

# Scottish Gaelic and Social Identity in Contemporary Scotland\*

---

*Emily C. McEwan-Fujita*  
University of Chicago

## INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Gaelic language is an important focus of claims to social identity in contemporary Scotland; however, Gaelic<sup>1</sup> holds a puzzling position as a significant feature of group membership. As even its proponents admit, Gaelic is rapidly approaching obsolescence as a spoken language of daily use in Scotland (e.g., Thomson 1990b). The 1991 census results indicated that approximately 66,000 people in Scotland spoke Gaelic out of a population of just over five million (Comunn na Gàidhlig 1994: 11), and the number of people who speak Gaelic has been declining at least since the late nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> At present, virtually all Gaelic speakers (save a few preschoolers) are bilingual in English, and Gaelic has no official status in Scotland.

But at the same time, significant numbers of Scots, Gaelic speakers or not, consider Gaelic a factor in the construction of social identities. Gaelic serves as a multivalent symbol in the construction and naturalization of multiple 'communities': local communities, the Scottish national community, and the European community.<sup>3</sup>

If we survey differing views about how Gaelic should contribute to the construction of identity, we can reframe a discussion of 'identity' as a discussion about language ideologies. Ideas about how Gaelic should constitute or enhance local, national, or European identity are ideological, in the Marxian sense that they conceal struggles for

---

\* Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Elaine Adkins, Grant Arndt, Marc Blitz, Beth Anne Buggenhagen, Paul Friedrich, Miklós Hadas, Dan Suslak, Elizabeth Vann, Miklós Vörös, and Marko Živković for their helpful comments, criticism, and encouragement. I would also like to thank Chrissie Bannerman, Torcuil Crichton, Jo McDonald, Beathag Morrison, Kevin Donnelly, and A.G. Boyd Robertson for taking the time to provide me with valuable information and insights about Gaelic media and other revitalization activities. Any errors of omission or commission which remain are entirely my own.

- 1 Throughout this article, 'Gaelic' refers only to Scottish Gaelic, not to Irish or Manx Gaelic.
- 2 Census data are by no means an exact measure of the extent of Gaelic ability in Scotland for a number of reasons, however (Johnstone 1994: 36; Macdonald 1987: 297). Moreover, the census itself is an apparatus of the modern state, and as such it cannot be approached uncritically (Anderson 1991: Ch. 10; Hacking 1991).
- 3 This article is a preliminary survey of selected expressions of social identity involving Gaelic. I do not exhaustively catalog all contemporary claims to identity in which Gaelic plays a part, but in reality, gender, occupational, religious, and other identities are completely interwoven with the nominally territorially-based claims to identity that I discuss here.

cultural hegemony, political power, and economic resources (Friedrich 1989). Here I wish to emphasize the multiplicity of claims to identity and discuss the ways in which a complex of identity claims can interact in discourse and other forms of practice "on the ground" (Gal 1992). The case of Gaelic in Scotland demonstrates the multiple roles a minority language may play in the simultaneous federalization and fragmentation of the 'new Europe'. It also provides an example of how people 'imagine' their social and political communities (Anderson 1991) – local, national, and 'supra-national' – through discourse about a minority language (Gal 1993).

#### NATIONALISM, IDENTITY, AND LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

Over the past two centuries, in both social scientific and popular discourse, nationalist ideology has shaped and pervaded the ways in which language is conceived of as indicating and determining social group membership (i.e., social identity). In the course of the nineteenth century, a new connection between language and nation was forged and naturalized (Anderson 1991; Gal 1992: 448), influenced by such eighteenth-century thinkers as Condillac and Herder. This is not to say that there was never a link between language and group membership before nationalism, or that there would always be one after the advent of nationalism. On the contrary, before the era of nationalism, language had been considered a factor in group membership, by, for example, religious communities (Anderson 1991: 12–15); and language is still not considered the marker of every group boundary or identity (Urcioli 1995: 533). But in the late eighteenth century such thinkers as Herder, who viewed language as "the primary social bond" (Smith 1981: 45), first defined language as a determining factor of membership in a national community (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994: 60). In the course of the nineteenth century this nationalist ideology of language spread from Europe to the rest of the world through such means as print capitalism and colonialism (Anderson 1991; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994: 60). Not surprisingly, nationalist ideology still influences contemporary European ideologies of language (Blommaert and Verschueren 1992).

Every conception of links between language and the world is an ideology of language with potential material consequences (Gal 1992: 448). 'Ideologies of language' or 'language ideologies' (I use the two terms interchangeably here) are here relevant for the ways in which people conceptualize the role that a language should play in creating and reproducing a social group.<sup>4</sup> Such conceptions may be explicitly expressed in public discourse about the language or implicitly conveyed through discourse and other forms of practice. They are "ideological in both the 'ideational' and 'pragmatic' senses," as Jane Hill describes another situation: in the ideational sense, there is a "set of propositions" being put forward about the language, and in the pragmatic sense, the people who would benefit from the truth of the propositions "put forward their political interests" in holding these propositions to be true (Hill 1992: 263, citing Friedrich 1989).

In any society a "multiplicity of language ideologies" (Gal 1992: 446–447) exist simultaneously, overlapping and conflicting in individual practice and public discourse. The formation of language ideologies is "a process involving struggle among multiple conceptualizations and demanding the recognition of variation and contestation within a community as well as contradictions within individuals" (Woolard and Schieffelin

4 Other approaches to language ideology have been outlined in a recent review of the literature (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994).

1994: 58). Contemporary Scotland is no exception: Scottish Gaelic enters into claims to social identity in multiple ways, and various people and groups disagree over how Gaelic ought to contribute to identity. In what follows I will examine a number of conflicting ideologies about Gaelic. If we pay attention to the variation, contestation, and contradiction that characterize discourse about the role(s) that Gaelic ought to play in contemporary Scottish society, we can understand the ideological nature of contemporary expressions of identity.

#### GAELIC AS A SYMBOL OF LOCAL IDENTITY

All identities are processes of construction, and "[l]ocal identity is not established from the mere facts of proximity" (Keane 1997: 37). Historical contact between native Gaelic speakers and anglophone monolinguals<sup>5</sup> has provided the material for construction of multiple interpretations of Gaelic as a component of local identity. Such is the variation that local identity "cannot be taken for granted as having a continuous, clearly bounded existence and uniformly experienced tradition" (Nadel-Klein 1991: 501). Nonetheless, one particular way in which Gaelic can be viewed as 'local' has taken precedence in the 'local' as well as the national imagination. I will give a specific ethnographic example of this view and briefly discuss coexisting alternative views of Gaelic as local, emphasizing the class-related aspects of conflicting ideologies of Gaelic as local.

In communities where a majority of residents are Gaelic speakers, many Gaelic speakers have come to believe that Gaelic stands for a local identity by representing and creating cultural and emotional solidarity, but that Gaelic also lacks the prestige and economic power associated with English (see Brown and Gilman 1960, cited in Woolard 1989: 89–95). Many inhabitants of local Gaelic-speaking communities see Gaelic as a component of a marginalized, relatively powerless local identity. This view has been documented by sociolinguists, sociologists, and anthropologists (e.g., Dorian 1981a; Ennew 1980; MacKinnon 1977; Mewett 1982; Prattis 1990), usually in the context of their concern with the 'death' of minority languages and cultures. The idea of Highland communities as marginalized 'local' communities, and the idea of Gaelic as a component of such an identity, have been constituted out of a homogenizing, hegemonizing nationalist ideology and political economy.

Gaelic symbolizes local identity most particularly in communities where the language is still spoken in daily life by a majority of the population. In the case discussed here, 'local identity' means a feeling of attachment to a specific (rural) geographical location as well as to a kinship group residing in that location and "a set of cultural practices that are self-consciously articulated and to some degree separated and directed away from the surrounding social world" (Nadel-Klein 1991: 502). Just as physical proximity in itself does not constitute a local identity, neither does Gaelic usage alone. Many other cultural practices indicate and comprise local identity in Gaelic-speaking communities, including religious and agricultural practices and "distinctive customs of social life" (MacKinnon 1977: 58). Many of the aspects of distinctiveness nonetheless involve the

5 I use the term 'anglophone monolinguals' here in place of the lengthy descriptor "people who are not native speakers of Gaelic, who have not learned Gaelic." 'Anglophone' and 'monolingual,' however, are vastly simplified and ultimately unsatisfactory terms for people who may have spoken English, Scots, any dialectal variants thereof, or any combination of these. The terms also take no account of the fact that the people whom they describe may have used other languages in addition to English and Scots.

use of Gaelic; these include the kinship system, expressed in Gaelic patronymics (Mewett 1982, Ennew 1980); distinctive religious practices, such as the reading of the scriptures and the singing of the psalms in Gaelic; and traditional Gaelic place-names (Jedrej and Nuttall 1996: 121–127), all of which contribute to the construction and consciousness of a local identity.

The awareness of a different surrounding social world as the context of the local community delineates the idea of the local both for 'locals' and non-locals (Nadel-Klein 1991). MacKinnon pointed out that the 'locals' in the Harris community he studied could to some extent simultaneously participate in or move in and out of different levels of identity, local, Highland, and national (MacKinnon 1977: 58). Nonetheless, the culture in which Gaelic use plays a daily part has been encompassed by homogenizing Scottish mainland and British mainstream culture. The process of encompassment has actually created Gaelic culture as 'local', that is, as marginalized: at one time Gaelic was a state language and a medium for both 'high' and 'low' culture (Thomson 1990a), but as the Highlands became assimilated into Scotland and Scotland into the Union, Gaelic became primarily "associated with an unsophisticated, non-learned folk culture" (Watson 1989: 49) in the eyes of most Scots.

Gaelic has come to indicate and constitute a marginalized local identity in the twentieth century primarily as a collection of non-written local dialects in daily use in selected domains.<sup>6</sup> Inhabitants of Gaelic-speaking areas utilize for the most part three main kinds of Gaelic in separate religious, media, and domestic domains, as described by Ennew for the Western Isles: "[t]he formal archaic Gaelic of the Churches has a specific sung form of psalmody. Broadcast Gaelic provides a form of received pronunciation. But there is a wide variety of Gaelic dialects spoken in home and village life in rural areas" (Ennew 1980: 107). A variety of Gaelic akin to 'broadcast Gaelic' is the Gaelic used in the bilingual classrooms, a standardized, written form of Gaelic that Dorian terms "textbook Gaelic" (Dorian 1981a: 90–94). This Gaelic is different from everyday spoken Gaelic used in local communities. Gaelic as a language of local identities is rarely written and is restricted to a number of domains including the church and the home. Gaelic speakers attach affective meaning to the daily use of Gaelic in these domains, but generally as an oral dialect (Ennew 1980: 107).

People conceive of Gaelic as a component of a marginalized local identity differently according to specific histories and geographies.<sup>7</sup> I will discuss one example of local identity in a predominantly Gaelic-speaking community located on the Isle of Lewis, the island with the largest Gaelic-speaking population of the Hebrides (Prattis 1990: 26).

6 Ten major dialectal divisions of Gaelic have been identified within Scotland, but the term 'dialect' is a convenient linguistic fiction, since it is 'bundles' of isoglosses, clusters of common features (themselves statistical abstractions), that have been used to draw dialect boundaries. Variations in Gaelic speech crisscross Scotland in all directions (Gleasure 1994: 93).

7 In her accounts of East Sutherland Gaelic and other Gaelic-speaking areas, Nancy Dorian has highlighted the differences in constructions of language ideologies that arise out of local experiences and understandings of Highland-wide subordination. For example, not all residents of a Gaelic-speaking community will even necessarily see Gaelic as a language of local solidarity. Dorian (1981b: 172–173) provides another example of a local difference of opinion on the role of Gaelic in constituting a community identity in a community where Gaelic is spoken. Dorian's survey of attitudes towards Gaelic in Dervaig on the Isle of Mull found that

English mother-tongue residents continue to regard the village as 'Gaelic' in character even when only slightly better than 50 per cent of the adults are native speakers of Gaelic (and an aging 50 per cent at that) and when virtually none of the young people have any active knowledge of Gaelic. The Gaelic native speakers, faced with precisely the same facts, no longer look on their village as a Gaelic community (Dorian 1981b: 179; see also Dorian 1981a).

Peter Mewett's ethnographic study of a Gaelic-speaking Lewis community was based on fieldwork conducted in 1974–75 in a collection of three *crofting* townships<sup>8</sup> to which he gave the pseudonym Clachan ('village') (Mewett 1982). Mewett demonstrated that his informants inhabiting the Lewis crofting villages had internalized the hegemonic British mainland view of themselves as a peripheral people with a negatively-valued rural way of life. In his study Mewett differentiated between the "mainstream culture" of mainland Britain and the "esoteric culture" of Lewis, a culture "which relates only to the local milieu that shares a specifically local social knowledge" (Mewett 1982: 222). He outlined the mainland-generated hegemonic dichotomy drawn between mainstream and esoteric, in which the urban mainstream was opposed to the rural esoteric culture with the rural pole negatively valued. According to Mewett, the Clachan villagers participated in the mainstream-led negative evaluation of their own culture by accepting the dichotomy and the place assigned to them in it. Lewis natives also demonstrated their acceptance of this viewpoint in their continued out-migration in large numbers. The out-migration in turn helped to maintain their negative evaluation of Lewis, because Lewis natives continued to feel that they had to leave the island in order to succeed in life (Mewett 1982: 224).

The phenomenon of out-migration demonstrates that the dichotomies of power/solidarity, center/periphery, and national/local have dictated the position of Gaelic relative to English not only in the social realm but also in the political economy of Gaelic-based local identity. The idea of 'the local' in modern Britain, as elsewhere, is at least in part "a *product* of modern political economy" (Nadel-Klein 1991: 501, emphasis in original).

Localism has... become a virtual synonym for 'marginality'. I argue that historically, the global division of labor has alternately produced and then marginalized localism as an integral part of the development process and the cultural construction of class (Nadel-Klein 1991: 501–502).

The modern ideological and political economic circumstances of the creation of the idea of the local have also affected Gaelic-speaking areas:

Even the ideas of 'community' and 'locals' seem to be identities invoked by recent ideologies and contingencies (it is notable that there are no regularly-used Gaelic terms for these categories); and these are identities which social anthropology has played a part in formulating (Macdonald 1987: 348).

These "recent ideologies and contingencies" are the ideology of nationalism and its political economic contingencies of homogenization and peripheralization.

The negative view of island life for Clachanites extended to views of Gaelic, since Gaelic was a prominent component of the "esoteric" local identity of Clachan. Mewett's Lewis informants associated Gaelic solely with insular, private island life, while they associated English with the mainland hegemony, public life, and economic success:

The situations in which [Gaelic is still spoken in Clachan]... are those which relate wholly to the affairs of the home and of the village. Gaelic, therefore, has become an esoteric language in specifically 'local' matters and irrelevant to the relations Clachan people have with the outside world. This fact reinforces their self-view that Gaelic is associated with

8 Crofting is "[t]he system of small-unit 'family farming' long characteristic of the north-west Highlands and the Hebrides. A croft was not a house but a piece of land (usually small), the tenant (crofter) paying rent to the landowner and sharing grazings in common with other crofters in a 'crofting township'" (Murchison 1994: 49, citing Carmichael 1884).

inferior economic and social standing in the wider society: a view supported by the values promoted by mainstream culture (Mewett 1982: 227).

As Mewett's account demonstrates, this local view is created in the context of Clachan residents' daily engagement with mainstream (i.e., national) ideas about Gaelic and its speakers. Mainstream ideas about Gaelic are conveyed not only through the national media, but also in Gaelic speakers' daily encounters with English monolinguals, including representatives of the state.

Gaelic is now restricted to domestic and village situations. When crofters enter the world of officialdom they use, and expect to use, English. An officer of the Department of Agriculture used Gaelic in some official dealings with a crofter in Clachan. The crofter subsequently said that he thought this improper and that it had made him feel uncomfortable. By using Gaelic the official had implied that the crofter was a rustic, unversed and incompetent in the ways of the English-speaking wider society (Mewett 1982: 227).

Gaelic speakers form their awareness of the distinctiveness of Gaelic and related cultural practices out of their encounters with anglophone monolinguals (see note 5) in a number of arenas, including encounters with representatives of the state, with the media, and with settlers in the Gaelic-speaking communities (Dorian 1981b; Jedrej and Nuttall 1996). These encounters, mediated through English, instantiate anglophone economic dominance, state power, and cultural hegemony. Gaelic use is thus made to stand for local identity in ways that express a local awareness of the differential status of Gaelic and English in the context of the Scottish nation and British state.

To imbue Gaelic with significance as a marker of local and domestic solidarity has also meant to accept the hegemonic placement of Gaelic into a dichotomous symbolic relationship with English in a local context. In this dichotomy, Gaelic holds positive value as the language of local 'solidarity', but since the island way of life with which it is associated in Clachan is negatively valued in hegemonic discourse, the acceptance of Gaelic as a purely island (i.e., local) language also carries a negative self-evaluation when the language is used. English, on the other hand, is the language of the state government, of education, of business; in short, the language of economic and state power (Brown and Gilman 1960, cited in Woolard 1989: 89-95).

Some Clachan parents expressed this negative evaluation of Gaelic in their refusal to teach Gaelic to their children. In Clachan, parents often took the "deliberate policy" of not teaching their children Gaelic (Mewett 1982: 226). Village children in Clachan increasingly used English rather than Gaelic in the playground as well as in the classroom, where English was the language of instruction. Some parents also hindered or prevented the implementation of new policies promoting Gaelic in primary education. One particular idea implemented by a local schoolmaster for teaching Gaelic "was not very popular, and one parent even rebuked the teacher" (Mewett 1982: 227). Mewett briefly observed the class-based aspects of the clash in opinion over Gaelic education.

Mewett interpreted the clash of ideas about Gaelic in Clachan in terms of occupationally-defined social class:

Perhaps this merely underlines the point that the present Gaelic 'revival' is mainly a phenomenon of middle-class and professional people. Others, including the working-class crofter, see Gaelic as a stigma that should not be passed on to future generations (Mewett 1982: 227).

Mewett pointed out here that social class was a factor in the conflicting approaches to Gaelic. He saw crofters in Clachan and elsewhere (whom he categorized as "working class") as pitted against "middle-class and professional people" resident on the island.

The latter obviously held the power to implement changes in the local educational system, even though they were probably in a demographic minority in Clachan according to MacKinnon's analysis of 1981 census figures (MacKinnon 1996: 245). Nonetheless, some villagers resisted the implementation of bilingual education, asserting their own view of Gaelic's role in constructing local identity.

Such conflicts arise in part out of the Gaelic-speaking population's heterogeneity. This heterogeneous population's geographical and economic contours reveal that there is a disjuncture between public perceptions of the 'Gaelic community' and the socioeconomic situation obtaining in contemporary Scotland. Gaelic speakers living in predominantly Gaelic-speaking communities in the Highlands have long been regarded as defining a local Gaelic identity, but the number of Gaelic speakers living in such communities has been declining for at least the past century as measured by the census. Census figures indicate that as of 1981, only slightly more than one-third of Gaelic speakers still lived in areas with concentrations of at least 50 percent Gaelic-speaking inhabitants. In the future, even more Gaelic speakers are expected to be found residing outside predominantly Gaelic-speaking areas (Johnstone 1994: 40; MacKinnon 1993: 494).<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, it is these Gaelic speakers who have emerged over the course of the past century as influential in the revitalization of the Gaelic language, as will be discussed in the following section.

#### GAELIC AS A SYMBOL OF SCOTTISH NATIONAL IDENTITY

Since the Romantic era Gaelic has held a contradictory position in contemporary Scotland "as both spiritual substance of the nation and struggling minority language" (Chapman 1978: 13). The contradictory elements are two sides of the same coin; the position of Gaelic as a signifier of national identity and the precarious state of its speech communities both stem from the unequal power relationship between inhabitants of the Highlands and the Lowlands created within a Scottish national framework. Gaelic has not always been considered a symbol of the Scottish nation; from the middle ages to the Romantic era Lowland governors and "improvers" considered it antithetical to Scottish political and cultural unity (Durkacz 1983; Withers 1984). It is only since the late eighteenth century, with the dismantling and disintegration of Gaelic hegemony and the ascendancy of English in Scotland, that Gaelic has come to be seen as a national symbol.

Gaelic is by no means guaranteed to become a universally-accepted component of Scottish national identity. Although sentiment toward Gaelic in Scotland can range on a continuum from passionately supportive to hostile (Thomson 1994: 91), the climate is generally indifferent (MacKinnon 1981: 51). Many believe that if they wish to ensure the continued existence of Gaelic, they must convince Scots that Gaelic is a national language (e.g., MacKinnon 1974: 117). Language revitalization is therefore built into the Gaelic nationalist project. A number of features characterize the nationalist project of Gaelic revitalization. First, in order to revitalize Gaelic and reach the largest possible

<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, in Scotland Gaelic is still symbolically identified with the Highlands and Islands region of Scotland. The Highlands were already considered a separate region of Scotland, with the Gaelic language as a unique feature of that region, by the fourteenth century AD (Withers 1984: 22). Although 'regional identity' could have constituted another category of identity for analysis here, Gaelic's position as a multivalent symbol of Highland regional identity is integral to its position in social identity at each of the other levels discussed here.

number of people, Gaelic has been inserted into the framework of a national history, a history whose ultimate purpose is to create a charter and coherent narrative framework for a national identity. Second, Gaelic has remained a de-politicized 'cultural' symbol, which allows for broader (but generally weak and ineffective) support of the language by Scots in general. Third, the language has been objectified and standardized (in the manner of all national languages) in order to appeal to the people who will supposedly 'save' it from extinction. These are features of the ideological project of promoting Gaelic as national, and as such they are goals in an attempt to convince people in Scotland of the importance of Gaelic..

In order to justify and promote its position as a national symbol of Scotland, proponents of Gaelic have to establish its place in a Scottish national history. What place, if any, Gaelic should have in Scottish history has been a matter for contention and disagreement, however, and Macdonald observed as recently as 1987 that "[o]n the whole ... the idea that Gaelic was part of Scotland's heritage does not seem to have been widely received, and has had its only recognition within the academic realm" (Macdonald 1987: 295). The extent of Gaelic's historical presence in Scotland has often been denied or obscured in national histories (Thomson 1994: 89), and only relatively recently have historians elaborated the historical trajectory of Gaelic in Scotland. Professional historians tend to emphasize that although the population of most of the area now known as Scotland was Gaelic-speaking "at one time or another" (Thomson 1994: 89), there was no single point in time when the whole of the area was entirely Gaelic-speaking (Nicolaisen 1994: 233; Thomson 1994: 89). Historians testify instead to the linguistic plurality and complexity of the geographical area now known as Scotland, defying an easy formulation of Gaelic as the "national language" (e.g., Durkacz 1983, Withers 1984).

But national histories are "retrospective mythologies" undergoing constant revision (Hobsbawm 1992: 3), and the making of history is not reserved for professional historians. The relatively recent addition of Gaelic to popular Scottish history supports a more 'pro-Celtic' (as opposed to 'pro-Anglo') view of Scotland's national history, and this pro-Celtic view of Scottish history has been popularized since the 1960s and 1970s (Macdonald 1987: 295, but see also Campbell 1950). Up to the present, with increasing ubiquity, proponents of Gaelic have promoted the national dimension of the language (Macdonald 1997: 56). With the foregrounding of Gaelic, popular Scottish national history has been once again simplified and distorted (Smout 1994: 108), this time in the construction of Gaelic as a symbol of national identity. In popular nationally-oriented accounts of the history of Gaelic, the early spread of Gaelic through Scotland by conquest and colonialism (Thomson 1994: 89) is downplayed; instead, the eleventh century AD, when "Gaelic ... came to be the language of social dominance throughout Northern Britain" (MacKinnon 1991: 22), becomes a historical high point (e.g., MacKinnon 1974). Scottish nationalist versions of history more generally tend to downplay the principal role that Scots themselves (both Lowlanders and Highlanders) played in the demise of the Scottish state and the decline of Gaelic; instead both processes are linked together and attributed to active English oppression and suppression of Gaelic. This convenient popular fiction "gives to the high esteem in which Gaelic is now held a place in a newly coherent and continuous Scottish history, uninterrupted and untroubled except by outside influence" (Chapman 1978: 12-13).

Language revitalization and nationalism have always been closely intertwined, for if a language essentially symbolizes the nation in nationalist ideology, the death of the language would mean the symbolic death of the nation. But the nationalist sentiment linked with Gaelic is not a 'political' nationalism but a 'cultural' nationalism, which can

help Gaelic appeal to as large an audience as possible in order to 'save' it. Gaelic in Scotland is not as politicized as other European minority languages (Macdonald 1997: 60). Gaelic has no party political label or profile (Torcuil Crichton, personal communication); in the late twentieth century Gaelic has not been closely associated with the Scottish Nationalist Party or any other political party in Scotland in terms of policies or party membership (Kellas 1994: 238-239; MacKinnon 1994: 115).<sup>10</sup> Because Gaelic has never been successfully or continuously linked to party politics, it has the potential to hold much wider appeal and to serve as an ideal mobilizer of general national sentiment (e.g., Hobsbawm 1994: 176-177).

Since the late-eighteenth-century publication of *Ossian*, Gaelic has indeed been associated for the most part with a 'cultural' rather than a 'political' nationalism (Macdonald 1997: 53; Tom Nairn [1995] quoted in Cohen 1996: 104). Although a specifically Scottish 'cultural' nationalism was already in place by the nineteenth century, a Scottish 'political' nationalist movement with national independence as its goal was relatively late in developing (Nairn 1977). Moreover, the Scottish nationalist movement of the 1970s concerned itself with 'political interests', but never co-opted Gaelic as one of these. One analyst, originally writing in 1981, stated that "Scottish nationalism is based on political and economic demands rather than on cultural or linguistic ones" (Kellas 1994: 239). Thus the potential effectiveness of Gaelic as a popular national symbol (as well as the greater public's indifference toward it as a national issue) continues to be based on its predication as a cultural issue rather than a political one, and therefore on the very assumption of political economic and cultural-linguistic realms as separate and mutually exclusive.<sup>11</sup>

Proponents of language revitalization expect Gaelic to play a particular role in the creation and maintenance of a Scottish national identity, and their expectations dictate how they conceptualize, shape, and utilize Gaelic. Those who consider Gaelic a significant feature of a Scottish national identity usually objectify Gaelic and construe its role in communication and social cohesion not as referential but only as emblematic. In other words, the concept of Gaelic, rather than daily use of the language, is what some nationalist proponents of Gaelic believe is necessary for the maintenance of Scotland's uniqueness: "I believe Gaelic - as an *idea* - has a central, not a peripheral role to play in the process [of endowing Scottish history with coherence]" (Moffat 1995: 16, emphasis in original).

Learners of Gaelic constitute one set of people for whom Gaelic is often an aspect of professed national identity. As a result of some learners' expectations that Gaelic will play a primarily emblematic role in Scottish national identity (among other important factors), fluent speaking ability is desirable but ultimately optional (and rarely achieved) for learners. In fact, people see widely varying levels of ability and commitment to Gaelic as necessary in order to symbolize their national identity. The levels may range from positive expressions (in English) of support for the language (MacKinnon 1981: 54); to the knowledge of a few phrases (Moffat 1995: 23); to undertaking the study of

10 In 1933 'Gaelic militants' were expelled from the National Party, together with other romantics who opposed the party's new policy advocating Home Rule for Scotland within the British Commonwealth (Hanham 1969: 159-160).

11 As some theorists pointed out before the 1997 referendum for Scottish devolution passed, in the 1990s Scottish nationalism itself seemed to be becoming less 'political' and more 'cultural' (Cohen 1996: 102; Paterson 1996: 116). Unfortunately the implications of this for Scotland as a whole and Gaelic speakers in particular cannot be discussed here.

the language in good faith (politician Billy Wolfe, then-chairman of the Scottish Nationalist Party, stated in 1973: "...I want to learn Gaelic. I see that as a symbolic assertion of my being Scottish" (Wolfe 1973: 161); to achieving fluency.

The people who promote Gaelic in a national dimension most visibly at present are a relatively homogeneous group of native speakers who may be termed 'intellectual elites'. Several generations of poet-scholars fit into this category, but television production professionals are currently among the most prominent members. Cormack notes the "compactness of the Gaelic intellectual community," a homogeneity and "closeness" that "has led to accusations that there is a 'Gaelic mafia' operating to the exclusion of outsiders" (Cormack 1994: 116), even though these educated professionals are not formally organized.

Many of the Gaels involved in television share the same educational background – school education at the Nicolson Institute in Stornoway, Portree High School or Oban High School, and university education at Glasgow, Edinburgh, or Aberdeen Universities. ... In fact, [the closeness] ... is the inevitable result of the networking which takes place within any special-interest group, but which in this case is perceived as being more impenetrable to outsiders because the group is defined by language ability and by attitude to that language (Cormack 1994: 116–117).

Such professionals, although they are not the only people promoting Gaelic as national, have been responsible for the explicitly national focus on Gaelic promotion in new Gaelic television programming of the past four years (Cormack 1994: 119).

Owing to government support, television programming is one of the major areas of contemporary Gaelic revitalization activities. The Broadcasting Act 1990 set up a Gaelic Television Fund, administered by the new Gaelic Television Committee (CTG). From January 1993 onward the CTG started to receive approximately £9.5 million annually to distribute for the production of Gaelic television programs. This funding has led to a great increase in the number and quality of Gaelic programs produced and broadcast in Scotland. Much of the programming, produced by members of the 'Gaelic elite' just described, has had a specific agenda:

[The new Gaelic television programmes] represent the attempt by a relatively small and cohesive group of Gaelic language activists to do two things: to alter the Gaelic community's self-perception, and to alter the broader Scottish public's view of Gaelic. To put it another way, they are attempting to reconstruct the collective identity of the Gaelic community and, at the same time, alter the position of the language within popular definitions of Scottish identity (Cormack 1994: 129).

The director of the CTG himself acknowledged this "attempt to make Gaelic central to Scottish identity" (Cormack 1994: 119). But the attempt has not been well received in all quarters. The Scottish tabloid press (associated with the working class) displayed negative reactions to much of the new Gaelic programming. Cormack advised reading these reactions "as a refusal to accept this broader redefinition of Scottish identity, rather than any kind of reasoned reaction to the programmes themselves" (Cormack 1994: 129). This refusal to accept the elite construction of Gaelic as specifically Scottish demonstrates another possible class-based disjuncture in views of the role of Gaelic in social identity, similar to the disjuncture postulated by Mewett in Clachan (Mewett 1982).

Contemporary Gaelic television programming illustrates the ways in which cultural elites can imagine the national community through Gaelic and disseminate their ideas to a national audience. It also illustrates the class dimensions of ideological conflicts over the issue of Gaelic as a component of national identity. Another example of conflict

over how Gaelic television should create and reinforce a Scottish national identity involves Alistair Moffat, Chief Executive of Scottish Television Enterprises, the network production subsidiary of Scottish Television (one of the three major Scottish broadcasting companies in Scotland). Moffat is not a native speaker of Gaelic, but his enthusiasm for Gaelic led him to study it and to promote it as a significant feature of Scottish national identity in Scottish Television's broadcasting output. Moffat worked discursively in a manner typical of nationalist promoters of Gaelic to link language and nation through an affective appeal to personal subjectivity. He placed Gaelic into a Scottish historical context as a cultural symbol; he outlined an appeal to revive Gaelic through television programming; and he objectified the language and promoted not its referential aspects but its emblematic capacity to stand for Scottish identity.

In 1995, Moffat was invited to give a lecture on the future development of Gaelic television at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (the Gaelic college founded in the mid-1970s on the Isle of Skye) (Moffat 1995).<sup>12</sup> In his lecture, titled "Dreams and Deconstructions," Moffat spoke about the need for a unified focus in Gaelic television planning and production and outlined his "language rescue plan" to be implemented through marketing and Gaelic television programming. His goals, approaches, and methods clearly establish that he is a proponent of Gaelic as a cornerstone of national identity.

Moffat stated that Gaelic could provide a greater historical coherence for Scottish national identity:

... [B]efore I... [offer a strategy for Gaelic revival]... I want to assess the state of Gaelic – not as a statistician, because I'm not one. But as a Scot interested in the identity of his country, anxious that possibly two or three years away from the first parliament in Edinburgh for three hundred years, we don't have a coherent, serial identity as a nation. Our sense of ourselves should move forward in a line. Instead it lies about us as the pieces of an unmade jigsaw. Gaelic is an important piece [of the puzzle]. It's important because Scotland is a visiparous, bad tempered little country sorely in need of all of its own history. We need it as a bonding agent and a glass through which we can see a shared past, 2,000 years of shared experience in one place, and a glass through which we can refract our common future (Moffat 1995: 19).

In his affective appeal for "a deeper, more widespread feeling of national unity," Moffat invoked the "coextensive history" of Gaelic in Scotland that, in an ideal case of linguistic nationalism, "the language then expresses, transmits, and symbolizes" (Smith 1981: 44). Moffat reminded his audience that Gaelic was spoken all over medieval Scotland by monarchs and numerous other historical personages, and that Gaelic had played an illustrious role in battles and other historical events ("How many Gaels know that the war-cry of the medieval Scottish host was Albannaich?") (Moffat 1995: 22–24).

In his speech Moffat acknowledged that the face Scotland presents to the outside world is a Highland face: "Gaels were frisked for all the portable bits of Highland culture, and it was promptly hi-jacked by the rest of us – whisky, tartan, music and much else." He felt that what was still lacking was the co-optation of the Highland language, Gaelic: "At posh do's most Scots look like Gaels, the problem is to persuade them to sound like Gaels" (Moffat 1995: 21). To persuade Scots to sound like Gaels would be to ideologically naturalize Gaelic as a national language, and Moffat's plan was directed toward this end. The link that Moffat drew between Gaelic and 'poshness' (i.e., the

12 For at least the past six years Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has sponsored an annual lecture on Gaelic language-related issues by a distinguished speaker. The 1997 speaker was Mary Robinson, former president of the Republic of Ireland.

essence of high social class and 'high culture') indicates the class-based aspects of his project, and, more generally, of the relationship between Gaelic and the nation posited in nationalist ideologies of language.

The political economic aspect of the relationship was further elaborated in Moffat's comments about the real, imagined, and desired relationships between social class and speaking Gaelic. First, he pointed out that those Scots who are most likely to learn Gaelic are the urban educated middle-class inhabitants of the mainland of Scotland:

...if the service [of the Gaelic Television Committee] is to be part of a *language rescue plan*, then that means programmes to stimulate learners and re-learners. That in turn means catching the interest of these people. Most potential learners live in cities, are likely to be in upper income groups and have had some form of higher education and probably own their own house. Now if these were a stated target group, then producers will [*sic*] target their programme *development* at that group. They will probably prefer, for example, documentaries to game shows, drama to variety or music programmes and so on (Moffat 1995: 19, original emphasis).

Moffat's observation about the socioeconomic standing of potential Gaelic learners corroborates with that of Mewett described previously. Moffat accepted the stratification of culture into 'high' and 'low', assuming that middle-class learners would want shows like documentaries and dramas. Moffat implicitly contrasted these preferences to the game shows and variety and music shows that he probably viewed as working-class preferences (and that he probably associated with the rural native Gaelic-speaking "working-class crofters" described by Mewett [cf. Mewett 1982: 227]).

Moffat's plan for Gaelic revitalization was apparently not informed by an awareness of either rural- or urban-dwelling native speakers' sentiments about Gaelic, as he himself unknowingly indicated. He complained about a fluent native-speaker 'snobbery' that existed "[f]or entirely understandable historical reasons to do with cultural confidence" (Moffat 1995: 20). With that one phrase Moffat dismissed the effects of years of extirpation of Gaelic and cultural and economic subjugation of its speakers throughout Scotland. It did not occur to him that the snobbery he read into their behavior could also be read as defensiveness. In Moffat's opinion, in order for revitalization to succeed, Gaelic native speakers needed to "stop being so proprietorial about Gaelic, and the rest of Scotland needs to be persuaded that Gaelic is for all Scots" (Moffat 1995: 21). In this statement Moffat was expressing distaste for the 'Gaelic mafia' mentioned previously, whom he saw as exclusively controlling the output of Gaelic television.

Moffat wanted to bring the predominantly middle-class learners of Gaelic into the space already principally occupied by a native Gaelic-speaking elite, where they would become the overwhelming majority. In his plan, the majority would soon co-opt for the Scottish nation the cultural consumption practices of the native Gaelic-speaking minority, and then the cultural production practices as well (as Moffat noted, this had already been done with many other aspects of Highland folk culture). At least some Gaelic professionals understood the threat to their position as cultural elites inherent in Moffat's approach, even if he himself did not, for Moffat complained in his speech about the vituperative criticism to which he had been subjected in the Gaelic press (including having his "presence...likened to the stench of urine") (Moffat 1995: 20).

Moffat proposed to transform Gaelic speakers into an overwhelmingly homogenized middle class (or rather, transform a homogenized Scottish middle class into the majority of Gaelic speakers). He would achieve the transformation in part by discursively blurring the line between native speakers and learners, removing the boundary of fluency that seemed to exclude most learners. "The first aim of any language rescue

plan and what should be a central element of the CTG's [Gaelic Television Committee's] policy is the creation of a substantial group of Gaelic learners. But let's do it formally and declare that every Scot who can say '*slàinte mhath*'<sup>13</sup> is a Gaelic learner" (Moffat 1995: 22–23):

Gaelic in 2000 shouldn't bother with the wearisome lexical precision of a so-called fluent Gaelic speaker. Anyone who signs up in any way for a language learning course should be defined into that group, not out of it or on the periphery. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig should develop this group as a database and find the money to mailshot them monthly, to involve, to bind them in (Moffat 1995: 23).

The group of learners would be created by discursive manipulation of the definition of a speaker. Census statistics, a purportedly objective measurement of the strength of Gaelic in Scotland (see note 2), would then indicate increased numbers of Gaelic speakers:

...I believe that we should declare every Scot (including the so-called native speakers) a Gaelic learner and aim to create 100,000 speakers of the language by 2000 AD (Moffat 1995: 24).

In Moffat's plan, the economic power and cultural hegemony of the middle classes would carry the movement after native speakers were stripped of their special status. More and more people would feel compelled to join the statistical bandwagon of purported learners, and to collectively imagine into existence a nationwide community of Gaelic speakers. Thus the ideological basis for the Gaelic-speaking Scottish nation would be disseminated 'top-down' in true nationalist fashion.<sup>14</sup>

Moffat's own social position in Scotland supports the observation that elites are the most enthusiastic proponents of ethnic revivals (Smith 1981). Moffat, as well as being a self-proclaimed 'patriotic Scotsman', is member of a cultural and socioeconomic elite – he is a television executive and author of several books who has had the advantage of higher education and is himself in an 'upper income group'. He grew up in the English- and Scots-speaking Borders Region, probably without the particular economic and educational barriers to success faced by many native Gaelic-speaking inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands (Gillies 1995).

Moffat's views are of course individual, and even among individuals who promote Gaelic as the essence of 'Scottishness', the level of commitment, availability of resources, and social, political and economic power vary widely. But Moffat's position in Scottish public life ensured that his views would reach a wider audience in Scotland. As a television executive, at the time of the lecture Moffat wielded considerable influence over the direction that Gaelic television programming would take in Scotland. As a minor example, he proudly claimed responsibility for the 'our' in the title of the popular Gaelic lesson show *Speaking Our Language* (Moffat 1995: 18). After the delivery of Moffat's speech, the publication of the text of the speech in a booklet with a full-color cover was subsidized in part by Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic college that sponsored the lecture (Moffat 1995). Invitations and hospitality for the lecture itself were sponsored by both Lochaber Limited and Skye and Lochalsh Enterprise Limited (two of the local enterprise companies, or LECs, responsible for economic development

13 Literally 'good health,' a popular toast.

14 For another example of how the boundaries of minority language speaker categories have been discursively manipulated in order to strengthen the position of a minority language within a society, see Jacqueline Urla, "Cultural Politics in an Age of Statistics" (Urla 1993) on the case of Basque.

of their respective areas of Scotland) (Moffat 1995). These LECs in turn received funding from the Scottish Office. Thus individuals in positions of power like Moffat, and holding similar nationalist ideologies of language, can significantly deploy national resources to shape the symbolic role, if any, that Gaelic will play in the construction and maintenance of a national community.

## GAELIC AS A SYMBOL OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY

Gaelic remains a significant feature of local and national identities in Scotland, but in recent years, Gaelic has begun to gain a new social significance for some Scots as a symbol of a pan-European identity. The EU has continuously attempted to promote the idea of a common European culture and heritage in order to facilitate economic union (Shore and Black 1992). The EU has also promoted European minority languages as sources of diversity and strength in Europe. Contemporary popular discourse about Gaelic in Scotland is now beginning to echo EU rhetoric about pan-European culture and European minority languages.

In order to achieve the fullest possible integration of Europe, as is the explicitly stated goal of the European Union, European Community officials realized that the EC would have to promote not only economic integration but also cultural integration. The European Community had therefore taken action "in order to promote a sense of belonging and develop feelings of 'Europeanness' among the citizens of the various EC Member States" (Shore and Black 1992: 10). Over the past decade the European Commission implemented a great variety of projects to achieve its goal of integration:

... the Commission has set up various committees to explore ways of "making Europeans more aware of their common cultural heritage" and developing the "European identity" – phrases that recur throughout official reports and documents (Shore and Black 1992: 11).

After Maastricht the European Union has continued to take an explicitly cultural approach to community building. The Title IX in the 1993 Treaty of European Union reiterates that the EU "should bring 'common cultural heritage to the fore'" and promote the exchange of cultural and historical knowledge and the "conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance" among Member States.

Postdating and supplementing the EU cultural policy are the EU's resolutions on minority languages and cultures, one of which was passed in 1987 by the European Parliament.<sup>15</sup> As a result of these resolutions a budget has been made available for "action to promote and safeguard regional or minority languages and cultures" through education, standardization, research and other projects (the 1997 budget was 3,741,000 ECU).<sup>16</sup> Actions taken include the establishment of the Mercator Project, set up in 1987 by the European Commission with centers in Friesland, Catalonia, and Wales for the study of minority language education, law and linguistic legislation, and media, respectively.<sup>17</sup> Through this and other projects the minority languages spoken on the European continent are made to represent Europe's "cultural diversity," and investment in the projects is justified by rhetoric about such diversity as a valuable resource for

15 Cited from the Mercator website, found at <http://www.troc.es/mercator/index.htm> [sic]

16 Quoted from a page of the 'Europa' website found at <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/mercator/comact.html>

17 Cited from the Mercator website, found at <http://www.troc.es/mercator/index.htm> [sic]

"economic deployment" and "a cornerstone of innovative development."<sup>18</sup>

European Union discourse portraying Gaelic as symbolic of a pan-European identity is now being disseminated in Scotland. EU discourse includes Scottish Gaelic as one of the more than fifty regional or minority languages spoken by almost forty million citizens of the EU.<sup>19</sup> EU pan-European and minority language discourse uses specific strategies to portray Gaelic in this way. It fashions Gaelic as a sign of Europeanness by declaring its speakers to be members of a pan-European culture. In this recontextualization, Gaelic speakers can remove Gaelic from a dichotomous relationship with English, and instead place Gaelic in a multilingual context. Both strategies remove Gaelic from an unequal dichotomous relationship with English, and instead place Gaelic in an equivalent relationship with "other European languages" in a multilingual context (Comunn na Gàidhlig 1997: 23).

Precisely who would experience a pan-European identity with Gaelic as its cornerstone, however? In 1992 Shore and Black concluded that most "average citizens" of Europe do not view Europe as a cultural entity, but that it is quite possible that this view of Europe may "become more effective in the future or among younger generations." They noted that the bureaucratic culture of EU bureaucrats in Brussels, that is, "European elites," could serve as a catalyst for a top-down or outward diffusion of "a new type of pan-European identity and consciousness" or that it could "remain the culture of an isolated, international bureaucratic elite" (Shore and Black 1992: 11). As the following examples demonstrate, an educated and relatively influential Gaelic 'cultural elite' composed of media and communications professionals and employees of government-sponsored Gaelic revitalization organizations has already started to disseminate the idea of Gaelic as an element of a 'pan-European identity' to other Scots through the media.

A Gaelic pop song illustrates one way in which EU discourse about conceptions of European community is shaping popular discourse about Gaelic as a symbol of Europe. It also shows clearly how such discourse reaches the popular level. A band called Runrig, perhaps the most popular of the very few Gaelic pop groups in Scotland, has played a part in the contemporary revitalization and popularization of Gaelic in Scotland since the early 1980s (Johnstone 1994: 34). Their 1993 album *Amazing Things* featured a song called "*Sràidean na Roinn Eòrpa (Streets of Europe)*," which presents appeals to a common European culture by placing the singer and his language on the European continent. The voice is that of a Gael turning away from the United Kingdom to a physical and spiritual existence in Europe on his own cultural and political terms: "I have put London behind me/The summer is on my face/And I am on the big streets of Europe/With my love, my flag/My sun, and my new moon" (Macdonald and Macdonald 1993).<sup>20</sup> On his travels through Europe the singer reflects on the legacy of his father who fought on the continent in World War II, and he meets a young German girl struggling to deal with the 'burden of history' she feels from Germany's role in the war. He parts ways with the girl affected by their mutual exchange: "I left her with a small part of my country/She left me with the fellowship of a new age." The singer expresses

18 According to a page on the European Union website describing the 'Euromosaic' report on European policy for minority languages and cultures, found at <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/mercator/eurom.html>

19 Found at <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/langmin/joen.html>

20 English translations by the authors, included in the liner notes of the album (Macdonald and Macdonald 1993).

pride in his language and the hope that it will flourish together with the other minority languages of Europe:

The flags are swimming  
In a sea of colour  
My language melodious in the ear of Europe  
The streets are alive with conversation and purpose  
Possibilities for a new Babel

The singer expresses the feeling that as a Gaelic speaker he can be proud in the knowledge that his language will be counted among the other languages of Europe. In so doing he leaves behind the putative negative/positive Gaelic-English dichotomy with its forced 'choice' located in the significance of Gaelic as a sign of local identity. He also bypasses proclamations of essential 'Scottishness' for "the fellowship of a new age" and the mixed blessings and opportunities in a "new Babel" of European competition and cooperation.<sup>21</sup>

Another example demonstrates how the identification of Gaelic with a pan-European cultural identity can be disseminated from official EU discourse to popular discourse through the influence of cultural elites and the state. Following the government grant of \$9 million annually for Gaelic television programming mentioned previously, BBC Scotland started to produce the television series *Eòrpa* ('Europe'), which first aired in 1993 (Macaulay et al. 1994: 27). The program works to establish Gaelic as a legitimate European language through the strategy of recontextualization, linking Gaelic to the program's European subject matter and professional presentation style. *Eòrpa*, the first and only specifically Scottish European affairs television series (Torcuil Crichton, personal communication), is a weekly thirty-minute European news program conducted in the medium of Gaelic (with English subtitles available). The program creates an image of the Gaelic language as a suitable language for the professional presentation and discussion of European affairs, in effect creating a new domain for the language within Gaelic broadcasting. The program portrays Gaelic and Gaelic-speaking presenters in a professional and international context (Torcuil Crichton, personal communication). Such recontextualization counters the long-held images of Gaelic speakers as rural or backward and of Gaelic as a language conveying "crudity, backwardness, and a bumpkin simplicity" (Dorian 1981a: 62). The program's presenters report from various locations across Europe and on a professional studio set, consolidating their image as modern and cosmopolitan 'citizens of Europe'. The program also recontextualizes Gaelic through its presentation strategies and choice of subject matter:

On several occasions *Eòrpa* has mounted multi-lingual television debates on issues as complex as the European Monetary Union and differing patterns of land ownership in Europe. In these debates (thanks to simultaneous translation facilities) exchanges have taken place in Gaelic, French, Irish, Spanish, Dutch and English. In that sense the programme has internationalised the language (Torcuil Crichton, personal communication).

Strategies of recontextualizing Gaelic as professional and as equivalent to European languages therefore work to make Gaelic represent a new pan-European community identity.

The tendency to make Gaelic stand for and constitute 'Europeanness' is also found in

21 The image of the Tower of Babel also features prominently at the top of a page on "Regional or minority languages of Europe" on the European Union website "Europa." The image forms a point of intersection between the EU's and Runrig's visions of Gaelic in the 'New Europe'. (The page is found at <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/mercator/regmin.html>).

discourse about Gaelic produced by Gaelic revitalization organizations. For example, a tourist brochure produced by Comunn na Gàidhlig (the government-sponsored organization responsible since 1984 for the development of Gaelic in Scotland) uses EU-influenced strategies of appeals to a common culture and recontextualization to create links between Gaelic and Europe. *Fàilte 97: Welcome to Scotland's Gaelic Renaissance* is a well-designed, lavishly illustrated thirty-two page color brochure first published in 1996.<sup>22</sup> The project that the brochure represents "has been partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund under the Highlands and Islands Objective 1 Partnership Programme" (Comunn na Gàidhlig 1997: 32), which makes the Highlands Region a top priority for EU economic development funding. Projects like this European-funded brochure promote the idea of Europe as a common cultural area and Gaelic as an element of that culture accessible to all Europeans, but the project simultaneously seems to strengthen a view of Gaelic as constitutive of ethno-national identity as well as promoting European regionalism.

The brochure's text and visual elements work to create links between Gaelic and Europe by representing Gaelic language and culture as a subset of European culture. The 1997 printed brochure's text starts on page two with a greeting set in a two-page spread linking Scotland to a wider, pan-European Celtic world through its Gaelic speakers:

We, the Gaelic-speaking people of Scotland today welcome you. Ours is a land of dramatic contrasts and serene tranquillity, home of the eagle, the wild deer, and courteous, hospitable people... We are a people of ancient lineage, and we are custodians of part of Europe's rich Celtic heritage (Comunn na Gàidhlig 1997: 2).

The links are part of a project intended to coordinate and promote Gaelic language-based tourism in Scotland. "Europe's rich Celtic heritage" is literally mapped on the facing page, subtitled "*Freumh nan Ceilteach/The Celtic Roots of Europe.*" The page features a map of Europe in which almost the entire continent is highlighted as an area where Celtic languages were formerly spoken (with the much smaller area where Celtic languages are spoken today also highlighted). This page also features a short essay about "the ancient Celts" extolling the virtues of "Celtic culture," "Celtic education," and Celtic bravery. The essay about the Celts portrays them not only as the ancestors of the Scots, but also as the original Europeans, dominators of a "pan-European commonwealth" (Comunn na Gàidhlig 1997: 3). This essay replicates the pattern of discourse established by European Union directives and projects about a pan-European culture previously outlined, and is repeated in other places such as in continental European museum exhibits of Celtic archaeology mounted in major European cities in recent years (Dietler 1994: 595–596).<sup>23</sup>

Aspects of the brochure also draw links between the Gaelic language and Europe by juxtaposing Gaelic with major European languages. Bilingual section titles throughout the brochure, while not necessary for comprehension by the brochure's intended audience (British, continental European, and North American tourists), set up Gaelic as equivalent to English. Moreover, the brochure itself is published not only in English, but in Gaelic, French, German, Spanish and Italian. Inside the brochure a Gaelic phrase book is offered for sale in English/Gaelic, French/Gaelic, German/Gaelic,

22 *Fàilte* means 'welcome'. An on-line version of the brochure is available through the Comunn na Gàidhlig website, found at <http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/cnag/failte>.

23 Dietler (1994) and Chapman (1992: Chapters 6–8) assess the implications and accuracy (or, more properly, inaccuracy) of these pan-cultural claims in archaeological, cultural, and linguistic terms.

Spanish/Gaelic and Italian/Gaelic (Comunn na Gàidhlig 1997: 28). The phrase book, like the subtitles and the simultaneous publishing of the book in other languages, accomplishes the task of making Gaelic seem to be a local equivalent to each of the mainstream European languages. As Benedict Anderson points out, this was also a linguistic strategy for nineteenth-century European nationalist movements: in the nineteenth century, "[b]ilingual dictionaries made visible an approaching egalitarianism among languages – whatever the political realities outside, within the covers of the Czech–German/German–Czech dictionary the paired languages had a common status" (Anderson 1991: 71). In such a way the bilingual section titles throughout this brochure and the publication of the brochure and phrase books in a variety of major European languages implicitly give Gaelic parity with these languages and hence place it on equal cultural footing within 'Europe' itself.

However, the *Fàilte* project also seeks to transform Gaelic's role in a local identity and reinforce conceptions of Gaelic as symbolic of the nation. The project links Gaelic with images of the nation, transforming an endangered marginalized minority culture (as previously discussed) into a national resource *par excellence*, and creating a new place for Gaelic as a cultural commodity in the postindustrial and soon-to-be-devolved national economy. First, the centerfold of the *Fàilte* brochure features a map of Scotland, with numbered sites mentioned in the text as well as marks pointing out the locations of Gaelic tuition festivals, the Royal National Mòd (Gaelic competitive festival), and Community Historical Associations (Comunn na Gàidhlig 1997: 16–17). Not surprisingly, the majority of the locations referred to in the text are in the Highlands (mostly the Hebrides and west coast). But their placement on a national map suggests a national coherence of purpose in the promotion of Gaelic, a coherence that is growing under the guidance of the national organization Comunn na Gàidhlig.

Second, the *Fàilte* brochure promotes the standardization of Gaelic, which is necessary for Gaelic to act as both national and European symbol. A standardized form of Gaelic is far more relevant to the experience of predominantly urbanized, middle-class learners and native speakers than it is for native speakers inhabiting rural localities where Gaelic is a language of daily use in multiple dialectal manifestations. Therefore, the standardized form of Gaelic is far more practical (and profitable) to promote. The commodification of Gaelic (cf. Silverstein 1987: 7–8) in support of the local and national economy requires a standardized form of the language, accessible to learner/tourists, as one section of the *Fàilte* brochure titled "*Cuid na h-Oidhche/Accommodation*" implies:

There are at least 250 accommodation providers in Scotland in which the proprietors or a member of staff are able and willing to speak Gaelic with visitors. Most of these are indicated by the 'G' symbol in the accommodation registers of the local tourist boards covering Argyll, the Highlands and the Isles (Comunn na Gàidhlig 1997: 37).

When a national organization such as Comunn na Gàidhlig sets up a scheme with a symbol for Gaelic-speaking homes, the purpose is to promote cultural tourism with Gaelic and Highland culture as its object. To facilitate the commodification of Gaelic in this instance, window stickers featuring the recently-designed 'G' symbol, a bold green 'G' within a black diamond, are sold through a new Gaelic mail order catalog called Muillean Dubh. This small Gaelic-based business resembles the many other new Gaelic-based businesses advertising in the pages of the *Fàilte* brochure. The brochure features small advertisements on almost half its pages for a variety of small Gaelic-oriented businesses and services catering to these tourists, many based in the Highlands, and many of which have started up in the last five to seven years: language schools,

video companies, mail-order catalogs, and visitor centers.<sup>24</sup>

Native Gaelic speakers who promote Gaelic as a language of Europe, like those who promote Gaelic as a national language, are for the most part intellectual elites (Cormack 1994: 116–117). They include people such as the members of the pop band Runrig (who regularly tour Scotland and continental western Europe), the producers and crew of *Eòrpa* (working in Glasgow and traveling all over Europe) (Torcuil Crichton, personal communication), and employees of the Gaelic revitalization organization Comunn na Gàidhlig. In most cases these professionals are no longer living in the predominantly Gaelic-speaking communities in which they were born (MacAulay 1987: 47–48; MacKinnon 1996). Such professional elites are simultaneously promoting Gaelic as local, national, and European through the Gaelic media, but as the previous discussions of Gaelic in local and national identities demonstrate, pop songs, television programs, and tourist brochures are not the only ways to portray Gaelic as symbolic or constitutive of social identity. The projects discussed here represent a selection of ideologies about Gaelic, which overlap and conflict with a multitude of others in contemporary Scotland.

#### CONCLUSION: TRANSFORMATIONS OF IDENTITY

Clearly, there is no one single 'ideology of Gaelic' dictating how people conceptualize the language in a scheme of social identity. Appeals to the Gaelic language as a component of social identity in contemporary Scotland play "a number of important and often paradoxical roles in the ideological naturalization of modern political communities at several contradictory levels," just as archaeologist Michael Dietler found with "appeals to an ancient Celtic past" in France (Dietler 1994: 584). The examples I have given of claims to local, national, and pan-European identities based on Gaelic show that nationalist ideologues and European bureaucrats are far from imposing a single view of Gaelic, or total cultural homogeneity, even when that is the explicitly stated goal. The construction of Gaelic-based local, national, and pan-European identities can work both for and against the creation of local, national, state, and European hegemonies. The class-based aspects of differences among ideologies of Gaelic, and the nationalist ideological influence on conceptions of local identity, become very clear when we consider how different groups of people approach Gaelic as a component of local identity: as a barrier to success or as worthy of revival on the local level. Moreover, the EU-influenced approach to Gaelic is complex; while some projects work to endow Gaelic with significance as a feature of European identity, they can also intentionally and unintentionally transform ideas about the significance of Gaelic for other levels of identity.

If we acknowledge the multivocality of 'identity' and discuss the construction of identities in terms of conflicting language ideologies, we can better understand the struggles for power that underlie claims about Gaelic in Scotland. The construction of identities is a continuing process, and new ideologically- and economically-driven transformations of Gaelic will continue to unfold in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Scotland's devolution is the most important development, and the

24 The business that designed the brochure, Cànan, is another one of these companies. Cànan was founded under the auspices of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic college, and is housed at their campus on the Isle of Skye. The company markets the *Speaking Our Language* course materials as well as other Gaelic materials.

enormous political reorganization and redistribution of duties that it entails will undoubtedly create new opportunities for proponents of Gaelic to promote the language as an element in the construction of social identities. Ethnographic fieldwork in the 'new Scotland' will shed even more light on the relationship between language ideology and the construction of identity.

## REFERENCES CITED

- Anderson, Benedict (1991): *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso.
- Blommaert, Jan and Jef Verschuere (1992): The Role of Language in European Nationalist Ideologies. In *Pragmatics*, 2(3): 355–375.
- Brown, Roger and Albert Gilman (1960): Pronouns of Power and Solidarity. In *Style in Language*. Thomas Sebeok ed., 253–276. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Campbell, J.L. (1950 [1945]): *Gaelic in Scottish Education and Life*. Edinburgh: W. and A.K. Johnson for the Satire Society.
- Carmichael, Alexander (1884): *Grazing and Agrestic Customs in the Outer Hebrides*. Reprint from Napier Crofting Commission Report.
- Chapman, Malcolm (1978): *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Chapman, Malcolm (1992): *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Cohen, Anthony P. (1996): Nationalism and Social Identity: Who Owns the Interest of Scotland? In *Scottish Affairs*, 18: 95–107.
- Comunn na Gàidhlig (1994): *Gaelic 2000: A Strategy for Gaelic Development into the 21st Century/Gàidhlig 2000: Roi-innleachd airson Leasachadh Gàidhlig dhan 21mh Linn*. Glasgow: Comunn na Gàidhlig.
- Comunn na Gàidhlig (1997): *Fàilte: Welcome to Scotland's Gaelic Renaissance*. Inverness: Comunn na Gàidhlig.
- Cormack, Mike (1994): Programming for Cultural Defence: The Expansion of Gaelic Television. In *Scottish Affairs*, 6: 114–131.
- Dietler, Michael (1994): "Our Ancestors the Gauls": Archaeology, Ethnic Nationalism, and the Manipulation of Celtic Identity in Modern Europe. In *American Anthropologist*, 96(3): 584–605.
- Dorian, Nancy C. (1981a): *Language Death: The Life Cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Dorian, Nancy C. (1981b): The Valuation of Gaelic by Different Mother-Tongue Groups Resident in the Highlands. In *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 13(2): 169–182.
- Durkacz, Victor (1983): *The Decline of the Celtic Languages: A Study of Linguistic and Cultural Conflict in Scotland, Wales and Ireland from the Reformation to the Twentieth Century*. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd.
- Ennew, Judith (1980): *The Western Isles Today*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Friedrich, Paul (1989): Language, Ideology, and Political Economy. In *American Anthropologist*, 91(2): 295–312.
- Gal, Susan (1992): Multiplicity and Contentment Among Ideologies: A Commentary. In *Pragmatics*, 2(3): 445–449.
- Gal, Susan (1993): Diversity and Contestation in Linguistic Ideologies: German Speakers in Hungary. In *Language in Society*, 22: 337–359.
- Gillies, Anne Lorne (1995): Gaelic in Scotland: Coming Full Circle. In *Language Issues: the Journal of NATECLA*, 7(2): 4–5.
- Gleasure, J.W. (1994): Gaelic: Dialects, Principal Divisions. In *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*. Derick S. Thomson ed., 91–95. Glasgow: Gairm Publications.
- Hacking, Ian (1991): How Should We Do the History of Statistics? In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller eds., 181–195. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hanham, H.J. (1969): *Scottish Nationalism*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Hill, Jane (1992): "Today There Is No Respect": Nostalgia, 'Respect' and Oppositional Discourse in Mexican (Nahuatl) Language Ideology. In *Pragmatics*, 2(3): 263–281.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. (1992): Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today. In *Anthropology Today*, 8(1): 3–8.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. (1994): *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jedrej, Charles and Mark Nuttall (1996): *White Settlers: The Impact of Rural Repopulation in Scotland*. Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Johnstone, Richard (1994): *The Impact of Current Developments to Support the Gaelic Language*. London: Center for Information on Language Teaching and Research in Collaboration with Scottish Center for Information on Language Teaching and Research.
- Keane, Webb (1997): Knowing One's Place: National Language and the Idea of the Local in Eastern Indonesia. In *Cultural Anthropology*, 12(1): 37–63.
- Kellas, James G. (1994): Politics, Highland (Twentieth Century). In *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland, 2nd edition*. Derick S. Thomson ed., 238–240. Glasgow: Gairm Publications.
- MacAulay, Donald (1987): Introduction. In *Nua-Bardachd Gàidhlig/Modern Scottish Gaelic Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology*. Donald MacAulay ed., 46–68. Edinburgh: Canongate Publishing Limited.
- Macaulay, Fred, et al. (1994): Broadcasting, Gaelic. In *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland, 2nd edition*. Derick S. Thomson ed., 26–27. Glasgow: Gairm Publications.
- Macdonald, Calum and Rory Macdonald (1993): Sràidean na Roinn Eòrpa. On *Amazing Things* [compact disc recording]. UK: Chrysalis Records Ltd.
- Macdonald, Sharon (1987): Social and Linguistic Identity in the Scottish Gàidhealtachd, a Study of Staffin, Isle of Skye. Oxford University: Unpublished Ph.D. diss.
- Macdonald, Sharon (1997): *Reimagining Culture: Histories, Identities, and the Gaelic Renaissance*. Oxford: Berg.
- MacKinnon, Kenneth (1974): *The Lion's Tongue: The Story of the Original and Continuing Language of the Scottish People*. Inverness: Club Leabhar.
- MacKinnon, Kenneth (1977): *Language, Education and Social Processes in a Gaelic Community*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- MacKinnon, Kenneth (1981): *Scottish Opinion on Gaelic: A report on a national attitude survey for An Comunn Gaidhealach undertaken in 1981*. Hatfield: School of Business and Social Sciences, Hatfield Polytechnic.
- MacKinnon, Kenneth (1991): *Gaelic: A Past and Future Prospect*. Edinburgh: Saltire Society.
- MacKinnon, Kenneth (1993): Scottish Gaelic Today: Social History and Contemporary Status. In *The Celtic Languages*. Martin J. Ball and James Fife eds., 491–535. New York: Routledge.
- MacKinnon, Kenneth (1994): Gaelic-speaking in Scotland, Sociology. In *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland, 2nd edition*. Derick S. Thomson ed., 114–115. Glasgow: Gairm Publications.
- MacKinnon, Kenneth (1996): Social Class and Gaelic Language Abilities in the 1981 Census. In *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 17: 239–249.
- Mewett, Peter G. (1982): Exiles, Nicknames, Social Identities and the Production of Local Consciousness in a Lewis Crofting Community. In *Belonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Cultures*. Anthony P. Cohen ed., 222–246. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Moffat, Alistair (1995): *Dreams and Deconstructions/Dòchas Agus Di-chruthachadh: The Sabhal Mòr Lecture 1995*. Glasgow: Scottish Television.
- Murchison, T.M. (1994): Crofting System. In *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland, 2nd edition*. Derick S. Thomson ed., 49–51. Glasgow: Gairm Publications.
- Nadel-Klein, Jane (1991): Reweaving the Fringe: Localism, Tradition, and Representation in British Ethnography. In *American Ethnologist*, 18(3): 500–517.
- Nairn, Tom (1977): *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*. London: New Left Books.
- Nairn, Tom (1995): Upper and Lower Cases. In *London Review of Books*, August 24: 14–18.
- Nicolaisen, W.F.H. (1994): Place-Names, Gaelic, in Scotland. In *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland, 2nd edition*. Derick S. Thomson ed., 231–233. Glasgow: Gairm Publications.
- Paterson, Lindsay (1996): Conclusion: Does Nationalism Matter? In *Scottish Affairs*, 17: 112–119.
- Prattis, J.I. (1990 [1981]): Industrialization and Minority Language Loyalty: The Example of Lewis. In *Minority Languages Today*. Einar Haugen, J.D. McClure, Derick Thomson eds., 32–39. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Shore, Cris and Annabel Black (1992): The European Communities and the Construction of Europe. In *Anthropology Today*, 8(3): 10–11.
- Silverstein, Michael (1987): *Monoglot 'Standard' in America*. Working Papers and Proceedings of the Center for Psychosocial Studies, no. 13.
- Smith, Anthony (1981): *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smout, T.C. (1994): Perspectives on the Scottish Identity. In *Scottish Affairs*, 6: 101–113.
- Thomson, Derick (1990 [1974]): *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Thomson, Derick (1990 [1981]): Gaelic in Scotland: Assessment and Prognosis. In *Minority Languages Today*. Einar Haugen, J.D. McClure, Derick Thomson eds., 21–31. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

- Thomson, Derick S. (1994): Gaelic (General Survey). In *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland, 2nd edition*. Derick S. Thomson ed., 89–91. Glasgow: Gairm Publications.
- Urcioli, Bonnie (1995): Language and Borders. In *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24: 525–546.
- Urla, Jacqueline (1993): Cultural Politics in an Age of Statistics: Numbers, Nations, and the Making of Basque Identity. In *American Ethnologist*, 20(4): 818–843.
- Watson, Seosamh (1989): Scottish and Irish Gaelic: The Giant's Bed-fellows. In *Investigating Obsolescence: Studies in Language Contraction and Death*. Nancy C. Dorian ed., 41–60. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Withers, Charles (1984): *Gaelic in Scotland 1698–1981: The Geographical History of a Language*. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd.
- Wolfe, Billy (1973): *Scotland Lives*. Edinburgh: Reprographia.
- Woolard, Kathryn A. (1989): *Double Talk: Bilingualism and the Politics of Ethnicity in Catalonia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Woolard, Kathryn A. and Bambi B. Schieffelin (1994): Language Ideology. In *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 23: 55–82.

## Protesting against the Consequences of Welfare

---

### Emerging Ethnification in Marginal Areas of Sweden

*Kjell Hansen*

Lund University

In this paper I intend to discuss certain political aspects of constructing local and regional identity, more closely, to grasp the ways these processes are related to different fields of power in society. By using a marginal area of inland Sweden as an example, I want to show how local and regional identities are shaped in relation to state politics as well as to local traditions in concrete places.<sup>1</sup> In my research, I found that there is a marked and definite difference between the local and the regional when it comes to identity construction: on the local level, identity is formed through shared everyday practices and reflections, while on the regional level, identity construction is part of a conscious and organized political process. Even if both types of identity may be interpreted as expressions of opposition, local identity in my field material seems to be of a *refractory* kind, while the more consciously organized regional identity

may be viewed as an expression of *resistance*. In this second case, regional identity is undergoing a process of *ethnification*, creating a mythology of a people with rights to a specific territory.

#### THE OVERALL SETTING

Geographically, the province of Jämtland is located in the middle of Sweden but in all other respects it belongs to Norrland, the northern part of the country. The province borders on Norway, to which it belonged until 1645, and on other Swedish counties in the south, east, and north. The sparsely populated, mountainous area of Jämtland stretches to approximately 37.500 square kilometers. More than half of the population of 130.000 live in the only town, Östersund, located in the middle of the county. Outside the town, people live in municipal centers or small hamlets. As the province is mostly covered by woodlands, villages are often separated by large forests. For the past hundred years, economic life has depended upon stockraising and dairy farming, tourism, forestry, and the production of electric power. In the national economy of Sweden, Jämtland's role has been to produce and supply raw material and energy for

<sup>1</sup> The article is drawing on field-material and discussions being developed in my forthcoming thesis.