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THE IMPORTANCE OF OLD AND NEW SYMBOLISM IN MODERN SCOTTISH NATIONAL IDENTITY

Abstract

This paper considers the use of myths and symbols, and the culture and values that underpin contemporary Scottish Identity. Symbols and myths play very important role in contemporary Scottish national identity, and many have a centuries-old tradition and are clearly associated with Scottishness, while others, created much later, are an important element of national belonging for Scots. Interestingly, some of these symbols and myths are so prominent and expressive that they are associated with Scottishness around the world. Others, on the other hand, are less recognisable worldwide, but have significant efficacy in Scotland. The importance of symbols that underpin, define and re-enforce Scottish national identity cannot be understated. They are evidence of pride in being Scottish and of belonging to the Scottish nation. Symbols and myths enable Scots, both old and new to express their national belonging. Furthermore, they provide an important element of national cohesion and a sense of national identity in turbulent times. We consider the issue of the song, dress, land and flag of the nation, and how they contribute to a sense of Scottishness at home (and abroad) today.

Keywords: Scotland, nationalism, national identity, symbols

INTRODUCTION

This paper critically considers the significance of key myths and symbols that help underpin a sense of Scottish national identity today. The importance of national identity in general (and Scottish national identity in

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particular) cannot be understated in the modern era. During the last 25 years, Scotland the nation, and the wider state that is the United Kingdom (UK), and of which Scotland is a part, has undergone significant constitutional, institutional and societal change. In 1997, a referendum to establish a distinct (albeit devolved) Scottish parliament was passed. Only 17 years later, Scotland held a referendum on independence, and voted to stay in the UK Union. This event was very shortly followed two years later by the now (in)famous Brexit referendum of 2016, where the UK voted to leave the European Union. Scotland represents a very key case study among westernised democracies, many of which face challenges to their established political order and boundaries.

What is perhaps less evident from among the noise of these events is the significant shift in Scottish political attitudes that can be found within the same period. When the Scottish Parliament came into being in 1999, the first results predicated a pattern of a distinctive Scottish politics. What has been clear since then is that Scotland has exhibited divergent voting behaviours, in direct contrast to the other areas of the UK, and especially England. Although this pattern was initially obvious from the late 1970s (Miller 1981), it has become much more significantly pronounced and the last decade plus of electoral results has seen the Scottish National Party (SNP), a party dedicated to Scottish Independence and the breakup of the UK, become the dominant party in the Scottish parliament, and the third largest party in Westminster, the UK parliament. At the last UK General Election, the SNP won another landslide victory, and returned 48 out of 59 Scottish MPs, after gaining 45% of the votes cast.

The level of Scottish electoral support given to the SNP in 2019 was exactly the same as the vote share gained for the wider, pro-independence side in 2014, when Scotland (on a turnout of 84.6%) vote 55% to 45% to stay a part of the UK. However, despite that result, the continued electoral dominance of the SNP means that the conversation in Scotland today is very much about when the next referendum on Scottish independence will take place, not whether one will do so. The idea of a distinct Scottish state, which has not existed in over 300 years, is very much an ongoing discussion in contemporary Scotland, the UK and the wider world. The political union between Scotland and England, which came into existence in 1707 seems much less firm today than it has in many decades.

The strength of Scottish national identity today is clear in term of demands for statehood and independence, but this has not always been the

case. Scotland has a long history of ambivalence towards the Union, both when it came into existence in 1707 and today (Devine 2017). Furthermore, what is undeniable is that, despite the Union, Scotland's sense of self, its sense of identity, has always remained. Such a sense of identity, and perceptions about what being Scottish meant and how strong it was may well have fluctuated throughout the last three hundred plus years (Mitchell 2014), but they have always been present.

Mitchell (2014) in a discussion on the efficacy of national identity, highlighted 'the daily plebiscite' – the idea that the existence of a nation cannot be taken for granted. This concept, presented by Ernest Renan in 1882, is predicated around the constant renewal of the nation in daily life, as the nation seeks to sustain itself and continue its existence. It has clear echoes today in the ideas and arguments around 'banal nationalism' (Billig 1995) and 'everyday nationalism' (Edensor 2002), but also within the theoretical framework of ethnosymbolism, which allows for the examination of a nation over the longer term. This approach (considering 'la longue durée') means that nationalism and a nation may be understood through its developments over time (Armstrong 1982; Smith 2010) and further emphasises that history is important in the understanding of a national identity (Smith 1986).

Therefore, it is through the lens of ethnosymbolism that we shall approach our analysis and especially our consideration of the importance of symbols which underpin Scottish national identity, and allow residents of Scotland to express their sense of national identity and nationhood. Specifically, in employing the ethnosymbolist approach, and how it allows for this examination, this article will consider key historical symbols and myths, such as land, flags, songs and dress, which play an important role in the construction of Scottish national identity today. Then, we shall consider how these symbols and myths contribute towards a contemporary sense of Scottishness.

DISCUSSION OF THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING OF SCOTTISH IDENTITY

There are several means by which scholars have sought to understand and classify the nature of nationalism and national identity (see, for example, Smith 2010 or Özkirimli 2017). A significant majority of scholars of Scotland and Scottish national identity have tended to fall into the modernist

camp, stressing the lack of pre-modern roots, with their key position starting from the argument that nations and nationalism simply did not exist prior to the modern era (Özkirimli 2017). In their examination, modernists tend to emphasis the more civic and inclusive aspects of identity and belonging in modern Scotland (Soule, Leith and Steven 2012), focusing on the civic autonomy and institutional aspects of Scottishness during the modern period. The argument goes that Scottish nationalism is 'one of the least romantic nationalist movements' (Keating 2001, 221) because this form of nationalism 'emphasizes the civic instead of the ethnic and the territorial rather than the tribal, because the history that counts is the one which stresses the role of public institutions and individual participation in that public culture' (Soule, Leith and Steven 2012, 5).

However, ethno-symbolism draws upon elements from a number of previous forms of study of nationalism, including modernism, and considers a wider range of both factors, and as mentioned above, time. The addition of history, culture and ethnic aspects of belonging to an examination of a nation, and the related national identity, allows for a fuller understanding of nations today. Armstrong (1982) highlighted the importance of understanding the attitudes of individuals within their own minds, touching upon the similar idea of the nation as an 'imagined community' of the mind (Anderson 1983). Thus, ethnosymbolism draws upon a variety of previous approaches, modernism, and other theoretical forerunners, perennialism and primordialism (Smith 1998; Leith and Soule 2012), and this allows for a wider understanding of contemporary nations.

National identity must be considered as both a collective and cultural phenomenon, and while nations are accepted as a thoroughly modern phenomenon, they clearly incorporate features from previous cultures and history, what Smith calls 'ethnies' (1986). If we are to understand national identity today, we need to consider 'the recycling and reinterpretation of historical narratives, figures and other iconography' (Leith and Soule, 2012, 9). Most importantly, ethnosymbolism also focuses on the importance of myths and symbols (Armstrong, 1982) and how they are emotionally and individually interpreted. In addition, Elgenius has argued that 'Symbols provide shortcuts to the group they represent, and symbolism is by nature referential, subjective and boundary-creating' (2011, 396). Such discussion obviously draws in elements of social constructivism, but this is not to say that these symbols are made up, or created out of nothing, and there are clear limitations to the levels to which they can be amended or utilised to

carry specific, especially elite, messages and ideas. This point has been emphasised before (Leith and Soule, 2012).

Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008) have also emphasised the need to understand the nature of nationalism and national identity by focusing on the everyday, by considering nationalism and national identify from the bottom up. In proposing a methodological research approach, they argued that their aim was 'to specify the actual practices and processes through which nationhood is reproduced in everyday life by its ordinary practitioners' (2008, 554). They went on to say that this means considering that the 'broad brush strokes favoured by macro-analytical approaches to the study of nationalism blur (and sometimes obscure) the finer grains of the nation that are embedded in the routine practices of everyday life.' (2008, 553). While we will not rely solely on an examination of routine practices, we shall consider those cultural elements which are employed as a part of the everyday Scotland. In following a similar vein then, we shall now shift to a consideration of Scotland and some specific myths and symbols of Scottishness, and what insights we can thus glean into contemporary Scottish national identity through them.

CONTEMPORARY MYTHS AND SYMBOLS OF SCOTTISHNESS

FLOWER OF SCOTLAND

At the start of major international events, especially sporting ones, the national anthem is played for the countries involved. For example, at the Olympic games, the British Team, if an individual is victorious, would hear God Save the King (GSTK), as this is the official anthem of the UK (although there is an argument that this has no statutory authority or basis for being such, but that would be a pedantic quibble). The national anthem for any Scottish organisation, be it a national sports team, orchestra, or any other organisation is, by default, the national anthem of the UK, GSTK. This status quo exists because while the UK has a national anthem, the constituent nations and regions of the UK do not. However, many do have unofficial anthems, which are utilised in variety of settings in place of GSTK. In Scotland, when the national teams are involved in sporting events, such as rugby or football, the song which is usually, normally, and often played is, Flower of Scotland.

Flower of Scotland was first performed in the mid-1960s and is only about 55 years old. The lyrics were written by Roy Williamson, who was a member of a Scottish folk group called The Corries. It was first broadcast publicly in 1967 on a BBC series. It is written and sung in English, although with a distinct use of Scottish words and phrases. The text of the song has several references, but famously refers to the battle of Bannockburn, fought in 1314, when the Scots, led by Robert the Bruce, fought against the army of Edward II, King of England. This is often the battle pointed to as the one in which Scotland was able to successfully assert its clear independence from England (which was officially recognised in the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton in 1428).

The lyrics include the statement that Scotland '…stood against him, Proud Edward's army. And sent him homeward, Tae think again' in both the first and second verse. It also states that 'But we can still rise now, and be the nation again'. The third verse just as clearly states 'Those days are past now, and in the past they must remain'. However, it has been accused of being historically romantic, dwelling on long past anti-English grievances and events. Of course, it never mentions the term England, but accusations that the tenor and form of the song is somewhat insular and negative are often made. The first verse is sometimes repeated after the third, although at other times only verse one and three are sung.

There are disputes around when it was first used as an 'unofficial' national anthem. It was sung by the national Scotland Rugby Team in 1974, when they toured South Africa, and was also employed during the 1990 rugby Five Nations series, being sung for the starting game against France, and then officially endorsed for the deciding match, which was played in Scotland, at Murrayfield, against England. Scotland won the game and the series (thus, perhaps, reinforcing the positivity associated with the song as an anthem.

According to the BBC (2003), it was officially adopted by the Scottish Football Association as the pre-game national anthem, although it had been used at various matches since 1993. It has also been employed at the Commonwealth Games (where the constituent nations of the UK represent each nation individually). In 2010, it replaced the song, Scotland the Brave, at these events (that song had also been previously employed in both rugby and football events) and again in 2014, where it was sung and played when Scottish participants won a Gold medal. Indeed, it is interesting to note that while Flower of Scotland was the song being sung at the

1990 Five Nations series for rugby, the 1990 World Cup, saw the national Scottish team employing Scotland the Brave as their 'anthem'.

There have been several unofficial, and certainly unscientific, polls over the years to seek some sort of official status for several songs to be considered as Scotland's official national anthem. There have been national newspaper polls, and in 2006, the Royal Scottish National orchestra held an online poll in which five different songs were presented as candidates. Roughly 10,000 votes were cast, and the clear winner was Flower of Scotland. Among the other contenders in the 2010 poll, the last two songs are both works by Robert Burns, and Scots Whae Hae also references the 1314 Battle of Bannockburn.

Table 1. 2010 RNSO Poll for a National Scottish Anthem

Song	% Votes cast
Flower of Scotland	41
Scotland the Brave	29
Highland Cathedral	16
A Man's a Man for A' That	7
Scots Whae Hae	6

Source: The Authors

The idea of a Scottish national anthem has also been discussed in the Scottish Parliament. In 2004, it was reviewed and considered within the official and legal competence of the Scottish parliament, and not a matter reserved for Westminster. It has been the subject of more than one petition to the Scottish parliament, and requests from individuals MSPs, but has never been officially acted upon. The issue of an 'official' Scottish national anthem is probably a fight not worth picking, in these somewhat, politically febrile, times.

There tends to be a negative stance among more leading public figures, and especially members of the political elite, for Flower of Scotland, due to perceptions of potential anti-Englishness or due to what is perceived as the general nature of the song. However, as Ichijo noted 'Despite the official denunciation of the Scottish past, the Scots continue to cherish their memories of Wallace and Bruce, Robert Burns… even after the Union

of 1707' (2004, 155). Whatever the stance among leading elites, the large sporting federations of Scotland have officially adopted Flower of Scotland. It remains a clear favourite among fans, and is sung far and wide throughout Scotland, and beyond, at events, major and minor.

During the last fifty years, Flower of Scotland has replaced previous songs employed as the unofficial Scottish national anthem, and its usage has become widespread. It is clear that it captures a certain sense of Scottishness and resonates with the wider Scottish public. Despite not mentioning the word England or English, it clearly evokes both the historical and traditional 'other' of Scotland (Leith and Sim 2020) and recalls one of the famous battles, if not the most famous, in Scottish history. Despite being less than 60 years old, it has come to represent a myth of Scottishness that, while modern, echoes back into history and derives its status by reference to that history.

Tartanry: Dress and Usage in Modern Scotland

Striped and checked cloths are well known in many European countries, and also in Asia, Africa and South America. In some countries stripes or checks are also used as a definition of individual or group's position within the society (Hinderks 2014, 2). However, tartan, patterned cloth consisting of criss-crossed, horizontal and vertical bands in multiple colours, is recognisable all over the world as an undoubtedly Scottish symbol. It is hard not to agree that tartan is certainly associated with Scottishness. In the Polish language there is a use of the phrase *szkocka krata*, 'Scottish checked pattern', which is associated with the characteristic pattern of tartan. There is, therefore, a clear association of tartan with Scottishness. Probably no other fabric or distinctive pattern is so clearly associated with a particular national identity as tartan.

Tartan enables Scots to express themselves both individually and as a national group. Therefore, it has many levels of meaning and, depending on the design, it gives one an opportunity to be a member of a particular clan. As a result, tartan has both a collective meaning and is a sign of individual belonging. From the Kilt to the scarf, it is employed and utilised as a form of dress throughout Scotland and the wider world.

According to Miller, 'Throughout its history, tartan has been used to express political viewpoints, as well as familial, regional and national identities. It has been viewed as tame and conservative by some; bold, brilliant

and radical by others' (Miller 2021). Indeed, tartan was a very important element during the Jacobite uprising, perhaps the most famous Scottish fight for independence. In order to manifest his affiliation to his followers (Highlanders), Charles Edward Stewart (called Bonnie Prince Charlie) wore a tartan coat. Bonnie Prince Charlie was Scottish, although he was not born in Scotland. Charles first set foot on Scottish land on the island of Eriskay, Outer Hebrides, on 23 July 1745 (Ross 2000, 7). Various portraits on trinkets from the time depicted him clad in his tartan coat (Miller 2021).

After the Jacobite uprising of 1745, Highland dress was statutorily banned under the 'The Act of Proscription'. The Act targeted the law against many aspects of Highland culture, but most notably it banned the wearing of any part of Highland dress and the carrying of weapons (Faiers 2008, 108). The only exception was for Highland regiments of the British army. Hanoverian authorities knew that the wearing of tartan would attract Scottish recruits to join the army, so the traditional dress was kept for those in the service of the British crown.

Despite the fact that the Act was abolished in 1782, the majority of the Highlanders abandoned tartan as everyday dress during this period (Quye, Cheape, Burnett et al. 2000, 3). However, after the ban was lifted, tartan became very fashionable among the urban aristocracy and the burgeoning middle class (Miller 2021). Thus, while a symbol for Bonnie Prince Charlie, who left Scotland in 1746, never to return, and being proscribed to Scots for almost 40 years, tartan not only survived but has again become a symbol of Scottishness. This distinct form of once specifically Highland dress also survives as a symbol of Scottishness throughout the contemporary world.

Coltman argued (BBC 2017) that tartan has always been a really 'partisan cloth' and perhaps that is why it has retained its importance as a symbol of Scottishness. Being Scottish, not British, it is a distinctive symbol of independence that continues to be associated with the individual nationhood of Scots today. Interestingly, and somewhat controversially, Trevor-Roper rejected the assumption that tartan was a clan badge. He claimed that tartan was 'so far from being a traditional Highland dress, it was invented by an Englishman after the Union of 1707; and the differentiated "clan tartans" are an even later invention. They were designed as part of pageant devised by Sir Walter Scott in honour of a Hanoverian king; and owe their present form to two other Englishmen' (Trevor-Roper 1983, 19). However, this claim has been challenged by a number of scholars (Leith 2006). According to them, Trevor-Roper simply misjudged Scotland's past.

Also, even if we acknowledge Sir Walter Scott as the creator of tartans, then almost 200 years could already give rise to a respectable tradition. And it is hard not to agree that the 'rejection of clan tartans threatens to elide the significance of tartan in the late medieval and early modern period' (Quye, Cheape, Burnett et al. 2000, 2).

The most famous tartan today is probably Royal Stewart. The red colour used on this tartan was significant because red dye was very expensive. Only the elite could afford to use this colour to show their status (Hinderks 2014, 3). The term comes from the Royal House of Stewart founded by King Robert II. The Royal Stewart Tartan was also the official tartan of Queen Elizabeth II, and now Charles III, and its royal status probably contributed to the spread of this design. So, once a symbol of Scottish resistance to British rule, one of the most famous of tartans is now a symbol of the British monarchy (The Scotsman 2018). Royal Stewart is formally not allowed to be worn without the Monarch's permission, but it has become a pattern virtually ubiquitous in the mass consciousness. The Royal Stewart Tartan frequently appears on a variety of everyday objects, both those closely associated with Scotland and those where it is simply a decorative pattern. For example, it can regularly be found on biscuit tins for shortbread. In the 1960s, it was ubiquitously worn by Scottish Formula 1 driver Jackie Stewart, and in the 1970s, it adorned the world-famous Scottish Pop Band, the Bay City Rollers. Both are classic examples of the pervasive imagery of this classic Scottish symbol. Thus, tartan has taken on a life of its own and appears in many different areas and levels, 'offering itself simultaneously as textile and garment, as symbol, and as embodiment of national identity and self-image' (Nicholson 2005, 147).

However, while firmly associated with Scotland, tartans often appear in many countries as an element of decoration, especially before Christmas. Tartanry has been used by Seagate Technology, Tommy Hilfiger fashions, Eastman Kodak, General Motors, and many other worldwide famous brands (Paterson 2001). It has been argued that 'The modern Scottish tartan fabric market falls, in fact, into three main areas: the kilt and Highland dress trade, the furnishing trade and the fashion trade with significant exports to France and Italy', and that "Tartan designs are also used in all sorts of contexts to sell all sorts of products, from golf umbrellas to table mats and Christmas gift wrap' (Paterson 2001, 153).

Despite the fact that the idea of tartanry is sometimes described as reducing Scottish culture to kitsch tweets that only evoke ethnic stereotypes

about Scotland, prominent thinkers such as McCrone and Pittock recognise tartan and tartanry as a key element in maintaining Scottish identity (Brown 2005, 15). Tartan remains highly popular and each year new tartan patterns are registered with the Scottish Tartan Register. It is noted that the new designs are vibrant and, according to Miller, 'far from being a dyed-in-the-wool slice of historic Caledonian kitsch' (Miller 2021).

In summation, it is very fair to say that little has changed in the 20 years since Paterson argued that 'Tartan is unassailably Scottish – in the same way that any other product of the Scottish imagination is Scottish' (Paterson 2001, 154). As a symbol of Scotland and Scottishness, tartan perhaps remains number one on any list.

The Land: Loch Ness as a representation of Scotland and Scottishness

Land is an important aspect of being a nation, and Scotland has a very distinct landscape in many respects. While many people may not know the highest mountain in Scotland (Ben Nevis) or be able to name many, if any, major Scottish landmarks, the symbol that is Loch Ness represents both a myth and an evocation of a particular sense of Scotland and Scottishness. The myth of Loch Ness stretches back to ancient times and connects directly to contemporary Scotland. It is important to understand exactly how it represents an aspect of contemporary Scottishness, by evoking a particular sense of land and (Scottish) home.

The first mention of a creature living in the waters of Loch Ness dates back to the time of St Columb, who introduced Christianity to Scotland. According to a biographer of the saint, he saved a man attacked by a monster in 565. St Columb was visiting the king of the Northern Picts near Inverness, where he saw a large beast attacking the man. Columb raised his hand shouting in the name of God at the creature to 'retreat with all speed'. He chased it away, saving the swimmer's life (Lyons 1999).

Scottish folklore is full of stories featuring water animals such as water horses and water kelpies, mythic animals who had magical powers but were also dangerous. One legend told of a water horse that saved some children from drowning but lured others to death. Such gloomy tales must have caused terror and fear among the people living near the lakes, especially children, who, thanks to the stories, could avoid drowning by avoiding immersion in water (Lyons 1999).

The modern legend of the Loch Ness Monster began again in the 1930s, when the Inverness Courier Newspaper carried an account by a local couple

of a 'an enormous animal rolling and plunging on the surface' (Lyons 1999). In July of the same year, George Spicer and his wife wrote to the Inverness Courier that they had seen, while driving beside the lake, a creature so large that it took up the whole road and made their further journey impossible. Described by them as having a 'long neck', this portraiture of the monster appears for the first time, as earlier reports depicted the monster differently as a fish-like or whale-like creature. Later, such an image of the Loch Ness Monster, colloquially called 'Nessie', was perpetuated by the so-called 'surgeon's photograph'' in 1934 – the most famous and presenting a distinctive and worldwide known image of the Loch Ness monster till today (Cairney 2018, 378).

The tale of Nessie is known worldwide. Of course, no one has proved that a monster has ever existed in the deep waters of Loch Ness, but the story has become so attractive that it has survived to the present day. The legend of a monster inhabiting Loch Ness probably did not come from nowhere. The Loch is cold and deep, marked by poor visibility and surrounded by the Scottish Highlands, which gives it a magical and harsh character. As a huge lake of deep waters, such mysteriousness can reinforce people's sense of fear and imagination. The fear relates to many aspects, the possibility of drowning in very deep and cold water, or it may simply mean a fear of the depth and size of this lake. The mystery and myth are probably also deepened by the increased interest in the legend of the monster inhabiting this great lake. It is 24 miles long and a mile and a half wide. Its depth remains unknown; however, it is said that it could reach as deep as 975 feet or more (Tarnas 2009).

While undoubtedly 'Scottish', Nessie is also famous and profitable. It has been argued in the Press and Journal, a leading paper of the Scottish Highlands, that it is worth up to £41 million (2018). Such a myth allows Scotland to be associated with the mystery and inaccessibility of the Loch and the Monster, giving the place and its people a magical character. Allied to the legend is this character of ruggedness, of a wild landscape, of a country set way to the North, which is further emblematic of Scotland as a whole. We can agree with the concept put forward by James Moir that 'In the case of the monster, the mythological elements come together to construct "Scottishness" through the notion of a desolate, wild and remote landscape being associated with a wild mythic creature' (Moir 2015, 13). The beauty of Scottish nature – wild, harsh and demanding – is a symbol of Scottishness around the world. It appears in popular culture and literature,

and it is the wild and rugged north of Scotland that attracts the most attention. It is known that in Scotland, you will find Britain's largest lake, Loch Ness, inhabited by a legendary monster. A place, a myth, and a symbol of the land that is Scotland, Loch Ness/Nessie instantly evokes Scotland and Scottishness.

Indeed, the legend of the monster is so firmly established that almost every aspect of Loch Ness instantly brings to mind an association with the monster living there. Even when wandering around Scotland and using Google maps in the Loch Ness area, if you turn on the street view option, the small, distinctive marker/man turns into a wee green monster. It is clear how strong the legend is when it is embedded in everyday materials. Nessie is a symbol of the land of Scotland, and a symbol employed on one of the largest search engines in social media.

Flagging the modern nation: The Saltire and the Lion Rampant – modern usage and understanding

There can be little doubt about the importance of flags to nations, and the fact that they provide a clear and powerful symbol for members of that nation (Billig 1995). Not only do they provide a rally point socially, and politically (which is, of course, their traditional role on a battlefield), they also serve as a very visual representation of the nation in a modern sense. In short, they 'distil' membership of the nation for any individual (Bechhofer and McCrone 2013). However, any visitor to Scotland could perhaps be confused around the issue of flags. A short trip along the Royal Mile running between the Scottish parliament and Edinburgh castle would introduce visitors to three 'national' flags, the Union flag, the Saltire, and the Lion Rampant. While all represent Scotland, and can certainly be found flying around Scotland on any given day, they all present slightly different versions of Scotland and what Scotland (and Britain) mean.

The saltire is the national flag of Scotland. It is sometimes called the Cross of St Andrew, due to the diagonal nature of the flag being the shape of the Cross upon which that Saint is said to have been crucified. The flag, as a symbol of Scotland, is itself based upon a legend. MacLean (2021) states that according to the legend, the origins of the flag can be traced back to a 9th Century battle where a combined army of Scots and Picts faced an English army out of Northumbria. The Warrior King leading the Scots is said to have prayed that he would make Andrew the patron saint

of Scotland if they won, and the next morning, a large diagonal cross appeared over the battlefield. Despite being outnumbered, the Scots were victorious, and the emblem of St Andrew became the national flag. MacLean argues that it is 'a good story' but with little basis in fact and the flag emerged as a national symbol in the late 13th century. Nonetheless, the village of Athelstaneford, in East Lothian, Scotland, stills labels itself the birthplace of Scotland's flag and has a monument at which a Saltire flies 24 hours every day. Æthelstan was the name of the English King defeated in the fabled battle in 832AD.

The other 'national' flag of Scotland is the Royal Banner of the Royal Arms of Scotland, commonly referred to as the Lion Rampant in Scotland. It is very much an emblem of historical Scotland, although it is technically (since 1672) for the sole use of the sovereign, or only to be used in the performance of royal duties. Yet, its use in Scotland is widespread. In fact, both of these flags are very common sights. They were especially prevalent in the independence debates prior to, and during, 2014. The 'Yes' Movement adopted a stylised saltire, with the word Yes often imprinted within or across the cross within the flag, and the Lion rampant could often be found at the same political rallies, being employed alongside and within the same crowds. Interestingly, the 'No' (No Thanks) Movement of 2014 also employed a stylised version of the saltire, using a slightly offset diagonal cross within badges and flags for their supporters, and at their rallies. Both sides clearly sought to employ emblems and images that resonated with a sense of Scottishness. The 2014 referendum may have been a contemporary debate about modern Scotland, and the future of Scotland, but historical images and contemporary but related symbols were very much an element of the visual aspects of the debate.

The Union Flag, on the other hand, is very much a representation of Britishness and the Union. With the Act of Union in 1707, and the subsequent Union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801, the flag (often, mistakenly, called the Union Jack) was created. It combines the white Cross of St Andrew, the red Cross of St Patrick, triumphed by the Cross of St George. This flag is also regularly seen across Scotland (and the wider UK, obviously) but tends to be employed in more official settings, flying from the Scottish parliament, and UK government offices and Royal Burgh town halls across Scotland.

As Elgenius (2007) notes, 'flags continue to reflect the political realities of nations and are introduced and promulgated during, or after, significant

national events. As a general rule, the history of the flag provides an understanding of the (subjective) history of the nation.' Therefore, the symbolism of the three flags in Scotland is a clear representation of just this. Each flag, despite their respective long historical uses (even the most recent is over 200 years old, and the Saltire may be one of the oldest flags in Europe) provides for a very clear insight into the nature of Scotland that is presented, represented, and deduced from the flag. The 2014 referendum was preceded by a very wide, and very engaged debate within (and beyond) Scotland. The ultimate turnout of almost 85% illustrates that engagement. Any viewer of a rally associated with one side or the other of the debate would have been instantly aware of which side the rally was supporting due to the flags represented within the event. Only the pro Union 'No' side would have had Union Flags within the crowd. Yet, both sides would have had Saltires present, although perhaps the Lion rampant would have only been seen at pro-Independence rallies. What is clear is that both the Union and Saltire flags represent a sense of Scottishness, but only one clearly, and unequivocally represents a sense of Britishness. What can be of little doubt is that, as McCrone has so eloquently stated, flags belong to those symbols which 'imperceptibly reinforce our sense of who we are, where and who we have come from' (2009, p. 39) and within Scotland today, they can also be used to exhibit a clear sense of where an individual thinks the nation should be going.

CONCLUSIONS

Symbols and myths play a significant role in people's increasing psychological identification with their nations. While expressing the feeling of being a part of a larger community (a nation), they allow us to format the national unity. They vary across ethnic and national groups and can be extremely specific to each one of them. As such they can be easily identified by the members of the given group as well as outsiders. Given that 'nation' is an abstract concept, we use symbols and myths to make it visible, distinguish it from others and provide ourselves with a concrete object of identification. Key aspects among national symbology are dress, songs, flags and a sense of home (the land). All have been discussed above, in relation to Scotland and Scottishness. The primary purpose of this paper was to present the importance of myths and symbols in building the current Scottish

national identity. The latter is very strong today and can be expressed at various levels. Being Scottish is a source of pride, while the symbols and myths allow for this pride to be clearly connected to and/or displayed. All these symbols and myths, whether centuries old or more recent, allow Scots to build/enhance/reinforce, and reify, their national identity. While there are many other symbols and myths that could play a crucial role in building Scottish identity, here we have focused on ones that are clearly symbolic and contribute to Scottishness, and remain key elements of the building blocks of any nationalism.

It is through these symbols and myths that Scots can express themselves as a nation. At the same time, because of them, attention is also paid to Scottish national distinctiveness beyond Scotland's borders. Recognisable throughout the world, they can be easily identified with Scotland and Scots. Tartan, the flags, the songs, or the Loch Ness Monster clearly symbolise and distinguish Scotland and the Scots, within the wider world. These symbols of Scottishness refer to the specificity of Scotland's history, location and climate, highlighting its regarded uniqueness and exceptionality. The longstanding and new uses of these traditional symbols and myths not only maintain, but also build and strengthen contemporary Scottish national identity. As we can therefore see, symbols and myths continue to be an important part of expressing national identity today. Noting the strong attachment to symbols can draw attention to the strength of the sense of distinctiveness that characterises the nation. In the Scottish case, this strength is evident also in politics and especially, and unsurprisingly, in the case of the push for independence.

Whether pro Independence, or pro Union, Scots are committed to their history and traditions, which allow them to survive as a national group. Symbols, old and new, draw on tradition, and bind modern Scotland to its ancestors. It is in history and tradition that Scots see their modern identity. The past is important, which is evident in how major historical events are commemorated across Scotland and in many other parts of the world. Attempts to undermine certain Scottish traditions of the past and calling them 'made up/created' by scholars such as Trevor-Roper, have been heavily criticised (see Leith 2006 for a longer discussion on this).

Attachment to symbols and myths remains strong and clear in contemporary Scotland. They are emphasised not only during festivals, major sporting events and anniversaries but are also a regular feature of everyday life. Having remained within the UK, Scots have never lost their sense

of identity. Whilst being citizens of the UK, they are a distinct nation attached to their traditions and history. Symbols and myths have survived in the Scottish consciousness, helping the Scottish people to maintain a sense of separateness. For this reason, symbols and myths associated exclusively with Scottishness take on a highly symbolic meaning. It is through their use that Scots continue to distinguish themselves as a separate nation within the multi-state UK.

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