlands to the Lowlands) and a number of migrations into Scotland from outside Britain.⁽⁶¹⁾ There is evidence of a small African presence from as early as the sixteenth century⁽⁶²⁾ and of African students studying at Scottish universities.⁽⁶³⁾ Concerning the African presence, we have little understanding of the ideological reaction of the Scottish population. There is evidence of an African man being refused a teaching post at Jedburgh Presbytery on racist grounds in the early nineteenth century,⁽⁶⁴⁾ but we do not know as yet how typical this act of discrimination was. Another migrant group, the Lithuanians, arrived in Scotland as political refugees, and there is evidence of union opposition to their employment in the Scottish mining industry. Although racism was not a dominant influence on this opposition,

it was nevertheless threaded into it.⁽⁶⁵⁾

The largest migration into Scotland, however, has been from Ireland, and we have more extensive evidence of both the political and ideological reaction from different sections of the Scottish population to this migration.⁽⁶⁶⁾ This evidence demonstrates that racism in Scotland was reproduced to typify not only populations in the more distant corners of the British Empire, but also populations within Scotland. The racist image of the Irish reproduced in England has been analysed by Curtis,⁽⁶⁷⁾ although this image seems to have been tempered by less defamatory stereotypes.⁽⁶⁸⁾ One of the current authors has compared the political agitation against the Irish in England and Scotland using secondary sources, and has concluded that racism was one of the strands in the ideological reaction.⁽⁶⁹⁾ He also argued that this expression of racism should be understood as being, in part, a product of the particular character of Scottish political and ideological relations. Here we add some further illustrative material to this argument in order to demonstrate how the idea of 'race' had become a component of the world view of those serving as functionaries within the Scottish proto-state, specifically the Church of Scotland, and of sections of the Scottish intelligentsia in the early twentieth century.

The Church of Scotland was one of a number of Scottish institutions which expressed concern about what was seen as the advantages that accrued to the Roman Catholic Church and to its schools as a result of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1918. The Church of Scotland set up a Committee, which included amongst its membership both the Moderator and the Procurator, to examine this issue in relation to the continuing Irish immigration to Scotland. This Committee reported to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on 29 May, 1923, and its written report clearly identified the Irish as a distinct 'race' whose presence was having a deleterious effect on the Scottish 'race' and Scottish culture. The Irish Roman Catholic population was identified as "a people by themselves, segregated by reason of their race, their customs, their traditions, and, above all, by their loyalty to their Church" and who therefore could not "be assimilated and absorbed into the Scottish race".⁽⁷⁰⁾ The Report called upon the Scottish 'race' to consider methods by which to "preserve Scotland for the Scottish race, and secure to future generations the traditions, ideals, and Faith of a great people, unspoiled and inviolate".⁽⁷¹⁾

Three main claims were made in this Report. First, it was argued that Irish migration to Scotland and Scottish emigration were causally related and were having negative consequences. The authors referred to the demand for cheap labour in nineteenth century Scotland, to which the Irish

'race' had responded, accepting "almost any kind of habitation, and ... content with small wages".⁽⁷²⁾ They continued:

"Compelled by the economic pressure of the Irish race, young Scottish men and women – the flower of the nation – left their native land, and sought to build up their fortunes in America and the Dominions ... Their places were taken by a people of a different race and a different Faith, and Scotland has been divided into two camps – a Scottish and an Irish."⁽⁷³⁾

Within Scotland, Irish settlement was seen as having a similar displacement effect:

"It is a notable fact that whenever the Irish population reach a certain proportion in any community, whether village, small town, or area of a great city, the tendency of the Scottish population is to leave as quickly as they possible can ... This social phenomenon has a very sinister meaning for the future of our race. The time is rapidly approaching when, through this racial incompatibility, whole communities in Parish, village, and town will be predominantly Irish."⁽⁷⁴⁾

Thus, it was being suggested that the Irish presence was forcing the Scottish 'race' to leave their homes and their country, and that this was an undesirable and unprecedented process:

"There is no parallel to the movements in modern and in ancient times. It is a thing unprecedented that one race should gradually by peaceful penetration supplant another in their native land."⁽⁷⁵⁾

Second, and following logically from the first argument, the Report claimed that a "fusion of ... the races" was impossible because:

"The Irish are the most obedient children of the Church of Rome; the Scots stubbornly adhere to the principles of the Reformed Faith. The Irish have separate schools for their children; they have their own clubs for recreation and for social intercourse; they tend to segregate in communities, and even to monopolise certain departments of labour to the exclusion of the Scots."⁽⁷⁶⁾

In this attempt to ascribe negative consequences to the Irish presence in Scotland, the causal sequence is reversed. Having previously argued that the Irish presence forced Scots to leave their homes and country, implying

that it was the Scots who did not wish to live amongst the Irish migrants, the authors continue by accusing the Irish migrants of desiring segregation in recreation, residence and work. Whatever the process and outcome, the Irish migrants were damned. It was argued that this was causing "bitter feeling" amongst the Scottish working class, and that this would lead to "racial conflict" in Scotland:

"As the (bitter feelings) increase, and the Scottish people realise the seriousness of the menace to their own racial supremacy in their native land, this bitterness will develop into a race antagonism, which will have disastrous consequences for Scotland."⁽⁷⁷⁾

Third, the Report argued that the Irish were changing the structure of power and moral character of Scottish society with negative consequences. These changes were seen to be the result of certain characteristics ascribed to the Irish 'race'. For example, it was claimed that:

"Their gift for speech, their aptitude for public life, their restless ambition to rule, have given them a prominent place in political, county, municipal, and parochial elections."⁽⁷⁸⁾

But, having ascribed to the Irish the characteristics of ambitiousness and positive intervention, the authors go on to ascribe to them additional, and contradictory, characteristics:

"They have an unfortunate influence in modifying the Scottish habit of thrift and independence. An Irishman never hesitates to seek relief from charity organisations and local authorities, and Scotsmen do not see why they should not get help when Irishmen receive it ... Generally speaking, they are poor partly through intemperance and improvidence, and they show little inclination to raise themselves in the social scale."⁽⁷⁹⁾

In addition, key aspects of Scottish cultural life were threatened:

"The Irish race too modify admirable Scottish customs. The Scottish reverence for the Sabbath day is passing away: it has now become a day for political meetings and for concerts."⁽⁸⁰⁾

These negatively evaluated cultural characteristics ascribed to the Irish 'race' were believed to be leading to the eventual elimination of the Scottish 'race', and this was thought to be a disaster of worldwide significance:

"The loss of the Scottish race to civilisation would be immeasurable. In science, theoretical and applied, in art, poetry and prose, in government and industry, in philosophy and theology, their contributions to the advancement of knowledge and civilisation have been remarkable."⁽⁸¹⁾

Yet, the authors identified an even greater danger than this. The Education (Scotland) Act, 1918, was described as yet another tool in the hands of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, giving it sufficient power and influence to begin "the destruction of the unity and homogeneity of the Scottish people."⁽⁸²⁾ But, as a consequence, the Roman Catholic Church was posed to gain control of England, "the greatest prize of all".⁽⁸³⁾

There are two points to note about the ideological content of this Report. First, the idea of 'race' is a key organising concept. Two separate 'races', the Scottish and the Irish, are identified and, for the reasons stated, their combined presence in Scotland is predicted to lead to 'race antagonism'. This suggests that the membership of this Committee, which included the leadership of the Church of Scotland, was thoroughly imbued with the scientific racism that had been generated in both England and Scotland in the course of the nineteenth century. Second, not only is the Irish Roman Catholic population identified as a separate 'race', but it also has ascribed to it in a deterministic manner a variety of cultural characteristics (gift for speech, restless ambition to rule, the seeking of relief from charity organisations, intemperance etc.) which are negatively evaluated and which are regarded as leading to negative consequences for the Scottish 'race'. In the light of one of the current author's definition of racism,⁽⁸⁴⁾ this is certainly a racist conception of the Irish. Consequently, this Report's almost apocalyptic prediction of the consequences of Irish migration to Scotland is an example of the reproduction of racist ideology in Scotland in the early part of the twentieth century. Significantly, it is not the only example for this period.

Concern about the 'Irish problem' was widespread amongst all classes of the Scottish population in the 1920s, and both politicians and the intelligentsia took up the theme. We can include here some of those who were agitating for a nationalist solution to what were identified as Scotland's problems, one of whom was Andrew Dewar Gibb. His glorification of the role of Scots in creating and maintaining the British Empire has already been mentioned, and in an earlier work which set out a case for the establishment of a Scottish government he suggested that "the great Irish trek to Scotland is a national problem and a national evil of the first importance".⁽⁸⁵⁾ Moreover, he claimed that:

“... never under a Scottish government could the immigration of undesirables have continued until they formed a seventh of the population ... The Irish problem is a monument to the type of statesmanship which has guided the affairs of Scotland since the year of grace 1707, a statesmanship of which the keynote is to devise no measures for Scotland until action is necessary in England.”⁽⁸⁶⁾

In Gibb's account of the 'Irish problem', themes similar to those which appeared in the Church of Scotland Report of 1923 can be found. He referred to what he saw as the exclusivity and isolation of the Irish population:

“The Irish community is rigorously prevented from intermingling or intermarrying with the Scottish population. Irish streets, Irish quarters and even Irish towns and villages exist ... the priests who hold over their flock the standing threat of hell-fire, a penalty incurred alike by marrying Presbyterians, and by the use of contraceptives, see to it that their sheep do not, by marriage, stray out of the Roman Catholic fold which is the same thing, practically, as the Irish fold.”⁽⁸⁷⁾

He claimed that the Irish were responsible for both crime and sexual deviance:

“Wheresoever knives and razors are used, wheresoever sneak thefts and mean pilfering are easy and safe, wheresoever dirty acts of sexual baseness are committed, there you will find the Irishman in Scotland with all but a monopoly of the business.”⁽⁸⁸⁾

This ascription of negative characteristics was combined with use of the idea of 'race' in such a way as to conclude that the very existence of the Scottish 'race' was threatened:

“Thus in the heart of a dwindling though virile and intelligent race there is growing up another people, immeasurably inferior in every way, but cohesive and solid, refusing obstinately, at the behest of obscurantist magic-men, to mingle with the people whose land they are usurping; unaware of, or if aware of disloyal to, all the finest ideals and ambitions of the Scottish race: distinguished by a veritable will to squalor which is mainly responsible for Scottish slumdom; squatting and breeding in such numbers as to threaten in another hundred years to gain actual predominance in the country.”⁽⁸⁹⁾

Gibb explicitly rejected the notion that the Irish migrants could have a positive impact upon Scottish culture and society:

“Even if it be granted that the Roman Church has a humanizing influence a hundredfold greater than that of the Calvinist Kirk, the conclusion cannot be drawn that Scotland will benefit or ever has benefitted by the Irish inhabitants any more surely than she would be benefited by the presence of a like number of Hottentots converted to Roman Catholicism. The finest manure makes no impression on concrete.”⁽⁹⁰⁾

The comparison between the Irish and 'Hottentots' is suggestive of a racist ideology which has a scope wider than simply the relationship between the Irish and Scottish 'races', but Gibb did not develop this point further.

But if there is clear evidence of the expression of racism in reaction to the Irish migration to and settlement in Scotland by sections of the Scottish ruling class and intelligentsia, it is more difficult to ascertain the extent of the articulation of racism within the Scottish working class. The record of civil disorder in the nineteenth century⁽⁹¹⁾ is suggestive but further research is necessary before we can draw conclusions about the content of working class ideology from physical attacks on Irish people and their property. Nevertheless, we believe that the historical record allows us to conclude that the ideology of racism was utilised to conceptualise and make a political issue out of the Irish presence in Scotland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Put another way, certain political forces in this period were able to racialise Scottish politics by drawing upon the ideology of racism in the course of responding politically to the migration of labour from Ireland (although, as one of the authors has suggested elsewhere, there were additional sources for this reaction).⁽⁹²⁾

Conclusion: Racism and the Racialisation of Politics

In conclusion, we wish to consider briefly the implications of this argument for the contemporary situation.⁽⁹³⁾ If we accept for a moment the widespread commonsense view that 'race relations' in Scotland are good, we are faced with, at best, a paradox and perhaps even with evidence that contradicts the analysis of the preceding pages, for 'good race relations' must prove that there is no racism in Scotland. We reject this argument partly on the strength of the conceptual inadequacy of the commonsense view. This rejection is predicted on the impossibility of an adequate, scientific analysis which utilises the ideological concepts of 'race' and 'race relations',⁽⁹⁴⁾ although this is an argument which need not necessarily detain the reader here. But we also reject this commonsense interpretation

on the strength of the limited evidence that we have so far assembled. This evidence shows that racist ideas have been generated and reproduced in Scotland, and have been utilised to comprehend and resist the migration of labour from Ireland. On the basis of this historical record, we believe that the most recent migrant population from the Indian subcontinent is therefore also typified and stereotyped using racist imagery by sections of the Scottish population and subject to discrimination as a consequence. What does distinguish the Scottish situation from England, however, is that the Asian presence has not yet been identified as a political 'problem'.

Political problems do not naturally exist but are created out of a process of political struggle in particular historical situations. We are therefore dealing with a social process by which different economic and political forces compete to define the political agenda and to offer solutions to the items on that agenda. There can be agreement between different forces about the agenda, but disagreement about solutions, as well as disagreement about the agenda itself. In defining the agenda and the solutions, the competing forces draw upon not only historical and contemporary events, but also upon ideology. Thus, to make this concrete, the Church of Scotland drew upon the ideology of racism in the course of reacting to both the migration from Ireland and the Education (Scotland) Act, 1918, in the early 1920s, the consequence of which was, in combination with other political forces, that the 'Irish problem' was created and placed on the Scottish political agenda. We need, therefore, to distinguish between the existence of the ideology on the one hand and, on the other, a political intervention by particular groups and individuals which has the objective of defining either a real or a mythical process or event as a political problem worthy of attention. By drawing on the ideology of racism, it was possible during the 1920s in Scotland for certain political forces to define 'race' as a political problem (or, to put it another way, to racialise Scottish domestic politics) in the process of stating what was widely understood as the 'sectarian problem'. Viewed from this perspective, we can now pose the following question: if racism is part of the cultural heritage of Scottish history, why has it not been successfully utilised to racialise Scottish domestic politics since 1945?

Before considering this question, the migration to Scotland from the Indian subcontinent and from Hong Kong and also the arrival of a small number of Vietnamese refugees should be noted. Because of Glasgow's role as a major port, there was a small Asian population in the city prior to the migration of the 1950s.⁽⁹⁵⁾ Indeed, a nineteenth century writer records an Asian presence in several Scottish towns in the late nineteenth century.⁽⁹⁶⁾ There is also literary evidence of Sikh travelling salesmen in

Scotland.⁽⁹⁷⁾ Accordingly, the 1951 Census records a small Asian population in Glasgow. It has been suggested that Asian migrants were employed in transportation, warehousing and restaurants,⁽⁹⁸⁾ and this population served as the base for the migration from the Indian subcontinent to Scotland that began in the late 1950s. The precise role of labour demand in the economy of the West of Scotland in determining this migration is not yet clear. In the case of Dundee, the evidence suggests that the Pakistani population did not arrive until the early 1960s, and had its origin partly in the dispersal through Britain of those migrants who entered just prior to the implementation of racist immigration control in 1962. Many migrants went first to relatives and friends in England, and then sought out work elsewhere in Britain, including Dundee where there was a demand for labour in the jute industry.⁽⁹⁹⁾ There is no evidence relating to the origin of the Asian presence in Edinburgh, although we do know that the Asian population of Scotland is concentrated in these three cities.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ A Scottish Office study calculated that there was a total 'ethnic minority' population in Scotland of 38,000, of which 65% are of Indian or Pakistani origin and 15% of Chinese origin,⁽¹⁰¹⁾ although this estimate has been criticised.⁽¹⁰²⁾

Given this migration and settlement, and given Scottish involvement in Empire and the ideological legacy that we have sketched, our question has a particular significance. In order to answer it, there is good reason to consider a comparison with the racialisation of domestic politics in England in this same period, partly because the issues that predominate in Scottish politics overlap with those in English politics,⁽¹⁰³⁾ and partly because we now have a detailed understanding of the racialisation of politics in England.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Such a comparison suggests that the following three factors explain why Asian migrants have not so far become an object of widespread political agitation in Scotland. First, members of the Conservative Party in Scotland have not initiated a political campaign against the Asian presence similar to that of English members (including Members of Parliament) from the early 1950s. Second, there is the absence of a significant fascist tradition in Scotland and, moreover, when fascist parties based in England have attempted to organise in Scotland since 1945, they have tended to agitate upon the 'Irish question'. In England, fascist parties have systematically articulated a racist message since the attacks on West Indian persons and property in 1958, and they achieved considerable political prominence following the Conservative Government's admission of Ugandan Asian refugees in 1972/73. Third, there is evidence of the Labour Movement playing a more progressive role in Scotland. In England, trade unionists were involved from an early stage in anti-immigration associations, and there is widespread evidence of the trade union movement endorsing the state policy of racist immigration control and

either practising or legitimating discrimination on the factory floor.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ It is not known whether the latter has happened in Scotland, but it is the case that the trade union movement has adopted a more public anti-racist profile, evident in the formation of the Scottish Immigrant Labour Council.

But it is not only that certain political forces have not made the same sort of political intervention in Scotland as they have in England. The economic and political context in which they might operate has also relevant distinctive features. First, the political and ideological reaction to Irish migration led to the formation of institutional and ideological divisions within the working class. Second, insofar as nationalism is a vehicle for the expression of racism, then English nationalism is distinct in important respects from Scottish nationalism.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ There are a complex set of issues here but, despite the danger of oversimplification, we have space to mention one aspect. In both England and Scotland, economic and social decline have dominated political debate in the past two decades, and in Scotland in the 1960s, this became one of the elements upon which political nationalism in Scotland constituted itself as a political force. 'Independence' came to be considered a viable solution to decline, reflecting a history of political and economic dependence since 1707, and giving the political agenda in Scotland a quite distinct character compared with England. There is no similar space for political forces seeking a solution to decline in England, given the facts of English economic and political domination within the framework of the Union. This contrast with Scottish political dynamics is highlighted by the fact that in England it has been right-wing and fascist forces which successfully exploited the question of decline in the 1960s and 1970s by drawing upon racism.

Although these five factors themselves require explanation, they do explain why Scottish domestic politics have not been racialised. But they may also appear to sustain the arguments of the Scottish Office and other institutions of government in Scotland that there is no reason to mount investigations into, provide funding for or establish organisation to deal with 'race relations' in Scotland. Such arguments have a long history in Scotland as the experience of those engaged in anti-racist work testifies.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Such a conclusion would be mistaken because it fails to grasp the significance of our distinction between racism as an active ideological element in Scottish culture and the process of the racialisation of politics. The fact that racism is present in Scottish society carries the implication that there always exists the potential for a process of racialisation to occur (i.e. that it is a necessary but not a sufficient cause), and there is evidence that such a process may now be beginning.

Significantly, the National Socialist Action Party, the National Front and the British National Party have all made an appearance in Scotland in the 1980s (*Dundee Standard*, 18.7.80, July 1983, September 1983). The latter two organisations seem to have had some limited success in organising young men who identify themselves with 'skinhead' youth culture, have sustained an organisational presence for two or three years and have gained a certain amount of media attention (e.g. *Glasgow Herald*, 8.11.84). They have been distributing racist material in areas where Asian people have settled and in schools where there are Asian pupils (e.g. *Dundee Courier & Advertiser*, 29.9.81), and are involved directly and indirectly in the widespread appearance of racist graffiti, especially on Asian-owned shopfronts. There have been other developments which mirror contemporary events in England. The Conservative Party has had to respond to the entry of ex-National Front members into its ranks (*Dundee Courier & Advertiser*, 11.4.84, 13.4.84) and racist attacks on Asian people and their property are a reality (e.g. *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 21.8.84). Racist chanting at footballers of West Indian origin has been reported in the media (*Sunday Mail*, 3.6.84) and people of Asian and African origin are reporting an increase in everyday racist abuse (*Glasgow Herald*, 2.7.84). It may also be significant that these connected, but not yet systematic and sustained, events are occurring in a period when unemployment in Scotland continues to increase and when a radical, nationalist solution to economic and social decline in Scotland no longer gains widespread support. We believe that these events and processes, along with the racism that sustains them, are matters for serious investigation and that the various institutions of the Scottish political system may find it increasingly difficult in the future to sustain the ideology that racism does not exist in Scotland.

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