

## INTER-ETHNIC MARRIAGE PATTERNS IN LATE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY SHETLAND

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### **Introduction**

This article uses evidence from personal names in an attempt to uncover patterns of inter-ethnic marriage in Shetland in the late sixteenth century, shortly after a large Scots immigration had drastically altered the ethnic makeup of its population. In the debate about the death of the Norn language in Shetland (a Scandinavian language similar to Norwegian and Faroese) and its replacement by Scots (a West Germanic language that shares its roots with English), it has previously been argued that a drastic change in the ethno-demographic makeup of the islands was an important contributing factor to the language shift. In the sixteenth century, large numbers of Scots migrated to Shetland mostly from the Lowland Scottish areas of Angus, Fife, and Lothian. In a relatively short span of time, the Scottish population in the islands rose from negligible numbers to approximately a third of the population.<sup>1</sup> Their numbers and the high status of the incomers' language (the latter inferred from the late nineteenth century onwards and not confirmed by sixteenth-century evidence) could alone be considered enough reason for a language shift. However, it can be helpful to look at other aspects of the demographic change as well.<sup>2</sup>

One of these aspects is exogamy: that is, the rates of intermarriage between members of the different ethnic groups. Exogamy is often mentioned as a mechanism of language shift. Children from an inter-ethnic marriage are often (but not always) brought up proficient in the 'target language', the language of the socially dominant group, rather than in the 'abandoned language' of the socially subordinate group. This paper investigates to what extent the Scots incomers and the original Norse population of Shetland intermarried shortly after the main period of immigration.<sup>3</sup>

### **The history of Shetland up to the sixteenth century**

The Shetland Islands are an archipelago situated in the North Atlantic to the north-east of the Scottish mainland. Previously a dependency of the Norwe-

gian and later Dano-Norwegian kings, the islands came under Scottish rule in 1469. The current author's interest lies primarily in Shetland's linguistic history, and it is from this angle that the current study is approached.

Norwegian emigrants settled in the Shetland Islands in the eighth and ninth centuries, and it has been argued that they entirely displaced the original, probably Celtic, population of the islands. Shetland was administered as part of the Earldom of Orkney until the late twelfth century, when it became a direct dependency of the Norwegian crown. In 1469, the Dano-Norwegian King Christian I pawned Shetland to the Scottish crown as part of the dowry he had agreed to pay for his daughter Margrethe's marriage to King James III.

Scottish influence on the Orkney Islands, geographically close to Shetland but nearer to the Scottish mainland, had started in the thirteenth century, and the Earls of Orkney had been of Scottish descent since 1236. The Sinclairs, earls from 1379 onwards, tried to make their mark in Shetland as well. Still, it is generally believed that Scottish influence in Shetland, apart from administrative and ecclesiastical links, was minimal until after the islands were pledged to Scotland, and 'while there were Scots in Shetland in 1469, they were few and far between'.<sup>4</sup>

There is limited evidence of any significant Scottish migration before 1500, but the names in the court book—a summary of proceedings at the local law court—a century later (1602–1604) suggest Scottish descent for about a third of the population. An earlier document from 1577, a complaint signed by 760 Shetlanders, shows a significant proportion of Scottish names as well.<sup>5</sup>

Donaldson lists three incentives for permanent or semi-permanent migration from Scotland to Shetland.<sup>6</sup> The first was a desire for land, perhaps most easily obtainable after former churchlands became available following the Reformation in 1560, but no less prominent a reason for migration before then. The second reason was trade, the third a more general work-migration. This included not only clergy and administrative personnel, but also other craftsmen.

The professional make-up of the immigrants and their geographical spread across Shetland—witness the documents mentioned above and in the following section—would suggest native Shetlanders and Scots immigrants were very likely to interact on a daily basis. This interaction could have resulted in frequent intermarriage between the two groups.

### **Society, language, and history: the field of (historical) sociolinguistics**

For the first century or so after the birth of linguistics as a modern scientific discipline in the nineteenth century, the linguists' focus was predominantly structural. Historical linguistics, which is concerned with how language changes over time, formulated generalisations of linguistic change in the form of 'laws'. Crucially, these changes were seen as operating and being motivated from *within* the language system.

It was not until the 1950s that a new sub-discipline in linguistics emerged—sociolinguistics—which considered, language in the context of its use. The focus of sociolinguistics lies *outside* the structural language system, in the link between language and society—or perhaps, to be more precise, the link between *variation* in language and *variation* in society. The earliest sociolinguistic work was concerned with language use in bilingual communities, and looked at what language, or language variety, members of these communities used in different situations ('domains') and for what purposes.<sup>7</sup> This early work had a very qualitative character, but it was not long before quantitative methods were applied to linguistic variation as well. This research paradigm, pioneered by William Labov in the 1960s,<sup>8</sup> seeks a statistically significant correlation between a linguistic variable—say, the pronunciation of 't' as a glottal stop in words like *butter*—and social categories such as class, gender, age, educational background, ethnicity, and so on.

Both the qualitative and quantitative sociolinguistic research paradigms revealed much about how language variation patterns within a community; moreover, they showed how these patterns changed over time—either by a study over a longer period, or by correlating variation with speaker age. It was now possible to see how linguistic change spreads through a community.

Because historical linguistics is primarily interested in language change over time, these findings led to interesting new opportunities in that field as well, and from the 1980s sociolinguistic methods have been applied to historical language situations. This new field of historical sociolinguistics includes both diachronic studies, charting a language change through time, and synchronic studies, looking at variation at a specific point in historical time, and applies both qualitative and quantitative methods. Because the surviving information on linguistic and social variation in historical situations is unlikely to be as fine-grained and easily obtainable as similar information in contemporary situations (the 'bad data' problem), historical sociolinguistics draws on generalisations from contemporary sociolinguistics, invoking the Uniformitarian Principle. This principle states that social variation in language was present in historical situations as much as in present varieties, and that linguistic changes spread through the community in similar ways as they do now.

#### *Sociolinguistic approaches to language shift*

From the early years of the discipline, people have been working on minority language groups within a mostly qualitative sociolinguistic framework. Minority language groups who are undergoing a language shift (that is, groups that are giving up their own heritage language in favour of another language, typically a more dominant language in the wider community) are of particular interest—partly in order to understand the process in which the heritage language cedes domain after domain to the dominant language, and partly in order to chart the social processes leading a community to give up their own language. This knowledge about the social causes of language shift can then be used to combat the shift, and strive for language maintenance.<sup>9</sup>

Language shift happens in a bilingual community, where there is an imbalance in the distribution of languages across different domains. Typically, the heritage language is used in more private contexts, while the dominant language of the wider community is preferred in more public and prestigious contexts. Because it is necessary for the minority language speakers to also speak the dominant language, bilingualism spreads through this community. Social pressures cause speakers to assign more and more domains to the dominant language instead of the heritage language, and at a given point, parents decide to teach their children the heritage language no longer, but to bring them up in the dominant language instead. This point, when the heritage language ceases to be the first language that children in the community learn, is called the Primary Language Shift.<sup>10</sup>

The decision not to transmit the heritage language to the children in the community is due to a complex of social factors. There is usually a weighing up of cultural factors,—which favour language maintenance,—against utilitarian factors—which favour language shift. It may well be economically sensible to shift to the dominant language and integrate into the wider community, but it will be at the expense of some cultural identity. Exactly when the utilitarian factors start outweighing the cultural factors may vary from one situation to another.<sup>11</sup>

Contemporary studies have shown various factors to be influential in tipping this balance to the side of language shift. These include participation in the same educational system as the majority-language group, in the same religious institutions, in the same army—in short, increasing integrative socialisation with the majority-language group. Another example of such socialisation is inter-ethnic marriage or exogamy.<sup>12</sup> Various studies of language shift in historical situations have suggested that same factors played a role there too. The current study of exogamy in late sixteenth-century Shetland can give diachronic evidence, supporting the idea that this type of socialisation can play a role in language shift.

### **Previous work on exogamy**

There have been occasional studies over the past decades detailing the relative origins of spouses married in specific parishes.<sup>13</sup> These have generally focused on 'marriage distance' or 'marriage horizon', which is defined as the distance between the parishes of residence of bride and groom at the time of marriage, as indicated in parish marriage registers.

Millard applied statistical methods—chi-square tests and regression analyses, among others—to his data to find significant migration links between urban and urban parishes, and rural and rural parishes. He also found that the geographical direction of migration was not a relevant factor in 'local' migration, but for migration from further away, major transport routes were a significant factor. Hunter applied similar methods to find a preference for marrying in certain periods of the year, in particular around Michaelmas. Outside England, data from marriage registers has been used, for example for

the area around Lille in Northern France, where Lemerrier and Rosental's study showed migration between parishes within larger clusters, but not between clusters of parishes, indicating perhaps a stronger preference for migration within the 'local' field than Millard found.

In an attempt to find how accurate an indicator of migration marriage registers are, Pain and Smith used not parish of residence, as shown in marriage registers, but cross-referenced data from marriage registers with information about parishes of *origin*, which appears in baptismal records. They found that marriage registers underestimate personal mobility, as people tended to marry after taking up residence outside their birth parish. In a follow-up study, Bellingham found that this was especially the case for periods of rapidly increasing population in a parish.

The present study differs from this previous work in several respects. Where the exogamy in the above studies was spatially defined, we are interested in ethnicity-based intermarriage here. Migration is obviously relevant, as that is how the multi-ethnic society of sixteenth-century Shetland came about, but our interests here are rather in the interactions of the two groups once *in situ*, and not in the origins or directions of the migration. As we will see below, the available data would not have allowed the latter to be observed. Finally, information about people's ethnicity is not explicitly mentioned in the data, but has to be inferred from people's names.<sup>14</sup>

## Methods

There are very few sources available for Shetland population statistics. Lists of names can be derived from a 1577 complaint (more on which below) and from surviving courtbooks from 1602–04 and 1612–29. However, as these contain predominantly male names and no significant information about marriage, the source that is best suited for the present study is the Index to the Register of Testaments, a list of names of people whose wills were executed in the early seventeenth century. Such lists are available for various parts of Scotland, including Shetland, and contain both female names and the necessary information about marriage, cross-referencing between entries for husbands and wives (see Table 1). Data from the Register will be used here to undertake a quantitative analysis of marriage patterns.<sup>15</sup>

The Index to the Register of Testaments lists the name of the deceased and the date on which the deceased's will was executed. It contains approximately 1,050 entries. Of these, some 300 pertain to women; the other 750 are men. Where women are listed, the name of their husband—whether they be married or widowed—appears in the entry as appropriate. This is the case for 270 women, and only a small minority are not listed as having been married. Similar information is not systematically available for men; information about marriage is only available if a male entry is cross-referenced to a woman's testament. About 250 men are only mentioned in the Register as the husband of a deceased woman.

**Table 1 Excerpt from the Shetland Register of Testaments**

<b>Wischart</b> , Andrew, in Melbie in Sandness par. of Waiss	28 July 1613
" Helen, spouse to James Christopherson in Midsetter in the Isle of Papa	31 July 1630
" John, in Skarversetter in Waiss. <i>See Mansdochter</i> Nans.	
" Nicoll, in Brinzetter	13 July 1648
" Peter, in Estabuster in the Isle of Papay par. of Waiss	24 July 1613
<b>Work</b> , George, in Clet in Quhailsay. <i>See Cull</i> Katherine	
" John, in Scallowaybanks par. of Tingwall	28 Oct. 1628
<b>Wright</b> , Agnes, spouse to William Forsyth in Scallowaybanks	27 Sept. 1648
<b>Young</b> , Ola, in Uphous par. of Papa	16 Sept. 1635

It is not certain how representative this sample of marriages is. The Register covers the years 1611 to 1650, but there appear to be considerable gaps. It also shows a heavy bias towards the northern islands and parishes, in particular Unst, and it is unlikely this reflects major centres of population in the North. Conversely, the parish of Tingwall, which includes Scalloway, at the time the administrative centre of the islands, is only represented by ten marriages. Only two marriages are listed for the island of Foula; only two married women dying in the space of 40 years on an island thought to have up to 200 inhabitants around 1720 seems very meagre indeed.<sup>16</sup>

As the Register shows people who had made wills, it also shows a bias towards this particular group of people. According to Scottish law at the time, '[n]o persone may have ane air bot he who is aither ane prelat, burges, or in fie undenueded.'<sup>17</sup> Also excluded from making wills were the insane, the dumb and deaf, and minors. There were also restrictions on married women making wills.<sup>18</sup> How much these rules were adhered to is another question which unfortunately the limited data available cannot answer.

There is generally some delay between a person's death and the execution of their testament. The average delay appears to have been between one and one and a half years, but in individual cases could be up to eight years or even longer.<sup>19</sup> The dates in the Register are therefore only a reasonable estimate of a person's date of death. If we follow Donaldson's assumption that the bulk of the Scottish immigration to Shetland took place in the latter half of the sixteenth century, the recorded deaths are possibly those of some original immigrants, but most will be of the first generation after the Scottish immigration.

Because of its date, the Register of Testaments is very well suited to a survey of inter-ethnic marriage patterns shortly after the Scottish immigration. There are

doubts about the list's representativeness of early seventeenth-century Shetland population in general, but despite these it is believed that it is still possible to discover general trends.

#### *Defining ethnicity*

The ethnicity of the people in the Register was determined on the basis of their names. This follows a previous use of the Register as onomastic, or name-based, evidence by Donaldson. He used data from the Register, as well as from one of the surviving court books (1602–04), to estimate 'the racial composition of the people of Shetland as it was in the early seventeenth century'. We need, of course, to be very cautious when using onomastic evidence as a clue to ethnicity or 'linguistic allegiance'. There is nothing to stop a name from being borrowed and used in another ethnolinguistic context, obscuring any clear ties between language, ethnicity and names. In the case of Shetland, this has indeed been observed: there was a steady decline of typically Norse names in favour of Scots names in the sixteenth century.<sup>20</sup>

But even if we ignore the unreliable nature of onomastic evidence in itself, we still need to deal with some other problems this evidence poses. These were identified by Donaldson. Firstly, the surnames only show paternal descent. A Scottish name only indicates a Scottish father, and it is possible that all the person's other ancestors were Norse, and vice versa. Donaldson argues that occurrences both ways will even each other out. For the period so shortly after the Scots immigration, this is likely to be a reasonable assumption.

#### *What is Norse, what is Scots in Shetland personal names?*

Another problem Donaldson addressed, although without giving a conclusive solution, is that it is not always clear whether a name is Scots or Norse. The guidelines set up by Norwegian place-name scholar Berit Sandnes for deciding whether place-names in Orkney were of Norse or Scots origin may be of use in this respect.<sup>21</sup>

- 'Probably Norse' are names with remaining Norse morphology [*that is, word elements*], or names with a Norse generic.
- 'Probably Scots' are names where all elements are Scots (including local borrowings from Norse), or names with a Scots generic.
- 'Uncertain' are names where all elements can be either Norse or Scots.

In the case of uncertain names, there may be circumstantial evidence to suggest Norse or Scots origins, such as a very early or late date of first occurrence. Translating from place-names to personal names, 'generics' correspond to people's surnames; first names are what Sandnes would call 'specifiers'. If it is possible to determine which elements are Norse, and which are Scots, we should be able to make at least an educated guess of the person's ethnicity.

A factor that complicates this, however, is the language of the Shetland

records. They were written down in Scots, and it is possible that some of the Norse names were Scotticised in the process. Sandnes gives examples of people using a Scots version of their name in Scots-language documents, and a Norse version in Norse-language documents—a not uncommon event; witness for example the attested Danicisation of Faroese names in Danish-language records from the Faroe Islands.<sup>22</sup> Donaldson mentions particularly the Shetland Norn form of *Sigurdsson*, which may appear in the records as *Shewartson*, *Stewartson*, or even just *Stewart*—the name of one of the most famous (and infamous) Scottish families in Shetland history: Robert and Patrick Stewart, 1st and 2nd Earls of Orkney (including Shetland) are well known for their brutal reign in the islands.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Norse and Scots names in Shetland: first names*

The most extensive study of personal names in Shetland is presented in a recent article by Tom Schmidt. The starting point for Schmidt's research is the already mentioned document from 1577, a complaint against misrule by the laird, Laurence Bruce of Cuthmalindie, signed by a large number of 'commons and inhabitants' of Shetland. (As these were all men, judging from Schmidt's article, this document is not suitable for the study of marriage patterns at the time.) Schmidt focuses on both first names and surnames. He divides the first names in the complaint letter into three categories: Norse names, such as *Olav* or *Magnus*, accounting for 30 per cent of the people named, international names like *John* or *Peter* (55 per cent), and British names such as *Robert* or *Bruce* (15 per cent).<sup>24</sup> He gives complete lists of the names he considers to belong to each of these three categories.

Schmidt's lists are a very useful starting point, especially in combination with the list of Norse names from Shetland by Hermann Pálsson. There is, however, some room for criticism. Firstly, some names seem to be placed in the wrong category. Schmidt treats *Hucheon* as a form of Norse *Håkon*. It is possible that Scots scribes scotticised *Håkon* to *Hucheon* in some cases, but it is also a diminutive of the British name *Hugh*. Schmidt also fails to recognise *Myches* (classed as an international name) and *Machis* (as British) as possible forms of the international name *Matthew* (or *Matthias*).<sup>25</sup> Secondly, the names *William*, *Henry* and *Richard* are listed as British, although Schmidt admits related forms (*Vilhelm*, *Hendrik* and *Rikard*) occur in Norway, especially in Western Norway, which was the area with which Shetland had the most intensive contacts. In this light, a classification as international names would perhaps have been more suited.

In his discussion of international names, including the three mentioned directly above, Schmidt focuses more on etymology, and on the question of whether names are historically demonstrably related, than on the forms themselves. However, it is clear that although, for example, *John* and *Hans* are related forms, they stem from different linguistic traditions. For some, but not all, of the international names, the form may give another clue to ethnicity. Local preferences for certain international names can also be distinguished, for instance the name *Erasmus* (the patron saint of the Hanseatic League) can be



expected to have been more popular in Hansa-influenced Scandinavia than in Lowland Scotland.

The Norse form of an international name may have been different from the Scots form, but as writers were working within a Scots tradition, we must be aware of a certain amount of scotticisation. (Adaptation of names will always have been a scotticisation of a Norse name; the inverse process is possible but very unlikely.) It therefore seems safe to say that if a name occurs in a Norse form, it is likely to reflect Norse ethnicity, but international names in a Scots form cannot be taken as conclusive evidence about ethnicity because of the possible scotticisation.

*Norse and Scots names in Shetland: surnames*

Schmidt distinguishes three types of surnames in his data: patronymics, which are names based on the first name of the person's father, by-names, which can indicate a person's characteristics or profession, and habitation names, which stem from the name of the place a person lives. All of these can be 'true' or 'fixed'. For 'true' names, the system is still productive, and the surname actually indicates a person's father's name, their characteristics or their place of residence. If the names are 'fixed', they have been passed unchanged from generation to generation and their meaning need no longer necessarily apply to the name-bearer.

As the Register of Testaments includes people's place of residence, we can see that none of the habitation names in the data seem to be true. This is all the more interesting since Schmidt did find true habitation names in his 1577 data. The habitation names may give a clue to the bearer's ethnicity, as it is clear where the place is that the person is named after. There is a small number of habitation names based on Shetland place-names: *Kirkhouse*, *Gott*, and *Inkster*. These may point to Shetland (Norse) origins. Alternatively, these people may have been Scots immigrants who named themselves after their newly acquired land: after all, landownership was an important incentive for migration. Orcadian place names, such as *Halcro* and *Linklater*, pose an additional problem in that Orkney is thought to have been far more Scotticised than Shetland at the time, although Norn was still being spoken there too. These Orcadians' 'linguistic allegiance' is very difficult to determine.

The second type of surnames, by-names, occurs in Schmidt's 1577 data, but only very rarely in combination with a Scandinavian given name. As the data in neither Schmidt's data nor the Register of Testaments give a clue to whether the by-names are true or fixed (and likely to be Norse or Scots, respectively), it seems wisest to count them as Scots, following the strong Scots bias in this type of names that Schmidt has observed.

Patronymics, finally, are thought to have no longer been used in Lowland Scotland and Orkney by the late sixteenth century. Donaldson, however, notices the possibility of incomers conforming to local practices and giving their children true patronymic surnames rather than fixed ones. True

patronymics were still the standard in Shetland at the time; indeed, the last Shetlander with a true patronymic did not die until the 1920s.

On the whole it seems relatively safe to classify at least the patronymics ending in *-dokter* as true, and therefore as Norse, although some reservations to this assumption are discussed below. Those ending in *-son*, however, pose another problem in that many Scots surnames were originally patronymics too. In these cases we can follow Sandnes' method and look at the specifiers, the fathers' first names. It is highly likely that *Manson*, *Magnusson* (from *Magnus*), and *Ola(v)son* (from *Ola(v)*) are of Norse origin, and given the clear Shetland bias for the international name *Erasmus*, *Erasmusson* is also very likely to point at Norse ethnicity. Other names are less clearly Norse, and further evidence is needed.

#### *Surname Profiler*

A useful tool for providing this further evidence is the 'Surname Profiler' on the 'Spatial Literacy' website, a web-based search facility into the distribution of surnames in Great Britain. The data are based on a recent research project at University College London. The profiler only shows the relative frequency of a name compared to other areas in Great Britain, and the oldest available data is as recent as from 1881, three centuries after the oldest people in the Register. Nonetheless, the 1881 data on this website may suggest some further classification of names, as follows.<sup>26</sup>

- The names *Laurenson* and *Walterson* are highly frequent in Shetland, but very infrequent elsewhere in Britain. This is interesting as Schmidt has *Walter* as a purely British name, and *Laurence* as an international name (but with high frequency also in Western Norway). Independent Scots-based patronymic formation is conceivable, but as the names hardly occur outside Shetland, this would rather suggest a local formation, with both *Laurenson* and *Walterson* suggesting Norse ethnicity.
- The name *Nicolson* occurs with high frequency only in Shetland and in the Highlands and Western Isles. The name *Nicolson* we find in the Highlands is an anglicised version of *MacNeacail*, and although members of this family migrated to Shetland, via Lowland Scotland, this was not before the late seventeenth century; the *Nicolsons* in the Register of Testaments are therefore most likely to be of Norse ethnicity.<sup>27</sup>
- The names *Simonson* and *Thomason* are interesting in that these forms are very particular for Shetland only, at least in a Scottish context.<sup>28</sup> The shorter forms *Simpson* and *Thomson* (including spelling variants) are found throughout Scotland, including Shetland. English patronymics in general seem to prefer formation with a shorter form of the father's name. It seems reasonable to suggest that the long forms are Norse formations; the short forms are inconclusive.

### *Initial observations*

Some of the names in the Register caused a problem for this survey as they did not conform to expected patterns. These were primarily Norse first names with a Scots surname, such as *Ingagarth Sinclair* (of Kirkabister, Yell), or *Sinevo Fraser* (of Clivocast, Unst). The Sinclairs had been trying to make their mark in Shetland since acquiring the Earldom of Orkney in 1379 and will have been among the earliest immigrants. The Frasers, too, migrated to Shetland at an early stage.<sup>29</sup> These names seem to point to inter-ethnic marriage among the earliest immigrants.

Another interesting set of names is *Agnes Bothwelsdochter* (Quoyfirth, Northmavine), *John Bothwelson* (Brough, Yell) and *Bothwell Erasmusson* (Hamnavoe, Unst). These appear to be true patronymics, but the first element is unmistakably Scots. This could be an example of Shetlanders borrowing Scots names, as mentioned by Sandnes. However, *Bothwell* is a surname based on a Lanarkshire place-name, not a first name. It is unlikely that patronymics would be formed from what would have been understood as a surname. It is possible the name *Bothwell* was understood as a first name because it appears parallel to Norse first names such as *Thorwald*. An alternative explanation for *Bothwelsdochter*, and similar true patronymics with an unmistakably British specifier, is that incomers conformed to local naming practices. However, given the attested sixteenth-century decline in Norse names in favour of Scots names mentioned earlier, the former explanation is perhaps likely to apply to more cases than the latter.

### **Results and discussion**

Allowing for considerable leniency and educated guesswork in the allocation of ethnicity to names, it was still necessary to exclude about one-fifth of the marriages in the Register from the research, as the names of either or both of the spouses were ambiguous. This left 216 marriages, which were then divided into three groups: mono-ethnic Scots, mono-ethnic Norse, and inter-ethnic marriages. The distribution of these marriages is shown in Table 2. Included in the table is the distribution one would expect if all the men and women from the sample married regardless of ethnicity.<sup>30</sup>

#### *Rates of inter-ethnic marriage*

The analysis shows that mixed marriages account for approximately a third of the sample. So shortly after the initial immigration, this suggests that the two ethnic groups were well integrated pretty much from the start, although a random distribution would see significantly more inter-ethnic and fewer mono-ethnic marriages. Of course, we need to keep in mind that the sample is not necessarily representative of Shetland as a whole.

The results differ from parish to parish quite strongly. Looking only at the five best-represented parishes (to stay on the statistically safe side), there is a clear difference between Dunrossness in the South, and Northmavine, Unst, Yell and Fetlar in the North of Shetland. Dunrossness was a major centre for Scottish

**Table 2 Inter-ethnic marriage patterns in late-sixteenth century Shetland**

Parish	<i>n</i>	N-N	N-S	S-N	Mixed	S-S
<i>Northern Shetland</i>						
Unst	50	20	9	13	22	8
Northmavine	24	12	2	7	9	3
Fetlar	18	8	5	4	9	1
Yell	17	7	0	6	6	4
	109	47 (43%)	16	30	46 (42%)	16 (15%)
<i>Mid-Shetland</i>						
Nesting & Lunnasting	12	6	3	0	3	3
Delting	11	8	1	0	1	2
Sandsting & Aithsting	11	8	1	0	1	2
Walls & Sandnes	10	2	0	3	3	5
Whiteness & Weisdale	7	2	1	1	2	3
Whalsay	6	1	1	2	3	2
Papa Stour	4	1	1	0	1	2
Foula	2	0	0	2	2	0
	63	28 (44%)	9	9	18 (29%)	17 (27%)
<i>Southern Shetland</i>						
Dunrossness	17	2	1	0	1	14
Tingwall	10	1	1	3	4	5
Bressay, Burra and Quarff	6	1	0	2	2	3
Lerwick	1	0	0	0	0	1
	34	4 (12%)	2	5	7 (21%)	23 (67%)
Unspecified	10	2	2	2	4	4
Total	216	81 (37%)	29	46	75 (35%)	60 (28%)
Expected	216	65 (30%)	45	62	107 (50%)	44 (20%)

**Note:** The letters N (Norse) and S (Scots) refer to the ethnicity of the spouses, with the husband's ethnicity named first.

immigration, while Scots were less numerous in the North. For the Northern parishes, the patterns of inter-ethnic marriage do not differ significantly from what we can expect if people married irrespective of ethnicity ( $p=0.1755$ , where values of  $p<0.05$  are considered significant). There are significant deviations from expected patterns for Mid- ( $p<0.0001$ ) and Southern Shetland ( $p<0.0140$ ), and for Shetland as a whole ( $p<0.0001$ ).

#### *Marriage preferences by ethnicity*

These significant deviations in areas where Scots were more numerous, and where Scots marriage partners therefore were more readily available, could suggest that Scots had a preference for marriage partners of their own ethnicity, possibly for reasons of status. However, mono-ethnic Norse marriages are also more numerous than in a random distribution.

**Table 3 Preference for marriage partners by ethnicity**

	<i>n</i>	Scots partner	Norse partner
Scots	195	120 (62%)	75 (32%)
Norse	237	75 (38%)	162 (68%)

Table 3 shows the Shetlanders' marriage preferences by ethnicity. Of the Scots, 38 per cent entered into an exogamous marriage, while 32 per cent of the Norse did so. The ethnic make-up of the population would predict that the percentages should be 55 per cent for the Scots and 45 per cent for the Norse. Both groups engaged in exogamous marriage 0.7 times as often as can be expected; in other words, they were both equally averse to exogamous marriage. This preference for endogamous marriage is statistically highly significant ( $p < 0.0001$  for both groups).

#### *Marriage preferences by gender*

Another issue that needs to be addressed is a possible gender division in the choice of marriage partners by ethnicity. From Table 2 we can conclude that of the mixed marriages, a substantially larger portion involved a Scottish man and a Norse woman. This is interesting in light of theories of women being more inclined to strive towards social upward mobility, and in particular of women playing a leading role in language shift and language change towards a standard or prestige variety.<sup>31</sup>

However, as the proportion between Norse-Scots and Scots-Norse marriages in the data is not significantly different ( $p = 0.54$ ) from what we would expect (Table 4), it is more likely to be a result of a possible imbalance in the gender make-up of the Scots population of Shetland at the time. Donaldson writes about 'a certain number of Scots [who] came to Shetland for a time for one reason or another but returned to Scotland'.<sup>32</sup> These Scots that came to Shetland with the intention of work rather than settlement are perhaps more likely to have been male than female, and a surplus of Scots males means that women would be more likely than men to marry a Scots partner.

The aversion to inter-ethnic marriage by the Norse population and the absence of a clear leading role for Norse women in inter-ethnic marriage could suggest that the high status modern historians tend to assign to the Scots immigrants was not perceived as such by Shetlanders around 1600.

#### *Generational differences*

The data not only show clear geographical differences, but also generational differences. In Table 5, the data are separated by the decade in which the married woman died. In light of the available data, this is the closest we can get to showing generational differences. The data set is spread over time and space in similar ways, so each period in the generational data covers an equally wide range of parishes.

**Table 4 Gender division in ethnically mixed marriages**

	<i>n</i>	Norse husband Scots wife	Scots husband Norse wife
Actual	75	29 (39%)	46 (61%)
Expected	107	45 (42%)	62 (58%)

**Table 5 Development of marriage patterns 1611–50**

Decade	<i>n</i>	Norse	Mixed	Scots
1611–20	67	37 (55%)	21 (31%)	9 (13%)
1621–30	70	26 (37%)	24 (34%)	20 (29%)
1631–40	33	12 (36%)	10 (30%)	11 (33%)
1641–50	46	6 (13%)	20 (43%)	20 (43%)
Total	216	81 (37%)	75 (35%)	60 (28%)

The data show that over time the proportion of mono-ethnic Norse marriages dropped spectacularly, and there was a similarly spectacular percentage rise in mono-ethnic Scots marriages. The rate of inter-ethnic marriage, interestingly, stayed more or less the same. There are several possible explanations for this. Firstly, as inter-ethnic marriage involved predominantly Scots men, the next generation would turn up in the records with a Scots surname and be very likely to be counted as Scots according to the method used. This theory may account for a rise in Scots marriages and a decline in Norse ones, but it does not explain why the amount of mixed marriages should stay the same. Another reason for the rise in mono-ethnic Scots marriages—as well as a rise in the percentage of the population in the data set that are Scottish from 29 per cent in the 1610s to 66 per cent in the 1640s—is that immigration may have continued into the seventeenth century. Finally, as the seventeenth century progressed, there may have been a growing rift of ‘possession’ along ethnic lines. That is to say, the class of people with enough possessions to make a testament may have been increasingly Scotticised. This would mean that the population in the data would be Scotticised as well.

### Conclusion

Using the early seventeenth-century Shetland Register of Testaments as onomastic evidence for patterns of inter-ethnic marriage between the original Norse population and Scots immigrants is a highly tentative affair due to the expected unrepresentativeness of the data and substantial difficulties in assigning ethnicities to names. Despite this, certain tendencies may still be observed.

The proportion of inter-ethnic marriages calculated from the data is 35 per cent. However, as the data is likely to have excluded mostly mono-ethnic Norse marriages, it is probable that the actual rate is likely to have been in the range of 25 to 30 per cent. This is a lower rate than might be expected from a

random distribution of marriage partners, but nonetheless a substantial proportion. Marriage patterns varied across the islands, with the South, in particular the parish of Dunrossness, the only area to show primarily mono-ethnic Scots marriages. As this was the area with the densest Scots population, this is unsurprising.

The data show that Scots were slightly more likely to marry someone from the other group than the Norse, but that both groups married within their own ethnic group more than can be expected from a random distribution. Taking into account the relative sizes of the groups, both appear to have had an equal aversion to inter-ethnic marriage.

In both the Scots and the Norse groups, women were more likely than men to marry a Scots partner. This is probably due to a surplus of men in the Scots population. The difference is not significant enough to confirm patterns of women leading upward social mobility and language shifts, but is reason to question the belief that higher status was assigned to Scots in the islands around 1600.

The later part of the data shows more mono-ethnic Scots marriages and fewer mono-ethnic Norse ones than the data from earlier decades, while the rate of intermarriage remains fairly similar throughout the period. There are several possible explanations for this, but none of them is conclusive. Inter-ethnic marriage occurred on this scale at least from the time of second-generation immigrants onwards and, judging from a number of 'hybrid' names, already from the time of the first-generation immigrants.

Finally, these data seem to confirm the theory that the Scots immigration to Shetland was a contributing factor to the language shift, not only through geographical proximity and daily interaction outside the home, but also through widespread intermarrying of both ethnic groups, bringing daily interactions in the Scots language inside the homes of Shetland.

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### NOTES

1. G. Donaldson, 'The Scots settlement in Shetland', in D.J. Withrington ed., *Shetland and the outside world 1469-1969* (Oxford, 1983), 8-19. On the role of immigration in the language shift, see R. Knooihuizen, 'The Norn-to-Scots language shift in Shetland: another look at sociohistorical evidence', *Northern Studies*, 39 (2005), 105-17.
2. K. MacKinnon, 'Migration, family and education in Gaelic policy perspective' (2006), available from <http://www.arts.ed.ac.uk/celtic/poileasaidh/migration-family-education-Holyrood.pdf> (accessed February 2007).
3. C.B. Paulston, 'Social factors in language maintenance and language shift', in J.A. Fishman ed., *The Fergusonian impact: in honor of Charles A. Ferguson on the occasion of his 65th birthday* (Berlin,

- 1986), 2, 493–511. Some more detailed studies exploring the role of exogamy in language shift are G. Stevens, 'Nativity, intermarriage, and mother-tongue shift', *American Sociological Review*, 50 (1985), 74–83; V. de Klerk, 'The cross-marriage language dilemma: his language or hers?', *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 4 (2001), 197–216; and K.K.Y. Cheng, 'Language shift and language maintenance in mixed marriages: a case study of a Malaysian-Chinese family', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 161 (2003), 81–90.
4. Donaldson, 'Scots settlement', 10.
  5. The study of names in the court book appears in Donaldson, 'Scots settlement'; that of names in the 1577 document in T. Schmidt, 'Torwald of Hoverstad and Williame Makriche: the complexity of the names of the "Commownis and Inhabitantis of Yetland" in 1577', in P. Gammeltoft and B. Jørgensen eds, *Names through the looking glass: Festschrift in honour of Gillian Fellows-Jensen* (Copenhagen, 2006), 254–74.
  6. Donaldson, 'Scots settlement', 11–12.
  7. Fundamental publications in this research paradigm are U. Weinreich, W. Labov and M.I. Herzog, 'Empirical foundations for a theory of language change', in W.P. Lehmann and Y. Malkiel eds, *Directions for historical linguistics: a symposium* (Austin, 1968), 95–188; and with reference to multilingual societies, C.A. Ferguson, 'Diglossia', *Word*, 15 (1959), 325–40. J.A. Fishman's work on language use in the Yiddish community in the United States is another important contribution: for example, 'The sociology of language: an interdisciplinary social science approach to language in society', in Fishman ed., *Advances in the sociology of language* (Den Haag, 1972), 1, 217–380.
  8. W. Labov, 'The social stratification of English in New York City' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1966).
  9. See for example J.A. Fishman, *Reversing language shift: theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages* (Clevedon, 1991). Language maintenance is an issue both because of a language's cultural value in society and because of the added value of language diversity for linguistics: see, for example, D. Crystal, *Language death* (Cambridge, 2000).
  10. This version of events is the essentials of a model of language shift and death published in H.J. Sasse, 'Theory of language death', in M. Brenzinger ed., *Language death: factual and theoretical explorations with special reference to East Africa* (Berlin/New York, 1992), 7–30. It is based on previous research on language shift and death in Scottish Gaelic and the Albanian dialects of Greece, but has since been shown to apply to Manx Gaelic as well: G. Broderick, *Language death in the Isle of Man: an investigation into the decline and extinction of Manx Gaelic as a community language* (Tübingen, 1999). This suggests the model may be more widely applicable.
  11. M. Ehala, 'An evaluation matrix for ethnolinguistic vitality', to appear in *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference of Minority Languages*, Trieste 2005, available from <http://www.tu.ee/fil/ehala/pdf/EthnolinguisticvitalityTrst.pdf>; A. de Swaan, 'Endangered languages, sociolinguistics, and linguistic sentimentalism', *European Review*, 12 (2004), 567–80.
  12. Paulston, 'Social factors', 498–9.
  13. J. Millard, 'A new approach to the study of marriage horizons', *Local Population Studies*, 28 (1982), 10–31; A. Hunter, 'Marriage horizons and seasonality: a comparison', *Local Population Studies*, 35 (1985), 38–42; C. Lemerrier and P.A. Rosental, '"Pays" ruraux et découpage de l'espace: les réseaux migratoires dans la région lilloise au milieu du XIXe siècle', *Population* (French edition), 55 (2000), 691–726; A.J. Pain and M.T. Smith, 'Do marriage horizons accurately measure migration? A test case from Stanhope parish, County Durham', *Local Population Studies*, 33 (1984), 44–8; R.A. Bellingham, 'The use of marriage horizons to measure migration: some conclusions from a study of Pocklington, East Yorkshire in the late eighteenth century', *Local Population Studies*, 44 (1990), 52–5.
  14. M. Poulain and M. Foulon ('L'immigration flamande en Wallonie: évaluation à l'aide d'un indicateur anthroponymique', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis = Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine*, 12 (1981), 205–44) showed that such onomastic evidence can be a reliable indicator of migration, although their study was restricted to a very salient marker of Dutch-language origin, that is surnames starting with the preposition *van*.
  15. *The court book of Shetland, 1602–1604*, ed. by G. Donaldson (Edinburgh, 1954); *The court book of Orkney and Shetland, 1612–1613*, ed. by R.S. Barclay (Edinburgh, 1962); *The court book of Orkney and Shetland, 1614–1615*, ed. by R.S. Barclay (Edinburgh, 1967); *Court book of Shetland, 1615–1629*, ed.



- by G. Donaldson (Lerwick, 1991); *Commisariat Record of Orkney and Shetland: Register of Testaments*, ed. by F.J. Grant (Edinburgh, 1904).
16. Foula population data from P. Razzell, *The conquest of smallpox: the impact of inoculation on smallpox mortality in eighteenth-century Britain* (Sussex, 1997), 118.
  17. J.A. Clyde ed., *Hope's Major Practicks 1608–1633* (Edinburgh, 1937), 1, 285–335 describes the regulations pertaining to wills and succession. This particular stipulation is on p. 312: 'No person may have an heir but he who is either a prelate, burgess, or in fee undenuded', that is, someone who holds something in fee—lands, right, heritage or office—but who has not resigned it.
  18. Clyde ed., *Hope's Major Practicks*, 285-6: 'Ane womane being frie, and not subject to no man, may make ane testament, bot, if she be under the pouer of her husband, she may not dispoun upon any goods without his consent.' As in only 10 per cent of cases does the wording suggest that the husband died before the wife, we may conclude that husbands typically did consent to their wives making their own wills.
  19. This statistic is obtained by cross-referencing the date for the execution of the wills of Shetland clergymen with information about their deaths in H. Scott ed., *Fasti ecclesiae scoticanae: the succession of ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, 7 (Edinburgh, 1928). The delay of eight years was in the case of Euphane Cranstane, wife of Nicol Whyte, minister of Dunrossness. There is no evidence that women's testaments were only executed after their husbands' death, as Whyte was known to have been alive eight years after Cranstane's testament was executed.
  20. The term 'linguistic allegiance' is from B. Sandnes, 'Personnavn i kontakt i de skandinaviske vikingtidskoloniene', *Studia Anthroponymica Scandinavica*, 22 (2004), 43–58, on p. 45. On Shetland naming practices, see also Hermann Pálsson, 'Norse personal names in early Shetland', in H. Cheape ed., *Tools and traditions: studies in European ethnology presented to Alexander Fenton* (Edinburgh, 1993), 247–55.
  21. B. Sandnes, *Fra Starafjall til Starling Hill: dannelse og utvikling av norrøne stedsnavn på Orknøyene* (Trondheim, 2003); 'What is Norse, what is Scots in Orkney place-names?', in P. Gammeltoft, C. Hough and D. Waugh eds, *Cultural contacts in the North Atlantic region: the evidence of names* (Lerwick, 2005), 173–80.
  22. Sandnes, 'Personnavn i kontakt i de skandinaviske vikingtidskoloniene', 46–7.
  23. On the Danicisation of Faroese names, see J.H.W. Poulsen, *Mál í mæti: greinasavn eftir Jóhan Hendrik W. Poulsen útgivið í sambandi við sjeiti ára føðingardag hansara 20. juni 2004* (Tórshavn, 2004), 135.
  24. The term 'British' here could be argued to be an anachronism, and some may prefer to describe this as 'English' and 'Scottish' instead. However, it is difficult to tell whether the British names are English or Scottish due to England and Scotland's shared and intertwined (linguistic) histories. For the purposes of this study, it is less important to distinguish between English and Scots names than it is to oppose Anglo-type names against Scandinavian type names.
  25. G.F. Black, *The surnames of Scotland: their origin, meaning, and history* (New York, 1946).
  26. Available at <http://www.spatial-literacy.org/UCLnames/default.aspx> (accessed September 2006–January 2007).
  27. W.D.H. Sellar and A. Maclean, *The Highland clan MacNeacail MacNicol: a history of the Nicolsons of Scorrybreac* (Watnish, 1999), 28.
  28. Outside Shetland, Thomason also occurs in Lancashire, and Simonson in County Durham. However, it is unlikely that a large-scale migration from Northern England to Shetland took place in this period, and the English occurrences are ignored for the sake of this argument.
  29. Donaldson, 'Scots settlement', 10.
  30. An alternative analysis with a stricter method of assigning ethnicity to names left only 151 marriages, or roughly half of the data, as opposed to the current four-fifths. Because there is not much data and the data may not be representative to begin with, it was considered preferable to use the method that left a larger part of the data intact, rather than feign a greater accuracy of results that will only ever be tentative.
  31. This is known in sociolinguistics as the 'sex prestige pattern': see, for example, R.A. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics* (Cambridge, 1996), 195–9.
  32. Donaldson, 'Scots settlement', 13.