

Matrimonial politics and core–periphery interactions in twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Scotland

R. Andrew McDonald

Department of History, Trent University, Peterborough, Ont. K9J 7B8, Canada

Abstract

The medieval kingdom of Scotland was an amalgam of diverse ethnic elements which included Gaels, Britons, Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavians and Normans. This paper explores one mechanism which is generally considered to have been of tremendous importance in fostering accommodation and understanding between cultures in medieval society: matrimony. An examination of the marriage alliances of prominent members of the native nobility of eastern Scotland demonstrates that matrimony played a crucial role in binding Scottish families to Anglo-Norman newcomers, to the Normanophile Scottish monarchs, and to one another. However, the marriage alliances of the powerful west-coast princes contrast sharply to those of the eastern nobility and demonstrate how matrimonial alliances also served another purpose: namely, building up and maintaining an alliance of princes in the upland margins of the kingdom who opposed Anglo-Norman ways and the extension of feudalism into these regions. This in turn suggests that there existed a fundamental dichotomy in Scottish society between the feudal kingdom of Scotland and those regions ringing the Irish Sea. Close examination of the matrimonial patterns of the twelfth-century Scottish nobility therefore reinforces some long-held convictions about the fabric of Scottish society, while calling others into question

The medieval kingdom of Scotland was a rich amalgam of diverse ethnic elements which reflected the turbulent history of the first millennium of its development. The point is nicely illustrated in the witness lists to two relatively well-known charters to Kelso and Dunfermline abbeys from the reign of King Malcolm IV, in the mid-twelfth century. In them, Gaels with names like Duncan, Ferteth and Uhtred witness alongside the unmistakably Norman Richard de Morville and Ranulf de Sules, while the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Scandinavian Aelwyn mac Arkil and the Anglo-Saxon Gospatrick stand shoulder to shoulder with Walter de Lyndsey and Philip de Coleville. Although it is true that, as the

R. ANDREW MCDONALD is a course instructor in History at Trent University.

twelfth century progresses, it becomes increasingly difficult to determine the ethnicity of a witness based upon his or her name, the witness lists to the charters of the twelfth century provide striking testimony to the various ethnic elements – Gaelic, Brittonic, Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian and Norman – which comprised the medieval kingdom of Scotland.¹

The newcomers to this multiethnic kingdom were the Normans. Although MacBeth (1040–57) had harboured some Norman exiles from the tide of anti-foreign sentiment which rose against them in England in 1051–52, it was not until 1124 that the Norman penetration of Scotland took a new turn. In that year, David I, the youngest son of Malcolm III “Canmore” (d. 1093), MacBeth’s slayer, and Queen Margaret (d. 1093), succeeded to the Scottish kingship. David was a brother-in-law of Henry I, had been raised and educated at the court of William Rufus and Henry, and became a trusted and prominent baron in England before succeeding to the kingship. Indeed, William of Malmesbury noted that he had “rubbed off all tarnish of Scottish barbarity through being polished from his boyhood by intercourse and friendship with us.”² It is scarcely surprising, then, that the directed settlement of Normans in Scotland began in earnest during his reign. Soon after his accession, David began to grant land to his followers in return for military service: one of his earliest surviving acts as king is the grant of Annandale to Robert de Brus, the ancestor of that Robert Bruce who became king in 1306.³ So, while some historians are wont to speak of a “Norman Conquest of Scotland”, albeit a peaceful one, such language probably places an undue military emphasis upon the events of the twelfth century.⁴ In reality, the process of settlement amounted to an aristocratic penetration at the upper levels of society, which created a new nobility of Anglo-Normans alongside the pre-existing Scottish one.

Considering the bias, intolerance and racial tension that marked much medieval thought, and which could and did exist between Normans and Anglo-Saxons or

¹ *The acts of Malcolm IV king of Scots 1153–1165*, ed. G.W.S. Barrow (Regesta Regum Scottorum 1, Edinburgh, 1960), nos. 118, 131. Other charters from this period are collected in *Early Scottish charters prior to A.D. 1153*, ed. A.C. Lawrie (Glasgow, 1905), and *The acts of William I king of Scots 1165–1214*, ed. G.W.S. Barrow (Regesta Regum Scottorum 2, Edinburgh, 1971).

² William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1887–89), vol. 2, 476–7; translation from *Scottish annals from English chroniclers A.D. 500–1286*, ed. and trans. A.O. Anderson (London, 1908), 157. Two seminal works dealing with David I are: R.L.G. Ritchie, *The Normans in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1954), and G.W.S. Barrow, *David I of Scotland (1124–53). The balance of new and old* (1984 Stenton Lecture, Reading, 1985).

³ Lawrie, *Early Scottish charters*, no. 54.

⁴ e.g. Ritchie, *Normans in Scotland*, xi, xiv.

English and Welsh or Irish in post-Conquest Britain,⁵ it is remarkable that, for the most part, these ethnic elements managed to coexist with what appears to have been a minimum of friction in the Scotland of David and his successors, even if racial cooperation has probably been overplayed in recent historiography on the subject.⁶ But, curiously, it has been only recently that any serious investigation of the actual processes and mechanisms which helped to promote accommodation and cooperation between races in medieval Britain has been undertaken,⁷ while the same field of inquiry remains largely untapped where medieval Scotland is concerned. It will therefore be profitable to explore one mechanism of many which was of tremendous importance in fostering accommodation and understanding between races in Scotland: marriage.

The marriage alliances of the Scottish nobility of the twelfth and early thirteenth century are, by and large, well known to students of Scottish history, and especially to Scottish genealogists. Thus, on the one hand, the land transactions that invariably formed a large part of medieval marriage, the order of marriages, and the offspring which resulted from them, have attracted much attention and provided material for many writers. However, on the other hand, there has been little effort to study these marriages as an integrated whole, in an attempt to discern whether any larger patterns may be discovered, and what such marriages reveal about Scottish society, its attitudes and outlooks, the relations between ethnic groups, and core–periphery relations in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Close examination of the matrimonial politics of the Scottish nobility will suggest that some long-held and deeply-rooted convictions about the fabric of Scottish society in this period may be reinforced, while others may be called into question.

Although it is a subject which has enjoyed much study of late, it may nevertheless be beneficial to begin with some comments upon the role of marriage

⁵ Many examples of such attitudes can be found in medieval texts, but little has been written by modern scholars on the subject. The remarks of William of Newburgh on the Scots, Irish and Welsh may be taken as typical: the Welsh were “unfaithful, avid for the blood of strangers, and prodigal of their own,” while the Irish were “uncivilized . . . ungoverned and lazy.” *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, in: *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. R. Howlett, 4 Vols (Rolls Series, London, 1884–89), vol. 1, 76, 182–3, 107, 166. For some modern comments on medieval racism, see E.J. Cowan, ‘Myth and identity in early medieval Scotland,’ *Scottish Historical Review*, 63 (1984) 111–135, and R.R. Davies, *Domination and conquest. The experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, 1100–1300* (The Wiles Lectures 1988, Cambridge, 1990), 20–23.

⁶ G.W.S. Barrow, *The Anglo-Norman era in Scottish history* (The Ford Lectures 1977, Oxford, 1980), 32, 49; A.A.M. Duncan, *Scotland. The making of the kingdom* (Edinburgh History of Scotland 1, Edinburgh, 1975), 141; for a partial corrective see R.A. McDonald and S.A. McLean, ‘Somerled of Argyll: A new look at old problems,’ *Scottish Historical Review*, 71 (1992) 3–22.

⁷ Davies, *Domination and conquest*, *passim*.

in medieval society.⁸ In the medieval period, marriage was not arranged for love, but was viewed rather as an important political and social tool for building up alliances and good relations and for diffusing tensions.⁹ Georges Duby has effectively summed up the role of marriage in the middle ages: “lawful marriage was first and foremost a political weapon. The wife was moved from square to square like a pawn. The stakes were high. They were honor, glory, and power.”¹⁰ As Fichtenau has observed, each marriage carried with it an opportunity or a threat. A good marriage would bring heirs, the dowry of the bride, and the high prestige of her family; a poor one would bring a decrease in the material and nonmaterial spheres.¹¹ But the primary benefit of marriage was social prestige, since most nobles attempted to “marry up.”¹² Indeed, by the choice of their spouses, “nobles were able to increase or maintain the degree of their nobility – a particular application of the same idea of selective breeding that provided their warhorses and their hunting dogs.”¹³ The social relationships formed by marriage were therefore an important aspect of the identification of members of the native nobility with the new Anglo-Norman aristocracy introduced by David I. Marriage became a vital tool in the process of accommodation, since it helped to ease the transition from one society to another, helped both natives and newcomers adjust, and ensured that children of mixed marriages would be comfortable in both worlds.¹⁴ Indeed, while marriages have been viewed as important landmarks in the process of the Normanization of Scotland,¹⁵ those contracted by members of the native nobility with the families of the kings of Scots and incoming Anglo-Norman families have seldom received the attention they deserve.¹⁶

⁸ There is a vast literature on the subject. In addition to those works cited below, see: C.N.L. Brooke, *The medieval idea of marriage* (Oxford, 1989), and ‘Marriage and society in the central middle ages,’ in: *Marriage and society. Studies in the social history of marriage*, ed. R.B. Outhwaite (New York, 1981), 17–34; D. Herlihy, ‘Land, family, and women in continental Europe, 701–1200,’ in: *Women in medieval society*, ed. S. Mosher Stuard (Pittsburgh, PA, 1976); and for a general overview, F. and J. Gies, *Marriage and the family in the middle ages* (New York, 1989).

⁹ Davies, *Domination and conquest*, 16.

¹⁰ G. Duby, *The knight, the lady and the priest. The making of modern marriage in medieval France*, trans. B. Bray (New York, 1983), 81.

¹¹ H. Fichtenau, *Living in the tenth century. Mentalities and social orders*, trans. P.J. Geary (Chicago and London, 1991), 90–91.

¹² C.A. Newman, *The Anglo-Norman nobility in the reign of Henry I. The second generation* (Philadelphia, 1988), 40.

¹³ J.P. Poly and E. Bournazel, *The feudal transformation 900–1200*, trans. C. Higgitt (New York, 1991), 90.

¹⁴ Davies, *Domination and conquest*, 52.

¹⁵ This point was well made by Ritchie, *Normans in Scotland*, xi, and throughout, who traced the so-called Norman Conquest of Scotland through marriages.

¹⁶ Barrow has recognized the importance of the marriages of the earls of Fife: *Anglo-Norman era*, 84–9.

Marriage and family connections helped to bind the native nobility¹⁷ of the east of Scotland to the kings of Scots, to one another, and to Anglo-Norman families. The powerful and important earls of Fife were among the first families to benefit from the social and political advantages of intermarriage. The province of Fife lay between the Firths of Forth and Tay, on the east side of the River Leven, and included the important bishopric of St. Andrews. Its earls were for long the most prominent of their peers: according to ancient tradition, they possessed the right of placing the king upon the stone of destiny at his inauguration. This ancient right may derive from the fact that these earls had close affiliations with the House of Canmore, probably originating as a cadet branch. Research on the nobility of medieval France, carried out by Duby and others, has demonstrated that names can be an excellent guide to lineage and ancestry.¹⁸ Christian names tended to be borrowed from ancestors, and “the preferred ones were those which recalled the memory of the most glorious forebears, or which implied relationship with the most illustrious lineages of the country.”¹⁹ In this context, the names of the earls of Fife must be seen as significant and as highly suggestive of a regal origin for this line of earls. Of the Earls Constantine, Gillemichael, Duncan (I and II) and Malcolm, three bore names associated with the royal house of Scotland from the tenth century onward.²⁰

The relationship between these earls and the royal house is highlighted by the fact that the first earl on record was Ethelred, the son of Malcolm Canmore and Queen Margaret. He appeared in a grant of land dated 1093 × 1107, as *Edelradus vir venerandae memoriae, filius Malcolmi Regis Scotiae, Abbas de Dunkeldense et insuper Comes de Fyf*.²¹ Exactly how Ethelred came to hold the earldom is not recorded and is hotly debated: some have suggested that Fife was “in the crown” at the time of Canmore,²² while others have suggested, less probably, that Ethelred was holding the earldom in wardship for an underage heir,²³ and it is

¹⁷ The term ‘native nobility’ demands some qualification because of the multiethnic composition of the Scottish nobility. It is used throughout the paper to denote members of the Scottish aristocracy – whether Anglo-Saxon, Gaelic, Gaelic–Norse, Brittonic, or some combination thereof – who were established in power before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in the early twelfth century. It thus distinguishes these nobles from Anglo-Norman “newcomers”.

¹⁸ G. Duby, ‘Lineage, nobility and knighthood,’ in: *The chivalrous society*, trans. C. Postan (London, 1977), 60–63. See also C.B. Bouchard, ‘The structure of a twelfth-century French family: the lords of Seigneray,’ *Viator*, 10 (1979) 47–8.

¹⁹ Duby, ‘Lineage, nobility and knighthood,’ 63.

²⁰ Duncan, *Scotland*, 164. Exactly why these tenth- and eleventh-century royal names re-appear among the earls of Fife in the twelfth century is one of the many unsolved mysteries of medieval Scottish history.

²¹ Lawrie, *Early Scottish charters*, no. 14.

²² E.W. Robertson, *Scotland under her early kings*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1862), vol. 2, 124 n.

²³ J. Wilkie, *The history of Fife from the earliest times to the nineteenth century* (Edinburgh and London, 1924), 113–114.

also possible that Malcolm Canmore had deflected the succession of the earldom. The association of Ethelred with the earldom of Fife is complicated by the fact that Constantine, also styled earl of Fife, attested the same grant. The solution to this problem may lie in the suggestion that the Latin memorandum of the grant was written after Ethelred had died, and Constantine, who had succeeded him as earl of Fife, was actually a witness to the later memorandum, not the original grant.²⁴ The relationship of Constantine to Ethelred and Gillemichael has not been satisfactorily worked out on the basis of the available evidence, and is likely to remain enigmatic unless further evidence should come to light.²⁵ But under Gillemichael's successor, probably his son, Duncan, the prominent position and favourable relationship of the earls of Fife with the crown becomes clearly apparent. In c. 1140 the earldom of Fife was granted by charter by David I to Duncan in return for unspecified military service, making "the most important earldom in Scotland . . . akin to a French lordship."²⁶ The significance of this enfeoffment should not be underestimated, since it is the earliest evidence demonstrating that native magnates in Scotland entered into feudal relationships with the kings of Scots. Although there had long existed in that kingdom a general duty of landed men to perform military service when required, the casting of that service in feudal terms, and its dependence upon the heavily armed and mounted knight, were innovations,²⁷ and serve to emphasize the extent to which accommodation existed between some, at least, of the Scottish earls and the kings of Scots.

In 1152, after the premature death of Earl Henry, David's son and heir, it was Duncan of Fife who was given charge of Henry's young son Malcolm and entrusted with the task of taking him around the kingdom and proclaiming him to be David's heir.²⁸ And some two decades later, Duncan's son and successor, Duncan II, enjoyed the privilege of speaking first at a council of King William, highlighting the prominent position of the earls of Fife within the medieval kingdom of Scotland.²⁹

²⁴ *Scots Peerage*, ed. J. Balfour Paul, 9 vols (Edinburgh, 1904–14), vol. 4, 4. See Lawrie, *Early Scottish charters*, 244–5, for another possible solution.

²⁵ Balfour, *Scots Peerage*, vol. 4, 3–5; Duncan, *Scotland*, 164, n. 55, and Genealogical Tree 6; W.F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland. A history of ancient Alban*, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1876–80), vol. 3, 63. The issue is further complicated by the fact that Constantine also appeared as a witness to King Edgar's grant to Durham in 1095: see Lawrie, *Early Scottish charters*, no. 15; and for a discussion of this charter, A.A.M. Duncan, 'The earliest Scottish charters,' *Scottish Historical Review*, 37 (1958) 103–35.

²⁶ *Facsimiles of national manuscripts of Scotland*, 3 vols (Southampton, 1868), vol. 1, no. 50; Duncan, *Scotland*, 138.

²⁷ W.C. Dickinson, *Scotland from the earliest times to 1603*. 3rd edn., revised and edited by A.A.M. Duncan (Oxford, 1977), 80–81.

²⁸ John of Hexham, *Continuation of Symeon of Durham's Historia Regis*, in: Symeon of Durham, *Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Arnold, 2 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1882–85), vol. 2, 330.

²⁹ Jordan Fantosme, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, ed. and trans. R.C. Johnston (Oxford, 1981), cap. 27–8.

Earls Gillemichael and Duncan of Fife each married a daughter to a prominent member of the Scottish nobility. If the enigmatic *Book of Deer* can be trusted, *Ete ingen Gille-Michel* married Gartnait, the earl of Buchan.³⁰ This Gillemichael may well have been the earl of Fife, although the identification is not definite.³¹ More important was the marriage of the daughter of Earl Duncan I, Affrica, which well demonstrates the political importance of marriage and its role in associating members of the native nobility with feudalising or anti-feudal factions. Some time before 1168, Harald Maddadsson, the powerful Earl of Orkney (1139–1206), married Affrica.³² In or after 1168, however, Harald repudiated her and married instead a daughter of Malcolm MacHeth, an erstwhile enemy of the kings of Scots who had died in 1168 and who, although at the time of his death was at peace with the Scottish king, had earlier been involved in uprisings against Malcolm IV, and whose descendants continued to carry the standard of rebellion into the thirteenth century. This marriage is discussed in more detail below. These matches, however, clearly illustrate the use of marriage as a political tool in the Scottish context, and its importance in identifying members of the native nobility with either Anglo-Norman or native elements in Scotland.

By the time of Duncan II (1154–1204), the earls of Fife were actively engaged in a policy of alliance-building with members of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy. Duncan II himself wed Ela, probably a daughter of Reginald de Warenne, a brother of Ada de Warenne, the mother of Kings Malcolm IV and William I.³³ The Warennes were one of the most prominent Anglo-Norman families to settle in Scotland, and an alliance with them would bring the earls of Fife “into the charmed circle of the great Anglo-Norman nobility.”³⁴ Duncan’s son, Duncan, apparently married Aliz Corbet, a member of another Anglo-Norman family present in Scotland and of some note in England.³⁵ And, in 1188, Duncan gave the king of England 500 marks for the custody of Roger de Merlay’s lands in Northumbria, for wardship of his son, and so that his daughter, Ada (note the Warenne name again), might marry the de Merlay heir.³⁶ Finally, there was the

³⁰ *The Gaelic notes in the book of Deer*, ed. and trans. K. Jackson (Cambridge, 1972), nos. 3, 4, 6 and p. 58.

³¹ Jackson, *Book of Deer*, 58.

³² *Orkneyinga Saga. The history of the earls of Orkney*, trans. H. Palsson and P. Edwards (Harmondsworth, 1978), cap. 109; Roger of Howden, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. T. Arnold, 4 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1868–71), vol. 4, 12.

³³ G.W.S. Barrow, ‘The Earls of Fife in the 12th century,’ *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 86 (1952–53), 53–54; Barrow, *Anglo-Norman era*, 87.

³⁴ Barrow, *Anglo-Norman era*, 88.

³⁵ *Liber cartarum prioratus Sancti Andree* (Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1841), 278. See also I.J. Sanders, *English Baronies. A study of their origin and descent 1086–1327* (Oxford, 1960), 29, on the Corbet family in England.

³⁶ *Calendar of documents relating to Scotland preserved in Her Majesty’s Public Record Office, London*, ed. J. Bain, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1881–88), vol. 1, 191.

marriage of Duncan's son, Malcolm, to Maud or Matilda (the popular Anglo-Norman name is significant), the daughter of Earl Gilbert of Strathearn, some time before 1204. It should be noted that, in addition to the family connections which this marriage brought with it, Malcolm received a large portion of lands to be held of Gilbert in frank marriage.³⁷ Thus, as Barrow has stated:

The earls of Fife, themselves almost certainly of the same kin as the kings of Scotland, moved within a closely knit aristocratic group of Anglo-Normans intimately related to the Scottish royal house.³⁸

The earls of Dunbar cannot be considered 'Gaelic' earls in the same sense as the Fifes, since their background and family origins lay in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. Nevertheless, they came to be associated with the kings of Scots from a very early period, and frequently attested royal acts throughout the twelfth century.³⁹ Thanks in large measure to the *Historia Regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham,⁴⁰ a source well informed on events in the north of England and southern Scotland, the genealogy of the earls of Dunbar can be reconstructed more fully than that of the other earls. Gospatrick, Earl of Northumbria and the first earl of Dunbar, was a son of Maldred, the brother of Duncan I (1034–40), by his wife Alghitha, who was a daughter of Earl Uhtred of Northumbria and the daughter of King Ethelred II.⁴¹ Gospatrick's lineage meant that he was a cousin of Malcolm Canmore as well as a descendant of the house of Wessex. Gospatrick had, according to Symeon, purchased the earldom of Northumbria from William the Conqueror in 1067, but forfeited it in 1072, ostensibly for aiding and abetting the 1069 rebellion which swept that province.⁴² Fleeing to Scotland, he was received by Malcolm Canmore and granted Dunbar with its adjacent lands in Lothian.⁴³ This was the richest region of Scotland, the land bounded on the north-east by the Firth of Forth, on the south-east by the River Tweed and the Cheviots, and on the west by a line drawn from Canonbie to Stirling. Its inhabitants were largely English-speaking and were not thought of as 'Scots' until the middle of the thirteenth century.⁴⁴ Gospatrick died c. 1074 and was succeeded by his son, Gospatrick, who was apparently killed fighting on King David's behalf at the

³⁷ Barrow, 'Earls of Fife,' 57–8.

³⁸ *Anglo-Norman era*, 89.

³⁹ See Barrow, *Acts of Malcolm IV* and *Acts of William I*, indices.

⁴⁰ A. Grandsen, *Historical writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (Ithaca, NY, 1974), 148–9, has cast doubts upon Symeon's authorship of this work.

⁴¹ Symeon of Durham, *Historia Regum*, in: *Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Arnold, 2 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1882–85), vol. 2, 199.

⁴² Symeon of Durham, vol. 2, 199.

⁴³ Symeon of Durham, vol. 2, 199.

⁴⁴ G.W.S. Barrow, *Kingship and unity. Scotland 1000–1306* (New History of Scotland 2, Edinburgh, 1981), 3.

Battle of the Standard in 1138.⁴⁵ But the close link between the earls of Dunbar and the Scottish crown is perhaps best exemplified in a charter given by Waldeve, Gospatrick III's successor. In a grant to the monastery of Coldingham of the vill of Ednam, Roxburghshire, Waldeve stipulated that the donation was made not only for the good of his soul and the souls of his parents and descendants, but also for the good of the soul of King Malcolm (Canmore) and his sons Edgar, Alexander and David, David's son Earl Henry, and Henry's sons, Kings Malcolm and William.⁴⁶ Although a grant *pro anima* was by no means unusual in this period, the lengthy list of monarchs in whose memory this grant was made sets out a close relationship between the earls of Dunbar and the MacMalcolms.

The story of the marriages of the earls of Dunbar is in many ways similar to those of the earls of Fife. In general, the same pattern was followed, but some of the early marriages of these earls reflect their status as cross-border landholders in northern England. Gospatrick I's wife is unknown, but their children included Dolfin, Waldeve, Gospatrick (II) and a daughter named Ethelreda (or Athelryth). Ethelreda contracted a favourable marriage alliance with her cousin, Duncan II, who was king of Scots briefly in 1094.⁴⁷ Of Gospatrick II's wife, nothing is known except her name, Sibilla, hinting at an Anglo-Norman background.⁴⁸ Gospatrick III was a son of Gospatrick II and had succeeded him in the earldom by 1139. Like his father, nothing is known of his spouse save her name, Derder.⁴⁹ But Gospatrick III's sister, Juliana, was given in marriage by Henry I to Ranulf de Merlay, lord of Morpeth in Northumbria, before 1138 when they jointly founded the Cistercian abbey of Newminster.⁵⁰ Waldeve, Gospatrick III's son and successor to the earldom of Dunbar, married a woman named Alina.⁵¹ Unfortunately, nothing else is known of her, but the name is again suggestive of an Anglo-Norman ancestry. It is with Earl Patrick I, Waldeve's son, that the

⁴⁵ Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. T. Arnold (Rolls Series, London, 1879), 264. The "leader of the men of Lothian" is not specifically named, but Gospatrick died at about this time: see Anderson, *Scottish annals from English chroniclers*, 203 n. 4.

⁴⁶ Appendix to J. Raine, *The history and antiquities of North Durham* (London, 1852), no. cxiv.

⁴⁷ J.C. Hodgson, *A history of Northumberland*, 15 vols (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1893–1940), vol. 7, 29.

⁴⁸ *Liber Vitae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis*, ed. J. Stevenson (Surtees Society, Durham, Edinburgh and London, 1841), 102. The name seems to have been popular in the twelfth century: Henry I's wife was named Sibylla: *The chronicle of Melrose from the Cottonian Manuscript*, *Faustine B.IX in the British Museum*, ed. A.O. and M.O. Anderson with an index by W.C. Dickinson (London, 1936), 32, and Fulk V of Anjou had a daughter named Sibyl: K. Norgate, *England under the Angevin kings*, 2 vols (1887; repr. New York, 1969), vol. 2, 240–41.

⁴⁹ *Chartulary of the Cistercian Priory of Coldstream*, ed. C. Rogers (Grampian Club, London, 1879), 6, 8. Professor Duncan kindly informs me that this is a Gaelic name, Deirdre.

⁵⁰ *Chartularium abbathiae de Novo Monasterio*, ed. J.T. Fowler (Surtees Society, Durham, Edinburgh and London, 1878 for 1876), 269. On the de Merlays see Sanders, *English Baronies*, 65–6.

⁵¹ *Chronicle of Melrose*, 42; *Liber Sancte Marie de Melros*, 2 Vols. (Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1837), vol. 1, no. 76.

importance of the earls of Dunbar and their close connections with both the royal family and Anglo-Norman families are clearly revealed. These connections are neatly encapsulated by Patrick's two marriages. In 1184 William, the king of Scots, "gave his daughter Ada to Earl Patrick."⁵² But Ada had died by 1200,⁵³ and Patrick took as his second wife Christiana, the widow of William de Brus.⁵⁴ Both marriages were undoubtedly conducted with the aim of "increasing . . . nobility with another nobility," as a medieval commentator would have put it.⁵⁵

One would be hard put to find a more textbook-like case to illustrate the importance of marriage to the process of accommodation between races in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Scotland than that offered by the earls of Strathearn. Strathearn, the land west of Fife between the Tay and Forth, with its bishopric at Dunblane, also controlled the strategic fortress of Dundurn. Until the time of Earl Gilbert (1171–1223), the powerful earls of Strathearn held their own against Anglo-Norman innovations and appeared as the "leaders of the Celtic party."⁵⁶ The origins of the earls of Strathearn are not recoverable. The first earl on record is Malise, and although he witnessed several charters and seems to have fought at the battle of the Standard in 1138 on behalf of King David, he strongly denounced the Anglo-French in the speech attributed to him by Ailred of Rievaulx: "Why is it, O king, that thou reliest rather upon the will of Gauls, since none of them with their arms to-day will advance before me, unarmed, in battle?"⁵⁷ The taunt nearly caused Malise and Alan de Percy to come to blows; the king himself was forced to restrain them before they caused harm to one another. Malise's son and successor, Ferteth, was the only noble explicitly named in the 1160 rebellion against King Malcolm at Perth, also suggesting opposition to the MacMalcolms and some reticence toward newfangled ways.⁵⁸ But, as Cosmo Innes noted over a century ago, Ferteth's son, Gilbert, undertook a vigorous change of policy, adopting Anglo-Norman fashions and connecting himself by marriage to both Anglo-Norman and native families.⁵⁹ Indeed, it was largely through marriage alliances that the earls of Strathearn were brought into the ranks of those who supported the kings of Scots.

⁵² *Chronicle of Melrose*, 44.

⁵³ Hodgson, *Northumberland*, vol. 7, 54.

⁵⁴ *Cartularium prioratus de Gyseburne*, ed. W. Brown (Surtees Society, Durham, Edinburgh and London, 1894), 340; Bain, *Calendar of documents relating to Scotland . . .*, vol. 1, 700.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Poly and Bournazel, *Feudal transformation*, 90.

⁵⁶ C. Innes, *Sketches of early Scotch history* (Edinburgh, 1861), 204. On the earls of Strathearn see C.J. Neville, "The Earls of Strathearn From the Twelfth to the Mid Fourteenth Century With an edition of their written acts." (Ph.D. Diss., University of Aberdeen, 1983).

⁵⁷ Ailred of Rievaulx, *de Standardo* in *Chronicles of Stephen, etc.*, vol. 3, 190; trans. Anderson, *Scottish annals . . .*, 199.

⁵⁸ *Chronicle of Melrose*, 36.

⁵⁹ Innes, *Sketches of early Scotch history*, 205; Ritchie, *Normans in Scotland*, 351.

Gilbert took as his wife Maud de Aubigny, the daughter of William de Aubigny.⁶⁰ This was a significant match, since it is highly probable that it was arranged by the king of Scots himself, either Malcolm IV or William I.⁶¹ Moreover, it would be difficult to find a family more strongly connected with the royal house of Scotland, since Maud's mother may have been Maud de Senliz, a first cousin of both these Scottish kings, and her grandmother was probably Maud, King David I's queen.⁶² Earl Gilbert then further strengthened his association with those who supported the crown by giving his daughter in marriage to Malcolm, the son of Duncan II of Fife. It is also of note that although a number of Gilbert's and Matilda's children bore Gaelic names, like Gilchrist, Ferteth, Fergus and Malise, others reflected the new alliance through Anglo-Norman names like William (always popular), Robert, Cecilia and Matilda.⁶³ The names given to the children of these marriages are important indicators of accommodation, since "the choice of Christian names gives some indication of the change in a family from a Gaelic to an Anglo-Norman way of life. It was to become a marked feature in the genealogies of the great Scots families as they became Anglo-Normanized."⁶⁴ Largely through marriage alliances, then, a family that had been in the forefront of the anti-feudal party in eastern Scotland was brought into a close association with the earls of Fife, an Anglo-French family of the first rank, the de Aubignys, and ultimately, it seems, the Normanophile MacMalcolm kings themselves.

In contracting such marriages, the native magnates of Scotland were, like all nobles, attempting to enhance and promote their status. But, while the political connections engendered by such marriages were important, they also had a deeper significance. For, by wedding the daughters and widows of Anglo-Normans, the native nobility of Scotland was drawn into the international confraternity of Anglo-Normans which, throughout the twelfth century, paid little heed to borders.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ *Charters, bulls and other documents relating to the Abbey of Inchaffray*, ed. W.A. Lindsay (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1908), no. 9; Barrow, *Anglo-Norman era*, 89. See also J.H. Round, *Feudal England* (London, 1895), 359–360.

⁶¹ Barrow, 'Earls of Fife,' 57.

⁶² Barrow, 'Earls of Fife,' 57; Round, *Feudal England*, 359–60. It is also of interest that Gilbert's brother Malise married Ada, the daughter of David of Huntingdon: *Chartulary of the Abbey of Lindores 1195–1479*, ed. J. Dowden (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1903), no. 36.

⁶³ *Chartulary of Lindores*, xxxiv.

⁶⁴ I.F. Grant and H. Cheape, *Periods in highland history* (London, 1977), 36. Recent work on the Merovingian and Carolingian nobility has stressed that "the mechanisms governing the division of names were not arbitrary. . . ." Poly and Bournazel, *Feudal transformation*, 219. Moreover, it has been noted that Gallo-Roman names were progressively eliminated in favour of Germanic ones, while the reverse phenomenon, the revival of Roman names, seldom occurred. This study of cultural assimilation therefore bears many striking resemblances to the process at work in Scotland.

⁶⁵ See J. Le Patourel, *Feudal empires* (London, 1984), esp. chaps. VI and VII; Frame, *Political development*, chap. 3.

Intermarriage between the Gaelic aristocracy and Anglo-French settlers was also common in Wales and Ireland throughout the twelfth century and beyond; perhaps the best-known example of such intermarriage was that between Strongbow and Aife, the daughter of Diarmait Mac Murchada.⁶⁶ Medieval commentators were well aware of the value of such intermarriages for the fusion of races. As Walter Map put it, "...this Henry I of whom I speak, by intermarriages among their families, and by every other possible means, joined the two peoples [Normans and Saxons] into a strong and harmonious union. . . ."⁶⁷ Thus, mixed marriages were, to cite a modern authority, "crucially important in helping Anglo-Normans and natives adjust to each other, to borrow each other's social customs and to begin the process of cultural integration."⁶⁸ And, as has been demonstrated, the names that were given to the children of these marriages illustrate the process of cultural integration at work. In short, intermarriage between natives and newcomers, in addition to enhancing the status of native families, eased their transition into Anglo-French society, and the children of these marriages would have been comfortable in both worlds. In this respect, then, there may have been many sons of native nobles who resembled David I, having been born into one culture but then having had the 'rust of Scottish barbarity' removed through being raised, married and indoctrinated into another.

Discussion of the noble families and their marriages has thus far been restricted geographically to the east coast of Scotland, where Anglo-Norman culture, with its attendant institutions, feudalism among them, penetrated most quickly and took root most deeply. Shifting the focus of our attention across the spine of Britain to the west coast of Scotland, into Galloway, Argyll, the Isles and the large territory of Moray in the north, reveals a land of strong contrasts to those just described. From the relatively populous and fertile regions of the 'lowland' or 'inner' zone, we move to the rugged and sparsely populated 'highland' or 'outer' zone, which remained far from the centres of power of the kings of Scots and was little touched by feudal penetration until much later in the twelfth century, if at all.⁶⁹ Moreover, these regions have few sources to compare with the inner zone, and no chronicle from Moray, Galloway, or Argyll speaks to us of the experience of these areas in the twelfth century. In sharp contrast to the period before 1100, when the evidence seems to show a marked bias toward the western highlands,^{69a}

⁶⁶ R.R. Davies, *The age of conquest. Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford, 1991), 102; K. Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the middle ages* (Dublin, 1972), 16–17; on Strongbow's marriage see M.T. Flanagan, *Irish society, Anglo-Norman settlers, Angevin Kingship. Interactions in Ireland in the late twelfth century* (Oxford, 1989), 91–5.

⁶⁷ Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium (Courtier's Trifles)*, trans. F. Tupper and M.B. Ogle (London, 1924), 272.

⁶⁸ Davies, *Domination and conquest*, 52.

⁶⁹ On the inner and outer zones see Barrow, *Kingship and unity*, 49–50.

^{69a} G.W.S. Barrow, 'The sources for the history of the highlands in the middle ages,' in: *The middle ages in the highlands*, ed. L. MacLean (Inverness, 1981), 13.

for the twelfth century and beyond there is a dramatic decrease in the documentation for these regions. The inescapable conclusion remains that once our gaze travels beyond the bounds of the feudalized regions into the margins the sources almost completely fail, forcing a reliance upon what fragmentary and often controversial evidence there is and upon lowland sources.^{69b}

The rulers of these regions were, by and large, independent rulers. They bore titles like the Gaelic *rí*, or the Latin *rex*, *regulus* or *princeps* – here, then, were no *comites* or Gaelic *mormaers*, but kings in their own right. Because of the geographic and historical westward orientation of these regions it is hardly surprising that the ancient world of the Irish Sea, not the fledgling Scottish kingdom, held the interest of the west-coast rulers. So, while noble families like the Fifes, Dunbars and Strathearns were busily forging marriage alliances with the kings of Scots, Anglo-Norman families and each other in the twelfth century, the princes of the west coast were much slower to be drawn into the same matrimonial patterns and instead forged alliances with powerful dynasties outside of the Scottish kingdom altogether.

In the first half of the twelfth century much of Scotland's western seaboard was dominated by two men: Fergus of Galloway and Somerled of Argyll. They were contemporaries who ruled independently of the Scottish monarchs of the east: Fergus was styled *rex Galwitensium* and Somerled was called *rí Indsi Gall & Cind tyre*.⁷⁰ They ruled over large territories which owed little, if any, obeisance to the feudalizing kings of Scots (whatever the Scots kings might think about the matter), and which were an integral part of the Irish Sea world with its attendant Manx, Irish and Orcadian connections.

The origins and ancestry of Fergus of Galloway and Somerled of Argyll have received considerable attention in the past two decades. Although the sources are both scarce and notoriously difficult to interpret, the most current scholarly consensus favours a mixed Celtic–Norse descent for both figures. In the case of Fergus the lack of evidence is most keenly felt. In charters he was styled simply Fergus *de Galweia*, and the pedigrees of his descendants were carried back only to him.⁷¹ Although it is possible to disregard much of the Victorian nonsense surrounding Fergus, which had him descended from Norman blood himself, it has also been more plausibly suggested that he was “of the line of Galloway princes or native princes”.⁷² While there might be much to commend such a view, recent

^{69b} On the sources of Scottish history in the medieval period and the problems associated with them, see B. Webster, *Scotland from the eleventh century to 1603* (Cambridge, 1975), *passim*.

⁷⁰ Fergus is called *rex Galwitensium* in a charter preserved in *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. R. Dodsworth and W. Dugdale, 3 vols (London, 1660–73), vol. 2, 551; Somerled is styled *rí Indsi Gall & Cind tyre* by *Tigernach's Continuator*, ed. W. Stokes in *Revue Celtique*, 18 (1898) 195.

⁷¹ Lawrie, *Early Scottish charters*, nos. 109 & 125. A charter of Dervorgilla de Baliol c. 1273 recorded a grant made *pro animabus Fergusii de Galwidia Uchtreidi filii et Roulandi aui mei et Elene uxoris sue et Alani filii sui patris mei: The acts of David II king of Scots 1329–1371*, ed. B. Webster (Regesta Regum Scottorum 6, Edinburgh, 1982), no. 235.

⁷² Sir H. Maxwell, *A history of Dumfries and Galloway* (Edinburgh and London, 1896), 47.

studies have demonstrated that the last of the native British line of rulers in Strathclyde had died out by the middle of the ninth century.⁷³ This makes it unlikely that Fergus was of British stock, but the possibility remains that, like Somerled, he was of Gall–Ghaidhil or mixed Celtic–Norse ancestry, and this is now the most common view taken by scholars. Somerled, like Fergus, also suffers from a dearth of evidence with regard to his genealogy. Although his name is Norse, meaning Summer Sailor or Viking, the names of his father and grandfather are Gaelic. The validation of Clan Donald genealogical tradition by the careful scholarship of David Sellar in the mid-1960s, however, allowed Somerled's descent to be traced back to Godfrey, the son of Fergus, a ninth-century chieftain “who links Derry and Dalriada, Ireland and the Isles, and whose name has Norse associations also.”⁷⁴ Thus, it can be said with a fair degree of certainty that the lineage of both Fergus and Somerled was rooted in the mixed Gaelic–Norse population of the western isles of Scotland, itself the result of accommodation between native Celts and Viking settlers in the ninth and tenth centuries.

One notable characteristic of the lineal family relationships of Fergus and Somerled, which contrasts sharply with the east-coast marriage alliances of the Fifes, Dunbars and Strathearns, is that they seem to have followed a deliberate strategy of forging links outside the Scottish kingdom with little or no regard for the kings of Scots. Moreover, they made no attempt to ally themselves through marriage with either the line of Malcolm Canmore or Anglo-Norman families like the de Aubignys or de Morvilles.

Fergus of Galloway married an illegitimate daughter of King Henry I of England, whose name is often repeated as Elizabeth but who is, in fact, never named in the sources. The evidence for the marriage comes from documents of the next generation, but their meaning appears clear enough. The chronicle attributed to Benedict of Peterborough recorded that Henry II claimed in 1175 that Fergus's son Uhtred was his cousin, while Robert of Torigni claims similarly that the King of Man, Fergus's grandson, was likewise related to Henry.⁷⁵ Although the name of the lady whom Fergus married is unknown, we need not doubt that such a marriage actually took place.⁷⁶ Henry had arranged other marriages for his illegitimate daughters: David I's elder brother, Alexander (King of Scots 1107–24), had married one named Sibylla. Fergus's match to another

⁷³ A.P. Smyth, *Warlords and holy men. Scotland A.D. 80–1000* (New History of Scotland 1, Edinburgh, 1984), 218–19.

⁷⁴ W.D.H. Sellar, ‘The origins and ancestry of Somerled,’ *Scottish Historical Review*, 45 (1966) 123–142, quotation on 141.

⁷⁵ Benedict of Peterborough, *Gesta Henrici Secundi*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols (Rolls Series, London, 1867), Vol. 1, 79–80, 126; Robert of Torigni, *Chronica Roberti de Torigneio*, in: *Chronicles of Stephen, etc.*, vol. 4, 228–9. See also D. Brooke, *Fergus the king* (The Medieval Lords of Galloway 1, Whithorn, 1991), 5; R. Oram, ‘Fergus, Galloway, and the Scots,’ in: *Galloway: land and lordship*, ed. R. Oram and G. Stell (Edinburgh, 1991), genealogical table at 128.

⁷⁶ C. Given-Wilson and A. Curtis, *The royal bastards of medieval England* (London, 1984), 71.

daughter suggests his high status and a considerable degree of independence as a sovereign ruler. We must, however, cast off all Victoria illusions of a romantic love-match made while Fergus was growing up at the court of the Conqueror's son. Apart from the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that Fergus spent his youth in such a manner, the union probably reflected the ever-present need for political alliances or mercenary troops.⁷⁷ Fergus's daughter, Affrica, married King Olaf of Man (c. 1114–53), possibly shortly after Olaf's accession to the throne.⁷⁸ Through this marriage Fergus may be considered the ancestor of a vigorous line of Manx and Hebridean sea-kings, for his grandson, Godred, succeeded as King of Man upon the death of Olaf in 1153 and ruled until his own death in 1187.⁷⁹

It was only much later in the twelfth century that the lords of Galloway would become entangled in the web of matrimonial alliances which emanated from the Anglo-Norman families and the MacMalcolms in the east, and even longer before it could be said that those ties were firmly cemented. The barriers which separated the Galloways from the other aristocratic families of the east began to be broken down in the generation following Fergus, when his son, Uhtred, wedded Gunnild, the daughter of Waldeve, Lord of Allerdale in Westmorland, the brother of Earl Gospatrick II of Dunbar.⁸⁰ Despite this, it was not until the time of Uhtred's son, Lachlan, who took the French name of Roland (d. 1200), that direct links were forged between the Galloway dynasty and the Anglo-Normans. While the change of name from Lachlan to Roland is itself a significant indicator of accommodation, Roland took as his wife Elena or Helen, the daughter of Richard de Morville, the sister of William de Morville, Lord of Lauder and Cunningham and the Constable of Scotland, and by 1186 she had borne him three sons. When William died ten years later without issue, Roland was able to purchase the succession to the huge de Morville inheritance for 700 merks, according to Walter Bower.⁸¹ Helen survived her husband, and appeared in various transactions until June 1217, when she died.⁸² But, such matrimonial ties notwithstanding, the Lords of Galloway as late as the time of Roland's son and successor, Alan (d. 1234), could maintain a fair degree of independence in the southwest and the Irish Sea World while simultaneously enjoying the position

⁷⁷ Which paid off when Fergus joined with David I to support the cause of Matilda in the civil war against Stephen: R. Oram, "The Lordship of Galloway c. 1000 to c. 1250." (Ph.D. Diss., St. Andrews University, 1988), 74.

⁷⁸ *Chronicle of Man and the Sudreys*, ed. P.A. Munch and Rev. Dr. Goss (Manx Society, Douglas, 1874), 60, and notes on 167. Although the date for Olaf's succession is often given as 1103, it is more likely to have been 1114. See R. Power, 'Magnus Barelegs' expeditions to the west,' *Scottish Historical Review*, 65 (1986) 115–117. See also R.H. Kinvig, *A history of the Isle of Man*, 2nd edn. (Liverpool, 1950), 54.

⁷⁹ *Chronicle of Man*, 60, 66

⁸⁰ Hodgson, *Northumberland*, vol. 7, 28.

⁸¹ Duncan, *Scotland*, 186; W. Bower, *Joannis de Fordun Scotichronicon: cum supplementis et continuatione Walteri Boweri*, ed. W. Goodall, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1759), 1, 509.

⁸² Balfour, *Scots Peerage*, vol. 4, 139.

of Constable of Scotland.⁸³ Alan's matrimonial politics are well known and consequently do not need to be described in detail here. It should be noted, however, that although Alan took at least three wives, including Margaret, the eldest daughter of earl David of Huntingdon (who was the brother of Kings William and Malcolm), the daughter of Hugh de Lacy the earl of Ulster (which brought him significant lands in Ulster), and a sister or daughter of Roger de Lacy, he nevertheless followed the long-standing family pattern by contracting at least one marriage alliance outside the kingdom of Scotland.⁸⁴

Somerled, like Fergus, also allied himself with west-coast dynasties, including Man. In his case it was through marriage to a daughter of Olaf's named Ragnhild, although she was not the daughter of Olaf's marriage to Affrica, but rather of a concubine.⁸⁵ The date of this marriage, like so much else about Somerled, remains unclear, but it must have occurred between 1120 and 1150.⁸⁶ A sister of Somerled, whose name is unknown, married Malcolm MacHeth sometime before his capture in 1134: the *Chronicle of Holyrood* recorded that two sons of Malcolm, Somerled's nephews, joined Somerled in his 1153 rebellion.⁸⁷ We have already noted how a daughter of this union in turn married Earl Harald Maddads-son of Orkney after 1168.⁸⁸ The drawing of Somerled's descendants, commonly known as the MacSorleys, into the community of the realm of thirteenth-century Scotland was a lengthy process. It was complicated by the divided allegiances of the various branches of Somerled's descendants, and hastened by the cession of the western isles by Norway to Scotland in 1266; moreover, it has been well treated elsewhere and does not need to be repeated in detail here.⁸⁹ However, it is perhaps noteworthy in the present context that the daughter of Ewen of Argyll,

⁸³ See K.J. Stringer, 'Periphery and core in thirteenth-century Scotland: Alan son of Roland, Lord of Galloway and Constable of Scotland,' in: *Medieval Scotland. Crown, lordship and community. Essays presented to G.W.S. Barrow*, ed. A. Grant and K.J. Stringer (Edinburgh, 1993), 82–113.

⁸⁴ See Balfour, *Scots Peerage*, Vol. 4, 141; K.J. Stringer, 'A new wife for Alan of Galloway,' *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 3rd series, 49 (1972) 49–55.

⁸⁵ *Chronicle of Man*, 61. Her name is given as Ragnhild in *Orkneyinga Saga*, cap. 100.

⁸⁶ The traditional date for the marriage, 1140, does not rest upon any contemporary authority. It seems to be first given in D. Gregory, *The history of the western highlands and isles of Scotland from A.D. 1493 to A.D. 1625* (London, 1881), 12, and was followed by later writers, including A. and A. Macdonald, *The Clan Donald*, 3 vols (Inverness, 1896–1904), vol. 1, 43. A.A.M. Duncan and A.L. Brown, 'Argyll and the Isles in the earlier middle ages,' *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 90 (1956–57), 195, argue that it can only be placed before 1150.

⁸⁷ *A Scottish chronicle known as the Chronicle of Holyrood*, ed. and trans. M.O. Anderson with some additional notes by A.O. Anderson (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1938), 125; see also 129 n.1.

⁸⁸ *Orkneyinga Saga*, cap. 109.

⁸⁹ See E.J. Cowan, 'Norwegian Sunset – Scottish Dawn: Hakon IV and Alexander III,' in: *Scotland in the reign of Alexander III*, ed. N. Reid (Edinburgh, 1991), 103–31; Duncan and Brown, 'Argyll and the Isles,' *passim*.

one of Somerled's descendants, had married Malise, the 5th Earl of Strathearn, at about the same time as Ewen threw his support behind the Scottish cause (c. 1268).⁹⁰

In contracting their marriages, Fergus and Somerled were, like the east-coast earls, making a statement. But while the earls of Fife, Dunbar, and eventually even Strathearn, all chose to associate themselves consciously, through marriage and other means, with the MacMalcolm kings and the Anglo-Norman families of the east, the dynasties of Galloway and Argyll demonstrate an opposite trend. They made no attempt whatsoever to forge links with the MacMalcolms or, in the time of Fergus and Somerled, at least, with Anglo-Norman families. The most important twelfth-century marriage connections were those linking these families to the Norse dynasty of Man, entirely separate from the Scottish kingdom, and with other prominent families of the north and west like the MacHeths. Indeed, while geographical factors should always be kept in mind, it is tempting to surmise that this represented a conscious policy of separation from the royal family and its attendants in the east. The marriage of Somerled's sister to Malcolm MacHeth is instructive: although some scholars have suggested that it represented an honourable link between the royal family and that of Somerled,⁹¹ it more probably demonstrates an association between elements opposed for one reason or another to the MacMalcolm kings of Scots. Another such marriage which is even more instructive in this regard is the second marriage of Harald Maddadsson, the Earl of Orkney, to a daughter of Malcolm MacHeth named Hvarflod. As we noted, sometime after 1168 Maddadsson repudiated his first wife, a daughter of Duncan I of Fife, and bigamously married Malcolm MacHeth's daughter. Unlike MacHeth himself, Earl Harald had no claim to the throne of Scotland even though his father was a grandson of King Duncan I (1034–40). His involvement in rebellion was related to political developments in the north of Scotland in the 1180s and 1190s, when there was a significant expansion of royal power in Moray through both secular and ecclesiastical officials, especially after the defeat of the troublemaker Donald MacWilliam in 1187. Thus, in repudiating Affrica and wedding instead MacHeth's daughter, Earl Harald was consciously associating himself with the MacHeth faction and resisting royal expansion into the north of Scotland.⁹² It is significant to note that in the eyes of John of Fordun, Harald had been, until the time of this marriage, "a good and trusty man – but at

⁹⁰ Balfour, *Scots Peerage*, vol. 8, 246.

⁹¹ Duncan and Brown, 'Argyll and the Isles,' 195. This hypothesis rests upon the assumption that Malcolm MacHeth was an illegitimate son of Alexander I, and can no longer be seriously entertained.

⁹² *Orkneyinga Saga*, cap. 109; For more on Earl Harald see E.J. Cowan, 'Caithness in the sagas,' in: *Caithness: a cultural crossroads*, ed. J. Baldwin (Edinburgh, 1982), 39–40, and P. Topping, 'Harald Maddadson, Earl of Orkney and Caithness, 1139–1206,' *Scottish Historical Review*, 62 (1983) 112–113.

that time, goaded on by his wife . . . he had risen against [the king].”⁹³ This contention is strengthened by the fact that a condition of peace with the king in 1196 was that Earl Harald should dismiss MacHeth’s daughter as his wife; this the recalcitrant earl refused to do.⁹⁴ Marriages, therefore, could be and were used to forge alliances among the members of what Professor Cowan has aptly termed an “anti-feudal faction” within twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Scotland.⁹⁵

Relations between the feudalized core and the non-feudalized, largely tribal and heroic, periphery of the kingdom of Scotland were often turbulent. The laconic chronicles and other records from which much of the history of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries must be reconstructed are full of references to uprisings against Malcolm IV and William the Lion. From 1124 until 1157, one of the prime motivators of rebellion was Malcolm MacHeth. He is a shadowy individual whose lineage cannot, on the basis of the available evidence, be determined with certainty. The most likely hypothesis, however, is that he was descended from the Moray dynasty of MacBeth (1040–57) and Lulach (1057–58), and was either a son or brother of Angus, the earl (Irish sources called him king) of Moray who was killed in 1130 at the battle of Stracathro by the forces of King David I.⁹⁶ MacHeth fought alongside Angus in the 1130 rising, was captured in the process of leading another uprising in 1134, and spent the next twenty-three years in captivity. From 1153 to 1157 the men of the western seaboard rose against Malcolm IV, led by Somerled and his nephews, the sons of Malcolm MacHeth, unquestionably on behalf of their imprisoned father. In 1157 MacHeth was reconciled with the king, and on his death in 1168 he was styled Earl of Ross, indicating perhaps that he was granted this province as part of his reconciliation.⁹⁷ In 1160 Malcolm IV was faced with rebellion on the part of many of the earls at Perth. Once the crisis was defused, three subsequent campaigns against Galloway forced Fergus to retire as a canon to the Augustinian house at Holyrood, and point strongly to his involvement as a prime mover in the events at Perth.⁹⁸ In 1164 came yet another threat. Somerled gathered a fleet of 160 ships, filled them with warriors from the Hebrides, Argyll, Kintyre, Dublin, and perhaps Galloway and Orkney, and sailed up the Clyde, landing at Renfrew. The force, however,

⁹³ John of Fordun, *Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. W.F. Skene, 2 vols (Historians of Scotland Series, vols. 1 [text] and 4 [translation], Edinburgh, 1871–72), vol. 1, 274–5; vol. 4, 270.

⁹⁴ Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, vol. 4, 12.

⁹⁵ E.J. Cowan, ‘The historical MacBeth,’ in: *Moray: province and people*, ed. W.D.H. Sellar (Edinburgh, 1993), 131.

⁹⁶ See Robertson, *Early kings*, vol. 1, 184–90; Duncan, *Scotland*, 166; for another view see Barrow, *Acts of William I*, 12–13.

⁹⁷ The authorities for Malcolm MacHeth and the risings led by him or on his behalf are: Orderic Vitalis, *The ecclesiastical history of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. M. Chibnall, 6 vols (Oxford, 1968–80), vol. 4, 276; *Chronicle of Holyrood*, 124–5, 129–31; *Chronicle of Melrose*, 35.

⁹⁸ *Chronicle of Holyrood*, 136–7.

was met by a hastily assembled local army, and Somerled was killed in the ensuing battle.⁹⁹ The 1160s did not, however, see the end of rebellion, despite the deaths of Fergus, Somerled and Malcolm MacHeth. Throughout the 1170s, 1180s, 1190s, and the first three decades of the thirteenth century, the descendants of Malcolm MacHeth, allied with the descendants of another rebel, Donald MacWilliam, and Harald Maddadsson, the Earl of Orkney, continued to cause problems for the kings of Scots in the far north and west of the realm. It was not until 1234 that the last of the rebellions was finally put down in Galloway, and that something approaching peace broke out throughout the peripheral regions of Scotland.

Alexander Grant has proposed that in twelfth and thirteenth-century Scotland a sense of Gaelic inferiority could not and did not develop, and that thirteenth-century Scotland was a ‘hybrid’ country.¹⁰⁰ As we have seen, ties of marriage could indeed help to heal and soothe relations between the different ethnic elements of Scotland, especially among the nobility. Matrimony was therefore crucial to the process of accommodation in the east of Scotland, and Scottish earls who wished to maintain their position and influence in the “Davidian experiment”¹⁰¹ which brought feudal society to Scotland did so in part through marrying the daughters and widows of Anglo-Normans. Through such matrimonial politics many members of the native nobility of Scotland were able to enter the “common aristocracy” which has increasingly attracted the attention of historians of medieval Britain.¹⁰² Thus, it is not going too far to say that marriage alliances played an important role in the creation of this hybrid kingdom of Scotland which had emerged by the thirteenth century. On the other hand, however, it is no coincidence that the leaders of many of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century rebellions were related by marriage. While a sister of Somerled married a daughter of Malcolm MacHeth, and a daughter of this marriage in turn wed Harald Maddadsson, Somerled himself married a granddaughter of Fergus of Galloway. It would appear, then, that just as matrimony was an important factor in accommodating native Scottish nobles to Anglo-Norman ways, so too it was a key in maintaining and perpetuating an alliance of princes in the western and northern regions of Scotland who stood opposed to Anglo-Norman innovation and the penetration of feudal holdings whose creeping tendrils were encircling the autonomous regions of Galloway and Argyll.

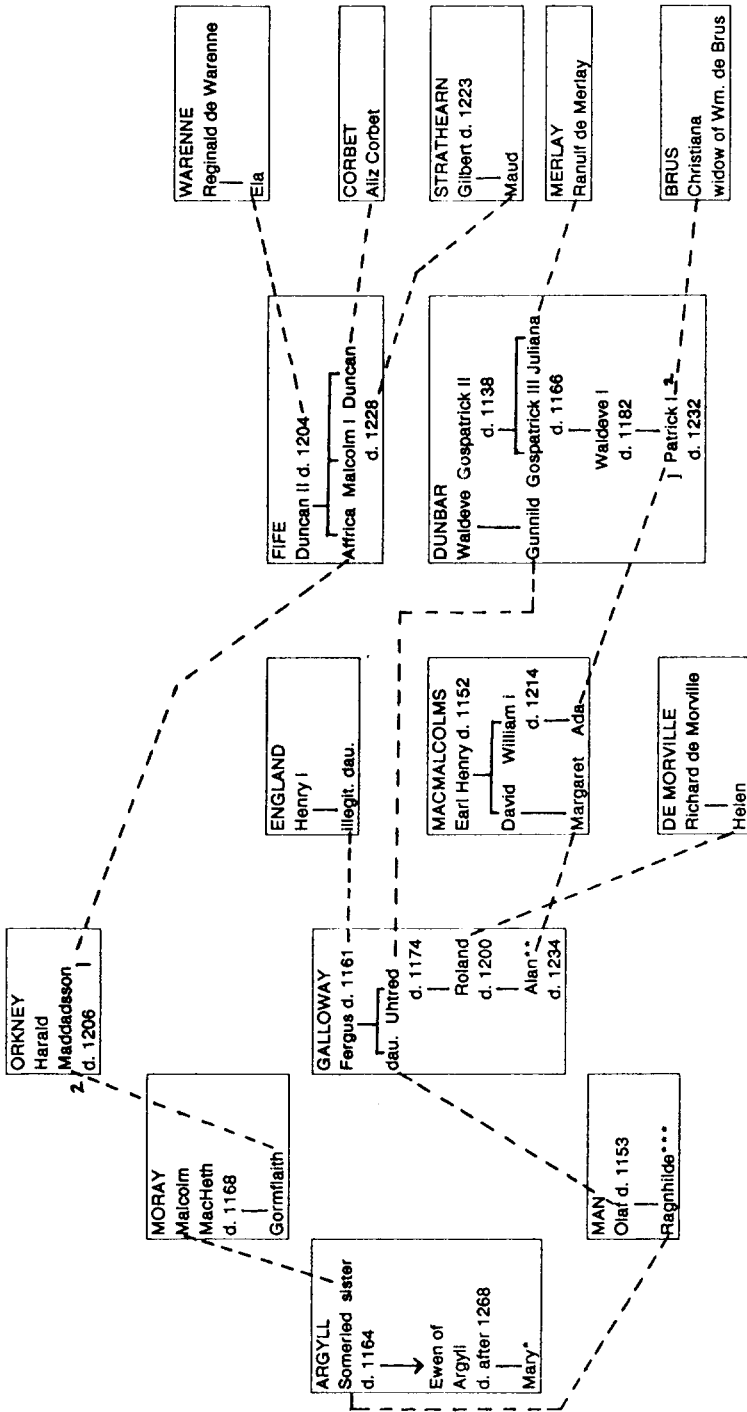
Figure 1 outlines the matrimonial politics and core–periphery interactions in

⁹⁹ The twelfth-century rebellions have not been the subject of substantial scholarly inquiry: see McDonald and McLean, ‘Somerled of Argyll,’ *passim*.

¹⁰⁰ A. Grant, ‘Scotland’s ‘Celtic Fringe’ in the late middle ages: The MacDonald Lords of the Isles and the Kingdom of Scotland,’ in: *The British Isles 1100–1500. Comparisons contrasts and connections*, ed. R.R. Davies (Edinburgh, 1988), 119.

¹⁰¹ The term is Professor Barrow’s: see *Acts of Malcolm IV*, 4.

¹⁰² R. Frame, ‘Aristocracies and the political configuration of the British Isles,’ in: *The British Isles 1100–1500*, ed. Davies, 143.



N.B. Genealogies significantly simplified

* Married Malise, fifth earl of Strathearn, c. 1268

** Alan contracted at least two other marriages outside a Scottish context

*** Not the daughter of Olaf's marriage to Fergus's daughter

Fig. 1. Matrimonial politics and core-periphery interactions in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Scotland.

twelfth- and thirteenth-century Scotland. Perhaps the crucial aspect of the matrimonial politics of Scotland in this period is the length of time that it took for marriage alliances to bridge the lochs and mountains which separated Galloway, Argyll and Moray from Fife, Strathearn and Lothian. Seen from the perspective of matrimonial politics, there clearly emerges a fundamental dichotomy in twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Scotland between east and west, between the feudal kingdom of Scotland and those regions ringing the Irish Sea. In many respects this disparity is readily apparent: indeed, in one sense it is obvious, since the process of feudalization never extended deeply into the southwest and western seaboard in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries – hence Professor Barrow's division of Scotland into "inner" and "outer" zones in this period.¹⁰³ But the rift between the east of Scotland and the Irish Sea World goes far beyond the matter of feudalization, and in some respects the division into inner and outer zones is misleading because it suggests less autonomy for the outer zones than they actually enjoyed. The dichotomy in Scottish society is revealed most clearly in the marriage patterns of the great families of the east and west coasts. They polarized around the king of Scots in the east, and the Norse dynasty of Man in the west. There thus existed a community of kings and princes off Scotland's west coast, linked to one another spiritually through resistance to the westward thrusts of the twelfth-century kings of Scots, and connected physically through matrimony. It was not until the late twelfth and early thirteenth century that the barriers began to crumble and the integration of the west into the matrimonial patterns of the east really began, as illustrated by Roland and Alan of Galloway, but even then it can hardly be doubted that the transition was only partially made, and never quite complete. If, therefore, matrimonial politics played a crucial role in creating a hybrid kingdom of Scotland by the mid-thirteenth century, it must also be argued that matrimony was a major tool in both forging and cementing an alliance of princes on the periphery of the kingdom which opposed the MacMalcolm kings of Scots and the foreign influence which their reigns were instrumental in establishing north of the Tweed.

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¹⁰³ Barrow, *Kingship and unity*, 49–50.