

Phases of Ethnology in Britain

With Special Reference to Scotland

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Fenton, Alexander 1990: Phases of Ethnology in Britain. With Special Reference to Scotland. – *Ethnologia Europaea* XX: 177–188.

The historiography of a subject is part of that subject; developmental phases tie in with developments in related subjects, and can react sensitively with periods of historical change. This paper considers the growth of the subject of ethnology in Britain in three main phases:

1. its late 18th–early 19th century beginnings, growing out of antiquarian learning.
2. a 20th century phase, in which a regional or national sense of identity (especially in the Celtic speaking areas) developed.
3. In the 1980s, an apparent decline in “traditional” studies of ethnology has been matched by stress on “contemporary documentation”, a sharpening of concern for working class social history, and the adoption of the concepts of site-interpretation (dating to the 1960s).

The model for the three phases is man-nation-class. Phase 1, running up to the First World War, was all-British, contributions being made by Scots but not primarily as Scots; phase 2 is one of growing regional self-consciousness, as peripheries reacted to the core; phase 3 marks a new research awareness in working folk in urban and industrial situations and includes aspects (e.g. concern for the “green” countryside) that transcend class boundaries.

These phases can almost certainly be mirrored internationally in Europe, though with variations in comparative chronology between countries. They are part of the historiographical framework of reference for the subject of European ethnology.

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Folk culture has many strands, as numerous as those that make up the multi-facetted ways of living and thinking of man himself. For the practical needs of analysis, these strands must be blocked into manageable groups or key-areas, like material culture, spiritual culture, historical change and continuity, community and individual. To pursue these in a meaningfully methodological way, we can use the Erixonian standards of time, space and social milieu, and test various aspects by applying appropriate conceptual approaches, many of which may be borrowed from related disciplines: cultural zones and boundaries, cultural connections, emigration culture, diffusion, acculturation, innovation, cultural fixation, interethnicity, integration processes, cultural ecology, periodisation, popular culture, cultu-

ral process, and so on. Some approaches may be creatures of fashion, here today and gone tomorrow, but whether of short-term or continuing utility, all can teach us something more about ethnology and its parameters; they should teach us also that we should not expect to find tightly-drawn, unchanging parameters. These can be modified through time and changing needs and circumstances. The historiography of ethnology, over the last century and a half, suggests that the discipline of ethnology is itself a process. This paper gives a preliminary view that at least three phases are distinguishable in Britain, and no doubt in other countries.

The roots of ethnology tend to lie in the field of antiquarian learning. In Britain, the subject attracted an influential literature, like Francis

Grose's journal, *The Antiquarian Repertory* (1775–84), in which antiquities are reviewed as being “attached to physical and visual remains and scenes and to the memorials of the great rather than the lowly”, and John Brand's *Observations on Popular Antiquities*, London 1777, which discusses tradition, and oral tradition, customs and beliefs that had “the same character of misshapen fragments surviving from a bygone age” as the material remains (Dorson, 1968, I: 1,6). Each writer lays emphasis on “remains” and “fragments”. The instinct being followed was in some degree that of a collector, even though Brand's work also had a strongly religious viewpoint.

Scottish antiquarians and intelligentsia, of course, knew such works, for writings in English are equally part of the Scottish heritage. That much thinking was going on, inchoately ethnological even if not fully on the direct line can be gathered from a writer like Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), the Scot whose essays and translations helped to introduce German literature and thought to a British audience. His novel *Sartor Resartus*, begun in 1830, was serialised in the London-based *Fraser's Magazine* in 1833, and first published in book form in Boston, USA, in 1836, with a second edition in 1837. Not until 1837 did an English edition appear. Perhaps he was a little ahead of his time for Britain.

The novel, of prime historical importance because it marks the transition from the Romantic to the Victorian period, was like no previous novel (nor indeed, any subsequent one). Carlyle himself described it as a “didactic Novel”, or a “Satirical Extravaganza on Things in General”. It is presented under the guise of a disquisition on clothes – itself a major theme of ethnology – by a German Professor, Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, entitled *Die Kleider ihr Werden und Wirken*, published by Stillschweigen und Co.gnie, Weissnichtwo 1833, and edited, as it were, by Carlyle, who includes in it “more of my opinions on Art, Politics, Religion, Heaven, Earth and Air, than all the things I have yet written” (McSweeney and Sabor, 1987: 217–288), by way of running editorial comment. Carlyle appears as a social critic and cultural prophet, using clothes whether physical or

spiritual as a system of symbols for carrying his thoughts. In doing so, he divides the work into two parts, “a Historical-Descriptive, and a Philosophical-Speculative”, a sequence which characterises the growth of ethnology in every country, and his further comment that there is no firm line of demarcation between the two, and that “each Part overlaps, and indents, and indeed runs quite through the other” (McSweeney and Sabor 1987: 26) is equally a mark of the character of ethnological studies, as of the mental development of many individuals. His comments (allegedly those of the professor) on tradition are so apropos, that they deserve to be quoted:

“Of Man's Activity and Attainment the chief results are aeriform, mystic, and preserved in tradition only: such are his Forms of Government, with the Authority they rest on; his Customs, or Fashions both of Cloth-habits and Soul-habits; much more his collective stock of Handicrafts, the whole Faculty he has required of manipulating Nature: all these things, as indispensable and priceless as they are, cannot in any way be fixed under lock and key, but must flit, spirit-like, on impalpable vehicles, from Father to Son; if you demand sight of them, they are nowhere to be met with. Visible Ploughmen and Hammermen there have been, ever from Cain and Tubalcain downwards: but where does your accumulated Agricultural, Metallurgic, and other Manufacturing SKILL lie ware housed?” (McSweeney and Sabor 1987: 231).

All that is here, the spiritual and the material, the transcendental interlinking of the two, the mysterious force of invisibly transmitted tradition, the symbolic quality of the material aspects of human culture, are matters with which ethnologists are intimately concerned. As he says later, on man: “Not a hut he builds but is the visible embodiment of a thought; but bears visible record of invisible things; but is, in the transcendental sense, symbolic as well as real (McSweeney and Sabor 1987: 167).

Carlyle is aware also, of changing fashion. Homer's Epos does not cease to be true, but it is not our Epos. Its truth is of a different era, it needs to be reinterpreted for subsequent generations (McSweeney and Sabor 1987: 170).

This is why a historiography of ethnology is important.

Sartor Resartus ("the tailor retailed") had no influence on ethnological thought as such then or later, but it does reflect some of the best thinking of the times. It is, perhaps, no surprise that only a decade later, William John Thoms (1803–1885), should coin the word "folk-lore" (on 22 of August 1846) as an equivalent for the "popular antiquities" that writers like Grose and Brand had brought to public attention as a new field of learning (see Dorson, 1968, I: 52–55). As it happened, Thoms's use of the term in a basically literary journal, *The Athenaeum*, did not bear fruit quickly and, aware of the communication problem, he founded his *Notes and Queries* in 1849 to deal more effectively with antiquarian and folklore matters. It was in *The Athenaeum*, however, that Thoms first proposed a programme, or rather design, for the study of folklore, expressing what came to be held as the credos of the subject. Anyone studying the manners, customs, observances etc. of olden times, he said, must reach two conclusions – "first, how much that is curious and interesting in these matters is now entirely lost – the second how much may yet be rescued by timely exertion". The need was to gather an infinite number of facts scattered in thousands of memories, till the harvest could be analysed and presented in the manner of Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie*, which Thoms saw as "a mass of minute facts, many of which, when separately considered, appear trifling and insignificant, – but, when taken in connection with the system into which his master-mind has woven them, assume a value that he who first recorded them never dreamed of attributing to them". Thoms also stressed the value of comparative studies, as, for example, between Britain and Germany.

By the mid-nineteenth century, therefore, the subject was beginning to be shaped in Britain. It had a name, "folklore". It had moved on from simple antiquarianism, and had entered a phase of intensive activity that developed Grimm's comparative mythological and philological approach. The "Indo-Europeanists" of the period included names such as those of Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900) who settled

in Oxford and became a don there. Their activity and influence ran on through the remainder of the century.

However, other forces were gathering strength, particularly in the work of Sir Edward B. Tylor (1832–1917), first Professor of Anthropology at Oxford. He and others, including his Scottish pupil, Andrew Lang (1844–1912), played a leading role in the controversy with Müller and his school over the interpretation of mythology and folk tales. The major outcome was a new approach, in which man as a tradition bearer was seen as the central subject, even if still regarded in the category of "contemporary savage". The oral survivals of the less sophisticated, their folk tales, proverbs and beliefs, became a basis for the study of cultural evolution. Folklore was becoming a science.

Due honour must be paid to The Folk Lore Society, founded in London in 1878, for drawing together a range of kindred spirits with the drive and ability to try to define the subject and evolve methodologies of approach that included accurate, systematic fieldwork, and the use of printed sources. Since they still looked on folklore as a key to the mental growth of man, it was logical that apparently insignificant and meaningless survivals should be studied by all possible means in order to try to understand the character they might have had when they existed in antiquity in a postulated fully functioning system. Archaeology studied material relics in a comparative way; folklore was concerned with immaterial, mainly oral, survivals. To a great degree, the effort was directed towards understanding the past, man's mental development, and his civilised status at earlier periods.

As research proceeded, specialisation appeared as scholars took up a variety of subject-niches that included, for example, examination of the laws of tradition, ethnicity in relation to layers of tradition, discussion of diffusion as against spontaneous creation resulting from what Lang saw as the sameness of the human imagination, the folkloristic study of early village and tribal institutions, questions of continuity between medieval Celtic literature and modern Gaelic folklore, and interestingly

enough, a realisation that the higher levels of civilisation were equally bearers of fragments from the past (details summarised in Dorson, 1968). As Lang put it, "the classes which have been least altered by education, which have showed least in progress ... these unprogressive classes retain many of the beliefs and ways of savages ... The student of folklore is thus led to examine the usages, myths and ideas of savages, which are still retained, in rude enough shape, by the European peasantry. Lastly, ... a few similar customs and ideas survive in the most conservative elements of the life of educated peoples, in ritual, ceremonial, and religious traditions and myths" (Lang, 1901: 11).

A major new important element by the early 1900s was the voice of social sciences, "asking for scrutiny of the processes affecting change and stability in folklore" (Dorson, 1968, II: 469), but thematic and conceptual broadening, allied with attempts to classify and systematise, proceeded also. The Orcadian, William Alexander Clouston (1843–96), introduced an Asiatic dimension, and sought to demonstrate that migration and trade had played a leading role in the Asiatic origins of certain European popular stories. He emphasised the role of medieval translations in such diffusion, and signalled the interplay between writing and oral storytelling. Francis Hindes Groome (1851–1902), using gipsy tales and superstitions as the basis for his sermon, preached diffusionism as against the evolutionistic approach of Tylor and Lang. Moses Gaster (1856–1934), the Rumanian rabbi who came to England in 1885, had a wide linguistic Eastern European experience that led him to believe in the easy transmission of oral narratives across language boundaries. He thus supported diffusionism, and also went against earlier British folklorists because he regarded fairy tales as the end of a literary process, and not as pointers to the mentality of primitive people. The Australian-born Joseph Jacobs (1854–1916) carried the diffusionist approach further by postulating two parallel lines of tradition, lateral and vertical (or synchronic and diachronic, or cross-sectional and longitudinal, in the terminology of later days), which gave some possibility of rec-

onciling the viewpoints of cultural evolutionists and diffusionists. Also amongst what Dorson describes as "the Society folklorists" was an archaeologist, David MacRitchie, whose contribution was to the historicity of tradition, about which the debate still continues. Looking at the local traditions of the British peasantry, MacRitchie thought he could distinguish a core of fact that continued from prehistoric times, e.g. the subterranean dwellings of the fairy folk and earlier underground structures. But perhaps the most interesting of the Society group was Robert R. Marett (1866–1943), the biographer of Tylor, who reinvigorated the doctrine of survivals by studying the process of change in living folklore. He considered that the study of it, if necessary through participation, could lead study to better understanding of what led up to it in the past. As an academic social historian, Marett laid stress on function, process, psychology and society. But though there were cross-disciplinarian figures like him and Tylor, it is curious that social anthropology in universities did not come to open its doors to folklorists.

At the same time, broadly in the second half of the 19th century, the data available to scholars was being continually broadened by published infusions of oral material from other countries, Iceland and Norway, Russia, Italy, India and Burma, Africa and elsewhere (Dorson 1968, II: 571–653).

Internally, a most important group was that concerned with Celtic folklore. Not only did its work spawn a number of academic institutes, but it also moved the pawns firmly onto the core-and-periphery gaming board. By so doing it brought to the forefront questions of racial or ethnic nationalism. The motivation was clear: it was a conservationist anxiety to protect what was seen as a disappearing language, literature and culture. Those involved were men like John Francis Campbell of Islay (1822–1885), whose *Popular Tales of the West Highlands Orally Collected*, appeared in two volumes in 1860, and two more in 1862. He was able to present his own folk inheritance, with intellectual detachment. He was "a creative collector, conscious of practical method and underlying theory, scrupulous in furnish-

ing information on his tellers and the storytelling situations, alert to the possibility of the storytelling situations, alert to the possibility of literary influences, aware of comparative narratives outside Scotland and of variations within the Highland hoard, and sensitive to the problems of translation" (Dorson 1968, II: 655). Another Highlander was Alexander Carmichael (1832–1912), from the isle of Lismore in the West of Scotland. From the crofting population he assembled a magnificent collection of religious folk poetry, not unlike the archaic prayers that Zsuzsanna Erdélyi has done so much to save in Hungary (Zs. Erdélyi, 1978; Fenton, 1985: 215–218). His work was published in two volumes in 1900; subsequently, his material was further worked and is now complete in six volumes (Carmichael, 1961–71). Wales also made its contribution through Sir John Rhys, philologist and archaeologist, who published on Welsh and Manx folklore, but without making any real impact since the traditions of the ordinary folk were largely ignored. More important from the functionally nationalist point of view was the Irishman Douglas Hyde (1860–1949) co-founder of the Gaelic League (1893) in Ireland, the function of which was to promote the active use of the Irish language and Irish cultural institutions. He became first President of Ireland in 1938. The work of the League led to Irish being made compulsory for matriculation purposes in the National University of Ireland in 1913, though still as an aspect of cultural rather than revolutionary nationalism. The Irish Parliament, the Dáil Éireann, was committed to the use of Irish from its first meeting in January 1919. Politically, "the Irish language, like the Catholic religion, was a badge of identity which set apart what Ireland had been in the United Kingdom from what it should be after independence". Its imposition, in schools, the civil service, the armed forces, etc. was viewed by many as utopian but nevertheless, what we have here is an example, not of the use of a language and a folklore to reconstruct the thoughts of prehistoric savages, but of its wielding as an instrument to give inspiration for the future greatness of a revived nation (Dorson, 1968, II: 698–9; Fanning, 1983: 80–82).

Part of this activity was The Irish Folklore Commission, founded in 1935; this played a role, also, in the somewhat later establishment of the School of Scottish Studies, in 1951, in the University of Edinburgh. With the founding of the Welsh Folk Museum in 1947, of the Ulster Folk Museum in 1958, the long, slow change-over from the all-British viewpoint in folklore to a decentralised but perhaps more wide-ranging and deeper approach to 'national' cultures, may be said to have been well and truly established.

Whether antiquarian or more directly folkloristic, the first developmental phase was common to all parts of these Islands. The second phase, essentially of 20th century date, is marked by decentralisation based on collectivities. Running in part through both phases, however, are other strands besides antiquarianism and folklore.

Though philology and etymology played a substantial role in evolutionist thinking, the study of language and especially dialect, and the compilation of dictionaries and glossaries based on scrutiny of printed sources and on questionnaires and field investigation, have built up data and established techniques of approach that have primary ethnological value. Sometimes rustic speech was seen as a direct key to folklore studies "opening windows into the covert beliefs of English countrymen through the living language of their local dialects" (Wright, 1913; Dorson, 1968, II: 561); later it became a vehicle for occupational studies, as of drift-net fishermen and coal-miners (Wakelin, 1972). Linguistic atlas work also helped greatly in the systematisation of the subject (cf. Mather and Speitel, 1975–86; McIntosh, Samuels and Benskin, 1986).

Such atlases can give ethnologists food for very serious thought. It has been noted, for example, in Wenker's *Deutscher Sprachatlas* that dialect divisions are for the most part illusory. "Instead of displaying the separate and clearly delineated regional dialects that the investigators expected, Wenker's atlas revealed a continuum in which the forms of language made up, map by map, a complex of overlapping distribution" (McIntosh et al. 1986, I: 4). Ethnologists concerned with culture zones and

culture processes, and ethnological cartography, must take such points to heart and consider them very seriously.

Another major strand in shaping ethnology in Britain has been that of historical geography. The fons et origo of this source of inspiration was Professor Herbert John Fleure (1877–1969), first holder of the Chair of Geography and Anthropology at Aberystwyth in Wales in 1917. A large number of his students went on to play leading roles in folk life studies and in the development of folk and open air museums (cf. A Fenton, 1986: 17–40). With the appearance of folk and open air museums, largely inspired by the lead given by the Scandinavian countries, Sweden in particular (cf. Peate, 1958: 89), folk life in its Scandinavian sense as expounded in the journal *Folk-Liv* and elsewhere, had come to Britain. A major new element in this was the study and collection of the material aspects of culture. Few of the earlier folklorists touch on material culture. Nevertheless the subject was not being ignored. In a series of lectures to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Sir Arthur Mitchell examined “neo-archaic” material objects – spindle and whorl, hand mills and water-driven horizontal mills, food, buildings, dress, transport vehicles, agricultural implements, ornament, lighting devices, weighing devices etc. (as well as various customs and superstitions) – as a means of throwing light on earlier times. This was a new form of data-base, but his purpose in using material culture survivals still related to study of man’s ascent from savagery to civilisation. Mitchell, however, deserves great credit also for recognising, in many of the items, a degree of sophistication in no way diminished by the fact that they had become outmoded. A survival of the past into the present did not necessarily point to “a rude practice”, nor to one that was inefficient (Mitchell, 1850: 96–98).

As an exponent of material culture, Mitchell was for long a lone star in the Scottish and indeed British ethnological firmament, with apparently one remarkable exception.

Mitchell had devoted a section to horizontal mills in his book. This topic, in fact, had already been rousing great antiquarian interest in Ireland. There, writers of the 1830s had

already discussed the possible pre-monastic origins of the mill, using documentary sources. Archaeological evidence was adduced in the 1840s. In 1856, an Irish writer examined contemporary evidence, from travellers’ accounts, to be found in the Faroe Islands, and in Shetland and the Hebrides. Irish scholars have continued to show a keen interest in horizontal mills up to the present day (Summed up in Rynne, 1988: 6–7; see also Mitchell, 1880: 39–44). In this subject area, at least, Ireland was ahead of Britain in material culture studies.

Mitchell’s work in Scotland did not go unregarded south of the Border. In 1898, the anthropologist Alfred C. Haddon (1855–1940) published his *Study of Man*. In the Introduction, he provided some significant definitions, in which “technology” may be equated with material culture:

“On the Continent the term Anthropology is restricted to what we in England term Physical Anthropology ... that is, the study of man as an animal. ... We prefer to retain the word Anthropology for the study of man in its widest aspect.”

Ethnography is the description of a special people, whether it be a small tribe, the natives of a restricted area, or a large nation; it includes a comparative study of human groups, and has for its aim the elucidation of the inter-relationships of tribes, races and other bodies of men; thus it deals with the classification of peoples, their origin and their migrations.

Ethnology may also be divided into several branches, the four more important of which are: Sociology, Technology, Religion, and Linguistics.

“Sociology is the study of human communities, both simple and complex, and an attempt is now being made to trace the rise of simple communities and their gradual and diverse evolution to the complex civilisations of ancient and modern times ...”. It should try to get behind history, to try to account for the data upon which historians work. It should consider how the natural environment conditions ways of life; how ways of life affect family life and organisation; how such organisation may come to affect different forms of government as civilisation advances. “According to this method

of investigation, we start with physical geography and find ourselves drawn into statecraft and political economy.”

Haddon added that amongst other fruitful lines of study were the tracing of the evolution of tools and weapons, indeed of all manufactured objects, as also of the origin, evolution, and migration of designs and patterns (Haddon, 1895).

These clearly expressed definitions are in line with his period, but the immediate point of interest is that Haddon exemplified his study of technology by tracing the evolution of the common two-wheeled cart, a subject he no doubt picked up from Arthur Mitchell, though his discussion about wheels owes something also to another pioneering, material culture orientated article on the origin of the plough and wheel carriage by Tylor himself (Tylor, 1880: 74–84). He not only devoted a whole chapter to the “evolution of the cart”, but also added one on the “origin of the Irish Jaunting-Car”, in the first case showing his wide-ranging scholarship in several languages and ability to see both evolutionary and diffusionistic aspects of the topic, and in the second studying, equally learnedly, a means of conveyance confined strictly to Ireland, and of no great age (Haddon, 1898: 161–218).

That material culture was on the move, as part of a broadening thrust, is shown in another way also. In 1892, the British Association appointed an influential committee to conduct an Ethnological Survey of the United Kingdom. Its first circular proposed the recording, for certain villages and the districts around, of the following points:

- “(1) Physical types of the inhabitants
- (2) Current traditions and beliefs
- (3) Peculiarities of dialect
- (4) Monuments and other remains of ancient culture; and
- (5) Historical evidence as to the continuity of race”.

It is of particular interest that villages were taken as the basic point for investigation, and that the exercise was a United Kingdom one, with no apparent core or periphery emphases.

About the same time, or somewhat earlier, an Ethnographical Survey of Ireland had been undertaken by a Dublin committee, with the support of the Royal Irish Academy. Even more than the British Association scheme, it demonstrated an all-in approach that is broadly in line with the topics of modern ethnological research:

“I. *Physiography of the district investigated*. II. *Anthropography*. – 1. Methods; 2. Physical characters with lists of measurements; 3. Vital Statistics (general and economic), (A) Population, (B) Acreage and Rental, (C) Language and Education, (D) Health; 4. Psychology; 5. Folk names. III. *Sociology*. – 1. Occupations; 2. Family Life and Customs; 3. Food; 4. Clothing; 5. Dwellings; 6. Transport. IV. *Folklore*. – 1. Customs and Beliefs; 2. Legends and Traditions; 3. Leechcraft. V. *Archaeology*. – 1. Survivals; 2. Antiquities. VI. *History*. VII. *Ethnology*. VIII. *Bibliography*” (Haddon 1898: 436–437).

Material culture, seen as part of a set of approaches to the subject as a whole, continued to be an element in the work of the Irish Folklore Commission, of which the bible is Sean Ó Súilleabháin’s *Handbook of Irish Folklore*, 1940, itself based on the Swedish (Uppsala) folklore classification. Elsewhere, material culture emphases grew with the establishment of and build-up of collections for a number of open-air and folk museums from the late 1930s; including what from 1959 till 1985 was known as the Country Life Section of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland. Following the amalgamation of this museum with the Royal Scottish Museum in 1985, this section became part of a large department of science, technology and working life. Numerous smaller folk- and open-air museums also developed, but it was mainly in those of national status that research policies involving fieldwork were to be found.

University institutes came into being, such as the School of Scottish Studies of Edinburgh University, the Irish Folklore Commission which is now a university department, the Institute of Dialect and Folk Life Studies of Leeds University (which has fallen victim to Government cutbacks on university spending) and the

Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language of Sheffield University. A number of societies were founded, broadening and deepening the work of the long-established Folk Lore Society in London. Examples are the Folklore of Ireland Society, the Society for Folk Life Studies, and numerous small, mainly thematically orientated societies or groups like the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group.

Some of these museums, institutes and societies published journals of which the main ethnological examples are *Folklore* (1878–); *Gweirin* (1856–62), subsumed in *Folk Life. A Journal of Ethnological Studies* (1963–); *Scottish Studies* (1957–); *Ulster Folklife* (1955–); *Béalóideas* (1927–), mainly in Irish; *Lore and Language* (1969–); and, most recently, *The Review of Scottish Culture* (1984–), founded and edited by the present writer.

The bulk of this activity lies in the middle third of the 20th century. As already noted, folklore began and for long continued as a subject common to all parts of these Islands. There were Scottish, Welsh and Irish participants on a Great British level, matching the broad mental and geographical sweep of Thomas Carlyle, perhaps *because* they were concerned with man and his development from a postulated savage state, which they saw as being pictured in their time by the tribes intrepid European travellers found when they went exploring in India, Africa, Asia and wherever foot, or quadruped, or boat could bring them. The norms and values of the Victorian period appear not only to have held the Empire together, but also the mental world of scholars.

It is striking that this cohesion did not last beyond the 1930s, when the peripheries, largely Celtic, began to feel their oats. The sociological model that seems to apply is that of internal colonialism, aided and abetted by the dislocation of old values following the First World War. In this model, the core “seeks to stabilize and monopolise its advantages through policies aiming at the institutionalisation of the existing stratification system”. It seeks to keep high prestige roles for its own members. In this way it creates a kind of “cultural division of labor”, which contributes to

the sense of ethnic division (or sense of advantaged as against disadvantaged) between the two groups. “Actors come to categorise themselves and others according to the range of roles each may be expected to play. They are aided in this categorisation by the presence of visible signs, or cultural markers, which are seen to characterise both groups.” It is likely that the peripheral group will seek to assert the equality or superiority of its culture by making use of observable cultural differences, even to the extent of conceiving itself as a separate “nation” and seeking independence, as Southern Ireland did and as the Scottish Nationalist Party would like to do (Hechter, 1978: 9–10). The post-1930s growth of folk- and open-air museums, university institutes concerned with ethnology, and societies largely tied to what have been described as the Celtic fringes (though this is far too sweeping a term) appears to coincide with the internal colonialism model.

But nothing is ever constant. Models have to be remodelled, dialect boundaries and culture zones run before the seeking finger (or the computer probe). The boom period (if it ever was that) for ethnology in the different parts of these Islands is over, largely as a result of financial restrictions in the running of both museums and universities, or, in other words, pressures from the core, generally applied. The matter is not so simple, however. The concept of ethnology is changing also. We have come through, in Carlyle’s phrase, the “Historical-Descriptive” phase and collections and archives are copious and representative of at least certain aspects of ethnological data. The phase has been common to all countries where the craft of ethnology is practised. In Britain it was tied to and partly motivated by the seeking of identity of the northern and western units of which these Islands are composed (as well as of some of the English provinces). It was strengthened by the earlier and ongoing ethnological activity that Sweden in particular spearheaded. Some aspects of the older attitudes survived throughout in places like the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, a ‘national’ museum in the strict sense of the word, dealing with the Scottish heritage (in

whatever appropriate international setting), with staff concerned to look at the whole of the country's culture from prehistory through medieval times to the present. The present writer, in this setting, with a lexicographical training, could hardly fail to use "words and thing" to help to interpret past days and changing times, whilst building up the collections and archives which, jointly with those of the School of Scottish Studies, are the bases for the next stage, the "Philosophical-Speculative", to bring the Scottish data into line with the kinds of analysis now being undertaken, notably in Germany and Sweden, and in Hungary, and in the United States, but by no means exclusively in these countries.

What may be a third phase in the historiography of ethnology is marked by several new influences, of which three may be specified. The first is another example of Swedish influence. As adopted in Britain, it is called SAMDOK, an acronym for Swedish *samtids dokumentation*, "contemporary documentation". Though more familiar in the museum world than in the world of academic ethnology, nevertheless it has great ethnological significance. It is a concept that relates to the modern world, marked as it is by a mind-boggling range of industrial products. It derives from a sense of social responsibility in collecting, that seeks to find the identity of modern communities and transmit it for the future, and so its orientation is more to the future than to the past. It depends heavily on research as a prelude to the selection of items for collection, acknowledging on the one hand that blind or random collection is a bad investment with substantial oncosts in terms of storage, and seeking on the other to find a means of transmitting, as realistically as possible, a view of the present for generations to come. To do this, documentation is required, which to a Swede represents a full research effort, covering fieldwork, recording, selection, acquisition and cataloguing. This is essentially an ethnological approach, as against the old-style museum approach which still often prevails in Britain, where documentation is no more than the paperwork that goes with a collected object (Rosander, 1977; Cedrenius 1987: 15–19; Kavanagh, 1983: 85–88).

The second influence, of which the first is part, is a sharpening of concern for social history over the last 15 years. The Group for Regional Studies in Museums, founded c. 1971 (renamed the Social History Curators' Group (SHCG) in 1982), has the aim of improving standards in social history curating, which includes also care for twentieth century collecting. Indeed the aspirations of the SHCG appear very much like the British equivalent of the outlooks and methodological approaches symbolised by SAMDOK in Sweden.

Care for social history is a strong movement, with specific research orientations that suggest something of a reaction to the earlier "folklife" approach in which the study of material culture, especially that of the countryside, tended to predominate. These orientations have been characterised as a marked move to the left, as a protest against "conservative" attitudes towards collection that represented only the more elevated or the rural layers of society. They are concerned with topics such as the working life of working men, labour history in general, women's history, urban and factory life, and ethnic minorities. Activities include efforts to integrate museums more closely with their communities (especially urban industrial), and much research is going into the recording of areas of life such as housing, food and drink (including fast foods), education, religion, women's emancipation history, sport and leisure, health, crime, death, etc., in short, the bulk of the things for which local authorities have a primary concern. To facilitate the establishment of a standard for documentation, the SHCG has produced a classification system, the Social History and Industrial Classification (SHIC), the primary headings of which cover community life, domestic and family life, personal life and working life (SHIC, 1983). It is not irrelevant, in this context, that the majority of British museums are now run by local authorities, many of which have Labour councils. It is almost as if the localities were reacting in classical periphery style against the strong central core of Conservative government that has now prevailed for several years.

Alongside this absorption with 20th century

issues has been a third influence, reflecting contemporary anxiety about the environment and what man is doing to it. It goes under the heading of *interpretation*. In its original essence, the science of interpretation came to Britain from the United States in the 1960s. It grew out of the perceived need in National Parks to explain to visitors what they saw around them, whether it related to past, present or future; implicit also was the fostering of understanding and awareness that would encourage visitors to be more caring and conservation conscious. It was site-specific, with a primary concern for the things of nature and for the effects on these of the activities of man.

Those who first translated the concept of interpretation from the USA to Britain maintained the site-specific approach, but a change in emphasis quickly appeared. Would-be aficionados quickly began to extend the idea from the natural environment to the "built" environment and to the man-made heritage in general, so that they sought to "interpret" collections of objects in museums also, even if these had become separated from their original locations. Where attention was paid to site-relatedness, there is no doubt that the concept greatly enhanced the communicative quality of displays. This is especially true of the bigger folk museums, which have the opportunity to weld artefacts, sites, buildings, archives and oral history into a single, integrated interpretation strategy (Tilden, 1957; Brown, 1971; Aldridge, 1975; Percival, 1979; Barclay 1983).

The exercise is in reality an end-product of research. Following research, site interpretation is applied manipulatively, to the extent that it aims at modifying human behaviour towards conservationist ends through the progressional model: interpretation whence understanding whence appreciation whence protection. Internal museum presentation, at least in Britain, rarely has such propagandist intention, and is best considered as "explanation".

Ethnologists have not yet given much thought to the implications of the interpretation movement, but it provides a readily definable example, outside the political sphere, of an area where core and periphery attitudes, and

the geographical areas to which they relate, are cut across by an all-class concern for a particular problem, somewhat in the manner of Durkheim's "conscience collective". The SHCG orientation towards the history of the left is a comparable example of non-localised alliance, related to a particular subject-area, view of life or philosophy. So what we seem to have in the last quarter of the 20th century is a third phase in or influence on the onward march of ethnology, in which class- and conservation-related matters are prominent aspects. At the same time, and herein lies an example of the difficulty about making too positive statements, there has been a renewed involvement by social anthropologists with the peripheries. The possibilities for following traditional lines of fieldwork abroad have become more limited, and it is a more economic option to work at home. In Scotland, for example, there have been studies of areas as diverse as a Border sheep farming village, the Western Isles, the Shetland islands of Burra and Whalsay, and North-East Scotland (Littlejohn, 1963; Carter, 1979; Ennew, 1980; Byron, 1986; Cohen, 1987). Under the general concept of "peasant studies", anthropologists appear to be encroaching on territory that has long been regarded as appropriate to ethnologists, economists, and historians.

Though much good work is being done, the pattern is complicated. It is as if anthropologists, ethnologically-orientated museum staff, the staff of ethnological institutes, and adherents of other related disciplines, were running along parallel roads with high walls between. The present amorphous, fragmentated approach to ethnology would disappear if some magic means of integration could be found.

What, then, of Scotland's position? We have seen the indications of a three phase development that affects Scotland too. The first, and longest, ran through the Victorian period and probably up to just before the Second World War. Scots like Lang played a prominent role, but were not thinking of themselves primarily as Scots in making their contribution. The second phase, which may be labelled as that of "national self-consciousness", occupied the middle third of the 20th century. It is marked

by active collecting in the peripheries and by the formation of new museums or the extension of existing ones to cater for folk life collections, as well as by the appearance of academic institutes and societies, all more or less heavily influenced by Scandinavian models. The third, covering the last decade or two, is marked by consciousness of working folk in urban and industrialised contexts as opposed to the "peasantry" with which the preceding period was much concerned. It is also characterised by concern for topics that are non locational and that cut across traditional class boundaries. The three phases can almost be summed up as those of man, nation, class.

There is, of course, much overlapping in each case, and much is continued from one phase into the next. This paper set out to look at patterns of ethnology in Scotland. It became clear on looking at the historiography of the subject, that much of the background was equally available and applicable to all parts of these Islands. It must be concluded that ethnology in Scotland is not a rare and separate breed. The two main centres are The School of Scottish Studies and the National Museums of Scotland. In practice the former concentrates on oral traditions, though not exclusively. The latter has tended to concentrate, though not exclusively, on material culture, picking up where Sir Arthur Mitchell left off after a gap of nearly three quarters of a century. Like the staff of the School of Scottish Studies in their own subject areas, the present writer keeps closely in touch with colleagues internationally. After four years as a lexicographer, he learned his ethnological trade first by studying Scandinavian practice and later broadening out to other areas, not least Hungary where many scholars pursue methods of approach which are felt to be kin. Comparative work in other countries has been a constant guide and inspiration. The fascination of the interrelationships of words and things has also conditioned much that has been written. Such work will continue; there are plans for an ethnological atlas of Scotland (to bring up to date an existing Medieval Atlas) and for a multi-volume lexicon of Scottish culture as seen in its North-West European setting. At the same

time, studies on individuals are being developed (Fenton, 1987), and ways of using the private diaries of farmers, craftsmen and others whose work fitted into a rhythmic seasonal sequence, are being explored, as a back-up to the ingathering of oral history.

There is, unfortunately, only a small handful of ethnologists in Scotland, a land where historians predominate. They have to be convinced of the virtues of ethnology. That can only be done by weight of scholarship, and that in turn can only be maintained by keeping in touch with international endeavours and trends. The collecting phase has been brought to a usable level, across a broad front. The real analytical thinking now has to follow, touching on all aspects of human culture and not excluding attempts at the construction of a theory of material culture, per se and in clarification of its interpretational role for the broad issues that concern humanity and the interactions of human beings. In the end of the day, it is the present writer's strong feeling – and motivation – that it is not so much the use of ethnology in establishing the "national" identity of Scotland or any other place, or in crossing traditional class-related boundaries, as its role in highlighting international relationships, across political boundaries, that gives it outstanding value for the needs of the present.

Note

A version of this paper is appearing in a special issue of *Ethnographia* that marks the Centenary of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society (1989).

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