

f

AMERICAN MILITARY UNIVERSITY

Charles Town, West Virginia

A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST OF THE HIGHLAND AND BORDER CLANS
OF SCOTLAND

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

ANCIENT AND CLASSICAL HISTORY

By

Clint Edwards

Department Approval Date:

31 October, 2014

The author hereby grants the American Public University System the right to display these contents for educational purposes.

The author assumes total responsibility for meeting the requirements set by United States Copyright Law for the inclusion of any materials that are not the author's creation or in the public domain.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST OF THE HIGHLAND AND BORDER CLANS
OF SCOTLAND

By

Clint Edwards

American Military University, 31 October, 2014

Charles Town, West Virginia

Professor Thomas Goetz, Thesis Professor

The following is a comparison and contrast of the Highland and Border clans of Scotland. This study is conducted through the lens of clan conflict from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries. It begins with a historical context of these regions of Scotland. It covers the territorial dynamics of the Highland and Border regions and how these dynamics often led to conflicts between the clans or between the government and the clans. A comparison and contrast of weapons, armor, and unit types comes next. The final chapter discusses the social framework of the Highlands and Borders, including what this framework meant when it was time to fight.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....	11
II. THE TERRITORIAL NATURE OF THE HIGHLANDS AND BORDERS.....	14
III. MARTIAL MATTERS: WEAPONS, ARMOR AND UNIT TYPES.....	34
IV. PERSONAL CONNECTIONS: KINSHIP AND ALLIANCE.....	54
V. CONCLUSION.....	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	78

Introduction

The Highland clans of Scotland create a colorful picture which is found throughout the artistic world; from romance novels to the Hollywood big screen to the world music stage. The icons are well known. The kilt and other garments of tartan color and the Highland bagpipes are known throughout the world as symbols of the Highland clansmen. The symbols are not the only things that are well-known. The names of Highland clans are found throughout the world, identifying their descendants; names such as Campbell, Macintosh, MacDonald, Mackenzie, and Sinclair.

What is not as well-known is that these symbols and names are specifically Highland in origin. In modern times, the kilt and the Highland bagpipes have been adopted by Scotland as symbols for the whole nation. A separate tribal system developed along Scotland's border with England which, at first glance, looks very similar to Highland society. While icons from this region are not as easily recognized as those from the Highlands, the names are very familiar: Maxwell, Armstrong, Graham, Nixon, Douglas and Scott. This research will seek to clearly compare and contrast Highland clans with Border clans. As a comparison between clans of the two regions in every aspect of society would be the work of a very large book, this research will focus on comparing and contrasting the Highland and Border clans in areas that are discernable through a study of clan warfare during the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries.

The clans of these regions were very militaristic and were often involved in feuds with nearby clans as well as battles involving government forces. Sometimes the conflicts arising from these feuds became international in scope, involving England or Ireland. Other conflicts

were very local in nature. By studying these conflicts, it will be possible to gain a clear view of characteristics and traits of the clans from these regions. Being able to see these characteristics and traits will enable the reader to see the regional differences and similarities. The research will focus on the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries. Many of both the Highland and Border clans as they are known today were in their infancy during the thirteenth century. In 1603 King James VI of Scotland inherited the English crown. At this time, the two nations did not become one, yet all of Britain was now ruled by one king. This meant that the territory marking the boundary between England and Scotland was not the border it used to be. In the years preceding this development as well as those following it, James put much effort into establishing his rule in the Borders, as well as the Highlands. His efforts in the Borders were motivated by his desires to transform this area from a border region to what he called the “Middle Shires.” He even created a new position called “The Commissioner of the Middle Shires.”¹ It was during this time that the Border clans began their decline and a comparison between Highland and Border clans would lose relevancy. These factors set the chronological bounds of this research.

Research on the Scottish clans becomes ever more relevant as family history grows in popularity. People all over the world are searching for their roots, their origins. As the United Kingdom established its empire, Scots from both Highland and Lowland regions settled all over the world. The United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand saw large numbers of Scots settle within their boundaries. Now the descendants of these settlers are searching for the origins of their families in ever increasing numbers. In his TIME.com article, “How Genealogy Became Almost as Popular as Porn,” Gregory Rodriguez stated, “...genealogy is the second most popular

1 P. Hume Brown, ed. *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1908): 161, 694, 762.

hobby in the U.S. after gardening, according to ABC News, and the second most visited category of websites, after pornography.”²

Many people, upon embarking on this quest, find themselves, whether virtually or literally, on the green hills, fertile plains, or remote mountains of Scotland. Often they can find a tie to one of the prominent clans that roamed this European frontier. The names of these clans are commonplace throughout the world: MacDonald, Campbell, Sinclair, Mackintosh, Graham, or Armstrong. Those who have found this connection immediately picture the symbols associated with Scottish culture, such as the Highland bagpipes and tartan-colored kilts. Books giving an introductory history of a given clan are usually easy to find.³ Before long, the seeker has found their clan tartan and, given the funds, might even go out and buy a kilt with the corresponding tartan. It is important for people to have reliable sources to go to in uncovering their heritage.

The problem is that these popular clan histories do not provide those seeking to know where their ancestors came from with a complete picture of their origins. A person with the last name of Elliot will get the same picture of their ancestors in their mind as one with the last name of MacKay, despite the fact that these two clans did not even speak the same language! The Elliots were a Scottish clan whose territory was on the national border with England. They spoke Scots and, during the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries, would not have been caught dead in a kilt of whatever color. The MacKays, on the other hand, were from the far north of Scotland, deep into the mountainous Highlands. Their language would have been

² Gregory Rodriguez, “How Genealogy Became Almost as Popular as Porn,” *Time*, May 30, 2014. <http://time.com/133811/how-genealogy-became-almost-as-popular-as-porn/> [accessed June 28, 2014].

³ A good example is Ian Grimble, *Scottish Clans and Tartans*, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1973).

Gaelic and they would have been more likely to wear a kilt (at least, perhaps, during the sixteenth century, and whether or not they were identifiable by certain colors is another matter).

Within the last few years, BBC produced a series of television shows highlighting different clans, including both Highland and Border clans.⁴ These productions were generally well-done. They included scholarly commentary from professional historians such as Anna Groundwater, Martin MacGregor and Allan MacInnes. Their commentary adds academic credibility to the program. This is the kind of media that a non-historian would take most of their information from regarding the Scottish clans. The shortcoming in the presentation of the clans does not come from a faulty or inaccurate presentation of information. What these programs lack is any kind of distinction made between the cultures of the clans they cover. For instance, the episode on Clan Gregor, in discussing Rob Roy's talent for stealing cattle, discusses the term blackmail, as if it was a Highland invention. The term was actually coined in the Border country.⁵ Certainly Rob Roy, the MacGregors, and Highlanders generally, practiced cattle rustling as if it were their national pastime. Had the term, however, come from the central Highlands, it would have more likely been a Gaelic word. This is indicative of the lack of clarification presented to those new to Scottish history.

Another example of this gap in information for the general public is the first website that pops up on a Google search of any given clan: the Wikipedia article. In a short experiment, the author did a Google search for five random Highland clans and five random Border clans. In all ten cases, the Wikipedia article was either the first or the second on the list of results for the

4 British Broadcasting Corporation, "Highland Clans: Episode 1, MacGregor," You Tube, Flash Video file, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24_rXY7GTCU (accessed August 8, 2014). This episode also mentions the ranking of genealogy as second only to pornography in popularity on the internet.

5 George MacDonald Fraser, *The Steel Bonnets*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972): 5.

search. Nine out of the ten Wikipedia articles included the Collins *Scottish Clan and Family Encyclopedia* in their sources.⁶ One article even quoted this book in the article. While Wikipedia, despite its usefulness in gaining a familiarity with a subject, is not considered a scholarly source, it will be foremost among those sources used by those doing a cursory search for information on any of the Scottish clans. As demonstrated, these articles commonly draw from the *Scottish Clan and Family Encyclopedia*, among other sources. While this book provides much information which is both accurate and helpful in learning about the clans of Scotland, it leaves the same gap in information referred to earlier in painting the same picture in the Borders as in the Highlands.

The introductory material of this book provides a cultural and historical context for the succeeding pages on the clans. This context is taken largely from the Highlands, which would be fine if the book was only concerned with Highland clans. Yet mixed among the histories of the Highland clans are histories of the Armstrongs, Bells, Johnstones, Hepburns, Kerrs and Elliots; all Border clans and all descending from a different heritage.

Not everyone in Scotland during the late Middle Ages lived in a tribal society. There were two main regions in Scotland where, during this time period, a tribal system prevailed: the Highlands and the Borders (Borders being a general term, not a specific political boundary). This is more or less acknowledged in academia yet it is done more so on the assumption that this is the case, rather than a specific statement. This thesis argues that the Highland clans and Border clans of the late Middle Ages possessed many similar characteristics, yet differed in some very fundamental ways. How deep do these similarities go? What were the specific differences

⁶ George Way and Romilly Squire, *Scottish Clan and Family Encyclopedia*, (Glasgow: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994).

between these clans? This thesis will answer this question by analyzing the clans of the Highlands and Borders during the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries A.D., when the clans that most people are familiar with were in full swing. It will show that there is some justification for a perception of similarity between Scottish clans of these different regions. At the same time, there were significant differences in the natures of these regions that go deeper than the clothes they wore or the musical instruments they played. This is a very broad subject and, if not narrowed farther, could be addressed with an entire book. Therefore, this thesis will specifically compare and contrast the Highland and Border clans through an analysis of the martial aspect of their cultures.

The areas of focus that this thesis will follow are divided into four parts: the territorial nature of the Highlands and Borders, the weapons, tactics and unit types employed by the clans of the Highlands and Borders, and finally, the social context in which these clans conducted warfare. Through analysis of these subjects, the similarities and differences of the Highland and Border clans will emerge and the reader will begin to see more clearly the true aspects of these clans. This thesis will serve two functions. First, it will provide a scholarly base for those seeking to create media serving the general public, whether family history enthusiasts or just history enthusiasts. Secondly, it will serve as a springboard for further scholarly discussion on the tribal societies of the British Isles.

There must be some clarification on the use of the word *clan*. This word comes from the Gaelic and means “children or descendants of”. It can be loosely synonymous with the word “family”. Yet in the context of the Scottish clans it means something more than that. In Scotland, *clan* refers to a unit within a tribal society where blood kinship carried with it a deeper sense of identity and obligation than it did in a non-tribal society. At the head of a clan was a

chief. His paternalistic duties extended much farther than his own children and grandchildren. He shared a sense of kinship with the whole clan, which in some cases, such as the MacDonalds and Mackenzies, could number in the thousands. As the head of a clan, the chief had a duty to serve his clan, specifically in areas of economy and protection. Members of a clan, likewise felt certain duties to play their role within the clan. They could be summoned to fight for their clan and territory with the chief, or near relative, at the head of the force. While there were exceptions to these factors, and while these factors were not wholly absent from family units in non-tribal societies, they were influential enough to distinguish these clans, setting them apart from families of other areas. Clan histories mostly deal with the leading members of the clan as literacy came late to the rank and file membership.

With the meaning of the word *clan* set forth, clan nomenclature will make more sense. Especially in the case of the Highlands, with the peculiarities of the Gaelic language, there are a couple of different ways to refer to a clan. The way most people from outside of Scotland are familiar with is, for instance, when referring to the foremost clan descended from Somerled, to refer to them as the MacDonalds. This is an appropriate method. Another legitimate way, however, is to refer to this clan as Clan Donald, which, interpreted literally, means “children of Donald”. When using the latter method, the name often takes its Gaelic form. For example, the MacKays come from a progenitor named Aodh (pronounced something like “Aye”). Therefore they may also go by Clan Aodh. The Mackenzies may also go by Clan Coinnich. The Robertsons, when using this alternative name, use the name of an earlier chief than Robert *Riabhach* (Grizzled), whose name was Duncan (*Donnachaidh* in Gaelic). Therefore the name of the clan becomes Clan Donnachaidh. Hopefully this will help the student of the Highland clans in their research.

In the Borders, the word *clan* also came to be used, despite its origin in the foreign Highlands. An act of the Scottish Parliament dated 29 July, 1587 was published with the intent to bring the unruly Highlands and Borders into a more harmonious state with the government. In this act, the word *clan* is used throughout to refer to both Highland and Border tribal units.⁷ With that in mind, one should be conscientious of the fact that, of the two methods mentioned above of referring to a particular clan, the Border clans generally did not use the latter method. Anna Groundwater argues that using the term *Clan* Armstrong or *Clan* Kerr is a modern convention used by popular historians and that the word *surname* would be a more historically authentic term when referring to the Borderers.⁸ This thesis will use the word *clan* to refer to both Highland and Border families, following the example from the 1587 Act of Parliament.

Another note is important on the bearers of a particular name. Just because a person held a particular clan surname did not necessarily mean that he was a blood relation to the chiefly family. Some people took the name of the chief because he was their feudal lord and, as the chief, it was he who had so much influence in their lives. This time period was full of raids and forays of one group into the territory of another. The chief was the one those in his territory looked to for defense in times of threat. Therefore, not every man who bore the last name of Mackay would be a blood relation to the leaders of the clan. Yet when the call to arms came, the said man would grab whatever he had for a weapon and assemble at the designated gathering place. He would fight, and possibly die, for the chief and the clan.

7 Scottish Parliament, "For the quieting and keeping in obedience of the disordered subjects, inhabitants of the borders, highlands and isles," Edinburgh, July 29, 1587.

8 Anna Groundwater, "The Obligations of Kinship and Alliance within Governance in the Scottish Borders, 1528-1625," *Canadian Journal of History* (Spring/Summer 2013): 7.

The Highland and Border clans did not come out of the same tribal heritage. The Highland clan society has its roots deep in ancient Gaelic culture. The earliest recorded Gaels in Scotland were those from the kingdom of Dál Riata, which kingdom had as its territory what is now Argyle and the Inner Hebrides. Most histories of Dál Riata begin with three kindreds: Cenél Loairn, Cenél nÓengusa, and Cenél nGabráin. While the author is not claiming that the Highland clans were descended in an unbroken chain from these early Dál Riatan tribes, Scottish Gaelic culture was a tribal one from its earliest recorded times.

On the other hand, the inhabitants of the Borders were not banding together in tribes until after Scotland won its independence from England under Robert the Bruce and their territory became a violent frontier between the two countries. True, the region had once been inhabited by Celtic tribes (although from a different branch of the Celtic language family than the Gaels). Also, many of the Borderers were no doubt descended from those tribes. However, those tribes had long ceased to exist as such and Border society tended to resemble society in other regions of England or Lowland Scotland.⁹ Challenging and violent social, political, and economic circumstances in the Border region in the early fourteenth century brought people together in kin groups for security. Thus, the tribal society of the Borders was born of circumstance and not of heritage as it was in the Highlands.

⁹ A detailed description of Teviotdale, a Border area, in the 1300's is given in Michael Brown, "War, Allegiance, and Community in the Anglo-Scottish Borders: Teviotdale in the Fourteenth Century," *Northern History* XLI, no. 2 (September, 2004): 219-238.

Chapter 1

Historical Context

Unlike Ireland, Scotland was never a wholly Gaelic speaking realm. It is true that at one time Gaelic was the dominant language throughout most of what is now called Scotland. Yet a seventh century snapshot of Scotland would have shown people speaking four different languages: Gaelic, Pictish, British, and Anglo-Saxon. Before its rise to national dominance, Gaelic was confined to what came to be known as Argyle, but was called in previous days Dal Riata. To the east and north of this kingdom and generally located north of the Firth and Clyde line were the Picts. There is some debate over what language they spoke. There are two prominent theories on this matter. The first is that they spoke a P-Celtic language, related to the language spoken in what was to become Wales and England before the Anglo-Saxon language became dominant. The other theory is that the Picts spoke a pre-Celtic language that was heavily influenced by a P-Celtic language, perhaps a class of society speaking a Brythonic language ruling over a population speaking a pre-Celtic language. Jenny Wormald sees conclusive evidence that the former theory is true.¹⁰ She is supported by Simon Taylor in his contribution to *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*, which also claims that the language of the Picts was a P-Celtic Brythonic language.¹¹ The Strathclyde Britons had their capital at Dumbarton, earlier known as Alt Clud. This British kingdom may have stretched as far north as the Clach nam Breatan, or Rock of the Britons, and have reached as far south as Cumbria, in modern northwestern England. They also spoke a P-Celtic language, similar to Cumbric or Welsh. Finally, in the southeast of what would become Scotland, were the Germanic-speaking Angles of

¹⁰ Jenny Wormald, *Scotland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 9.

¹¹ Michael Lynch, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 483.

Northumbria, who had extended their power over the Votadini, whose capital was Dun Edin, modern Edinburgh.

Latecomers to the scene were the Vikings, mostly those coming from modern-day Norway. As the Vikings transitioned from temporary raiders to permanent settlers in the ninth century, their language obtained a strong foothold in the Hebrides, western and far northern Highlands, and the northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland. Although Gaelic was to emerge the dominant language in these areas (in some cases even until the present day), it became heavily influenced by the Norse tongue. This is evidenced by the place names of these regions. Another example of the Norse influence in these areas is the names of the local clans, many of whom trace descent from Vikings. The MacLeods descend from a man with the Norse name of Leod. The Gunns, MacCorquodales, MacAulays, MacSweeneys, and the MacIvers claim a similar origin. The MacDonalds and their sept, the MacDougals, and MacAlisters despite their Gaelic names, all claim descent from Somerled, a man of supposed mixed Norse-Gaelic heritage and a bearer of a Norse name.

Even later than the Vikings were their kinsmen, the Normans. These settlers came in as socio-political elites, many of them invited from England by David I in the twelfth century. They often legitimized their new titles and positions by marrying in with the local noble families. Many of these Norman families “went native”. In the Highlands they learned Gaelic and took Gaelic titles. The Frasers of Lovat provide a good example of this. Their chiefs are styled *MacShimidh*, or “son of Simon” in Gaelic, after a famous ancestor. Other Highland clans stemming from Norman ancestors are the Chisholms, Grants, and Sinclairs. At least as important as the founders of these notable clans, the Normans brought with them feudalism to Scotland. This was not a mutually exclusive concept with the system of kinship already

extensively employed by the Scots. Therefore, feudalism took on a very Scottish form, adapted to the native socio-economic environment.

From these origins, trends developed that were to have large cultural impacts on the areas of focus for this thesis. In the Highlands, Cinaed MacAlpin took the throne of the Picts in the mid ninth century. This is the argument of Dauvit Broun, who contradicts those who claim that Cinaed was a Gaelic king that inherited the Pictish throne through his mother.¹² At this point, ironically, Scotland north of the Clyde-Firth line saw the Gaelic culture and language overcome that of the Picts. Eventually, even the Norse were assimilated into the Gaelic sphere. Thus, the Highland clans came to be identified as Gaelic, regardless of whether the bloodlines of their chiefs traced back to the Gaels of Dal Riata, the Norse or the Picts.

In the Borders, the clans that came to be known as Border Reivers occupied territory that possibly straddled three language boundaries. Gaelic had also become firmly established in Galloway. The Johnstones and Maxwells, who were both firmly established in the West March by the fourteenth century, could have controlled territory inhabited by Gaelic speakers. It is uncertain exactly how long the old Brythonic language of the Kingdom of Strathclyde lingered in the Border territory but it certainly died out before Galwegian Gaelic did. Dominant in the Borders for the period of this thesis is Scots, descended from the language of the Angles of Northumbria, who extended their power westward in the seventh century. This is the language of the Border clans, regardless of whether their bloodlines trace back to the *Gall-Ghaidhealaibh* settlers of Galloway, the original British tribes of the region, or the Angles of Northumbria.

¹² Lynch, *Scottish History*, 359.

Chapter 2

The Territorial Nature of the Highlands and Borders

In the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries, the Highland and Border clans were constantly engaging in combat of one type or another. Sometimes the fighting was between just a few individuals. At other times whole clans would turn out to fight each other. On an even larger scale, the same clans would be part of a force fighting on a national scale and including many other clans fighting side by side with government troops who were not fighting under the banner of a clan chief. When fighting on a national scale, the Scottish clans, both Highland and Border, sometimes fought with the government and sometimes against it. Through all this fighting it is important to understand why the clans were involved in the conflict in the first place. While there were a variety of reasons for this, this thesis will discuss but two: territorial transgressions, where one clan invades the territory of another or is on the receiving end of the invasion, territorial disputes, and in fulfilling obligations of loyalty to one side or another who were preparing for combat.

Territorial Transgressions: Invasions of Territory

This motivation for a clan to war with another clan highlights some important similarities between Highland and Border clans. In both the Highlands and the Borders, clans possessed certain territories. Sometimes the border of clan territory was defined by the extent of land that the chief and a clan could hold by the strength of arms. Clan Gregor appears to be one of these clans. As the Campbells of Glenorchy persecuted them, there seems to be a lack of legal appeal, such as one finds submitted by the Colquhouns against the MacFarlanes (to be discussed shortly). Had they held their land by charter, either from the central government or by a feudal

superior, they could have appealed to the source of the charter for redress. In his research on the Statutes of Iona, Julian Goodare notes that there were few clans in the Hebrides who possessed legal documentation that would be acknowledged by the Crown.¹³

Other clans held their lands, as previously mentioned, either from the crown or from a feudal overlord. The MacFarlanes and Clan Donnachaidh were two such clans. An ancestor of the MacFarlanes, Duncan, received a charter for the lands of Arrochar from the Earl of Lennox, a near kinsman. This charter was later confirmed by James I.¹⁴ Robert *Riabhach* received a crown charter in 1451 for extensive lands in Athole for apprehending the murderers of James I.

Similarly, in the Borders, the Johnstones acquired the beginning of their territory in Annandale from the Bruce family. They added to that territory at the expense of the Douglas clan. In 1455, the Black Douglases were in open rebellion against the crown. At the Battle of Arkinholm, the royal army opposing them was made up of Border clans who would not live under Douglas dominance any longer. Leading this force was John Johnstone of Annandale and Lord of Johnstone. For his part in the victorious battle, Johnstone was awarded some of the Douglas lands in Annandale. In this case, the Johnstones were similar to the MacFarlanes and Robertsons, who acquired their territories from the crown.

The MacDonalds and MacDougals represent a hybrid of these two systems: acquiring and holding the land by the sword on one hand, and holding the land through legal charter on the other. Their ancestor, Somerled, was of mixed Norse and Gaelic heritage. Proving to be an able leader, he conquered much of the Hebrides and Argyle, carving out his own kingdom from what

13 Julian Goodare, "The Statutes of Iona in Context," *The Scottish Historical Review* LXXVII, no. 203 (April, 1998): 34.

14 William Fraser, *The Lennox: Vol. 1 Memoirs (Vol. 2 Muniments)*, (Edinburgh: 1874): 228.

had previously been Norwegian territory. His descendants, who include the MacDonalds and their many branches, the MacDougals, and the MacAllisters, continued to hold the territory Somerled conquered.¹⁵ The MacDougals and some branches of the MacDonalds actually allied themselves with King Haakon IV of Norway against King Alexander III of Scotland at the Battle of Largs.¹⁶ Despite this defeat, the clans of the Isles retained their lands, yet were then under the rule of the Scottish king. The royal seal of approval for the MacDonalds came when Angus Og (young Angus) threw his lot in with Robert the Bruce. Angus Og's brother, Alexander, who was the birthright son, sided against Bruce, along with the MacDougals. As Bruce proved the victor and became Scotland's king, Angus Og MacDonald acquired large portions of his unfortunate brother's forfeited territory, as well as much of the MacDougal territory. It pays to be a winner. So the MacDonalds under Angus Og inherited territory from their ancestor, Somerled, who acquired it through strength of arms. This territory and much else, at the expense of other tribes, received the royal confirmation through backing Robert the Bruce.

Two clans that experienced rapid growth in territory through backing Robert the Bruce were the Campbells and the Douglasses. Both proved extremely loyal to the Bruce and were rewarded handsomely at the expense of the Bruce's enemies' territories. The Campbells would continue their policy of backing the government in Edinburgh, much to the chagrin of their neighbors in the Highlands. The Douglasses would do so until the sixteenth century, where their scheming against the crown and subsequent loss on the field of battle would lead to their demise.

15 A study done by Bryan Sykes and Jayne Nicholson concerning the DNA of individuals bearing these surnames indicates that the claims of these families being descended from Somerled are more than fanatasy. See Bryan Sykes and Jayne Nicholson, "The Genetic Structure of a Highland Clan," The University of Oxford, Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine.

16 Oliver Thomson, *The Great Feud: The Campbells & The MacDonalds*, (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2000): 4, 12.

However it happened that a clan acquired their lands, clan chiefs were under nearly a sacred obligation to defend the borders of their respective territories from any incursions from other clans. The concept of *duthchas* was one of a people belonging to the land, rather than land that belonged to a particular person. *Duthchas* not only referred to the land of a clan but the resources of that land as well. The steward of the land resources was the clan's chief. In time this concept was to change as chiefs preferred to live in Lowland and even English cities. With this trend, they lost the paternal feeling that had previously been more typical of a chief toward his clan. While this trend was to have dire consequences for the rank and file of the clans, it didn't really catch on until after the time period this study is concerned with. During the 1300-1500's clan chiefs still felt not only the obligation to defend the perimeters of their territory, but also the inhabitants of that territory. Territorial transgressions could occur on a small scale, involving raids which included only the chief and his closest men, or could see hundreds of men take the field in disputing the ownership of or title to a specific district.

The Highland clans were always probing the territory of their neighboring clans. This was often done through cattle raids. Cattle raiding was an ancient Gaelic tradition that is evident in the earliest legends of that culture. The *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (*Cattle Raid of Cooley*) is an ancient Irish legend which revolves around a massive cattle raid conducted by the Queen of Connaught against the kingdom of Ulster. Cattle raiding was conducted by the majority of the Highland clans. Martin MacGregor comments that "The fundamental form of warfare [in Gaelic Scotland] was the *creach*, or cattle raid..."¹⁷ In the introduction to the *Wardlaw Manuscript*, William MacKay points out that in the Highland tradition, cattle lifting, as it is often referred to, was not regarded as petty theft. It was a noble endeavor conducted by the clan elite,

17 Martin MacGregor, "Warfare in Gaelic Scotland in the Later Middle Ages," Edward M. Spiers, ed. *A Military History of Scotland*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012): 216.

differentiating it, in MacKay's eyes at least, from the "petty larcenies" of common highwaymen and "the mosstroopers of the Borders."¹⁸ It actually served more than to simply enrich the clan at the expense of their neighbor. The Daoine Uasal, or clan gentry, usually made up the raiding party, which might consist of a dozen men or 350 men. It was led by the chief or a man who would soon succeed the chief. On this raid, the man in charge had the opportunity to prove his worthiness to lead men in combat due to his courage and wit. Truly, raiding was such an important part of Highland culture that Cathcart phrased it as "an integral part of the clan structure itself."¹⁹

Of course it wasn't just cattle that were stolen. In most descriptions of cattle raids, homes are burnt and portable goods are taken. Those unfortunate enough to be caught in between the raiders and the goods were cut down. When the raid was conducted against another Highland clan, the chief had a serious decision to make. If he did nothing he could be perceived as weak, not only by his own clansmen, but also by the offending party, who might then see an opportunity for expansion. Thus, two reasons for entering a conflict appear: one, for probing and testing the strength of a neighboring clan, the other, for displaying the required strength to not only maintain the clan's territory, but also to earn the respect of a chief's clansmen.

Such an affront to a clan's territory spawned many clan conflicts. The MacFarlanes were notorious cattle raiders in a region known for cattle raiding. In his *History of Clan MacFarlane*, James MacFarlane relates the details of a feud between the MacFarlanes and the Colquhouns of Luss (pronounced Cuh-HOON). Humphrey Colquhoun sued for forty oxen, sixty cows, and ten

¹⁸ James Fraser, *Chronicles of the Frasers: The Wardlaw Manuscript*, (Edinburgh: University Press and T. and A. Constable, 1905): xxviii.

¹⁹ Alison Cathcart, "Crisis of Identity? Clan Chattan's Response to Government Policy in the Scottish Highlands c. 1580-1609," In Steven Murdoch and A MacKillop, ed. *Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experience c. 1550-1900*. History of Warfare, 15 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill: 2002): 165.

horses.²⁰ On a later occasion, the MacFarlanes allied with MacGregors, themselves notorious raiders, and descended on the fields and pastures of Luss. The number of the invading party is not given but this does seem to be a larger one than when the raid was carried out by stealth and under the cloak of night. The same Humphrey Colquhoun assembled a force to repel the invaders. Although the defenders fought hard and drew much blood, they were outmatched by the raiders. Sir Humphrey fled to his stronghold of Bannachra, pursued by the MacFarlanes and MacGregors, where he was shot by an arrow through a loophole. After killing Sir Humphrey, they killed some of his close friends, raped his daughter, and then set fire to Bannachra.²¹

On occasion, the cattle raid was carried out in retribution for some offense. In *The History of the Feuds and Conflicts among the Clans in the Northern Parts of Scotland and the Western Isles; from the Year MXXXI unto MDCXIX*, a conflict which is illustrative of this occurred. The inhabitants of Athole, in the central Highlands, mistreated John Monro, who was on his way from Strathardle, in the southern Highlands, to Ross, in the north. In return, Monro brought back 350 of his best men to exact retribution for his treatment. They pillaged and plundered, carrying away the cattle of the region.²²

The Highland clans did not have a monopoly on cattle raiding. This was practiced extensively in the Border country and is one of the matters that really make the two regions look

20 James MacFarlane, *History of Clan MacFarlane*, (Glasgow: David J. Clark Limited, 1922): 72. Note that Colquhoun could sue for this property because he possessed it by legal charter.

21 *Ibid.*, 72-73. So engaged in cattle raids were the MacFarlanes that their pipe tune (*pibroch* in Gaelic) was titled "*Thogail nam Bó Theid Sinn*" (To Lift the Cattle We Go). Not always on the giving end, the MacFarlanes are said to have obtained their *slogan*, or war-cry, in recovering their cattle from a party of Athole men. This happened near Loch Sloy, at the foot of Ben Vorlich, and became their battle-cry.

22 *The History of the Feuds and Conflicts among the Clans in the Northern Parts of Scotland and the Western Isles; from the Year MXXXI unto MDCXIX*, (Glasgow: J&J Robertson, 1780): 5-6.

similar to each other. *The Calendar of Border Papers* is a collection of papers detailing the day-to-day affairs of the Borders. In this collection is repeated reference to Scottish raids across the border, where their conduct looks much like the raids of the MacFarlanes described earlier. It wasn't just cattle that were taken, although in certain entries they are specifically mentioned. Under the entry for March 10, 1579 is found a "Muster of the East Marches."²³ Numerous villages describe the depredations of Scottish border reivers enriching themselves at the expense of the villages. Sometimes, the villages are vague in their report, claiming only that they have suffered from "Scottish rebels." In other entries, the record is specific. Certain names seem to appear more than others in this specific part of the *Calendar*. The Scots of Buccleuch are recorded by name ("Bucklughe") as raiding the villages of Learmouth, Mannylawes, Pawstoun, Cowpland, Kirknewton and West Newton, Wouller, and Dodengtoun. The Kerrs of Ferniehurst ("Ferryhurst") are included in the record for Cowpland. Mention of the men of Liddesdale are interspersed throughout the Muster of the East Marches for this date as well. Although they are not mentioned by name, the most prominent clans from this area are the Armstrongs and the Elliots; both known as active Border Reiver clans.²⁴

In a later entry, dated July 12, 1587, Sir Cuthbert Collingwood reported to Sir Francis Walsingham, the principal secretary to Queen Elizabeth, of the terrible state of affairs on the border, caused by Scottish raiders. He includes a list of depredations preceded by the title of the guilty party. The reoccurring names in this part of the *Calendar* are the Kers, Hepburns, Doulases and Elliots, though one must read between the lines to get this information. The clans are listed by the titles of their chiefs as well as the district they inhabit. The Kerrs had two

23 Joseph Bain, ed., vol. 1 of *The Border Papers: Calendar of Letters and Papers Relating to the Affairs of the Borders of England and Scotland*, (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1894): 14.

24 *Ibid.*

branches: those of Ferniehurst and those of Cessford. They were often at odds with each other yet both appear here (not necessarily in concert) as conducting raids across the border into the English Middle March. They are recorded in this record under these titles (Fernnyhurst, or Farnehurst, and Cesford). The Hepburns are recorded as “Bothwell”. The Earl of Bothwell at this time was Francis Stewart, who inherited the title from his mother, who was a Hepburn, and to which family the title traditionally belonged. Ironically we find the Douglasses under the title of the Earl of “Anguish”. He certainly was a source of anguish, although the name most are now familiar with is “Angus”. Although the Douglas chiefs who held this title tended to run in less parochial circles, the rank and file of the clan were Borderers and were apparently quite active as raiders in the English Middle March. The only clan in this part of the record to be mentioned by name are the Elliots, although they actually appear under an older form of their name; Elwood.²⁵

Under the titles held by the heads of these clans are specific depredations they wrought on the English side of the border, mostly in Cookedale and Rydsdale (Redesdale). The record shows that on some occasions the party was relatively small. On 1 May, 1587, eight Kers of Cessford rode to a village called Eldirton and made off with six “horse and meares.” On 25 May, 8 Kers of Fernehurst rode out and took four horses from Rothbury. Other entries describe large raiding parties that obtained quite a significant amount of plunder. On 12 May, the Hepburns embarked with four hundred men to Clenell and took sixty head of livestock and even included some of the natives as captives. A party of eighty Hepburns and Douglasses set out on 3 June to Rydsdale and brought back sixty “oxen and kye, 100 sheep, and sundry prisoners.” The same clans set out on 23 June and took “500 head of cattle, 300 sheep and 20 prisoners to Lydesdale.” Between 30 April and 7 July, the total of goods taken from the English Middle

²⁵ Ibid., 262-63.

March totaled “700 oxen, kye and geld cattle and mo., 80 horsse and meres and mo., 400 sheep and mo –with 30 prisoners ransomed to better then on hundrethe poundes starlinge.”²⁶

The Middle and East Marches of England were not the only areas that suffered depredation from the Scots. An entry in the *Calendar* under the date of June, 1583, is titled “Rules for Defense of the Borders,” and pertains to the English West March. It describes the main defensive positions of that region and what can be done to deter the Scots. The language gives the impression that the inhabitants of this march were more worried about “...the keepinge out of the Scottishe theves of Greteney, Redhawll, Stilehill, and others of the Batable landes of Kinmowthes retynewe, that comonlie use to ride in the nighte time through the said barronrie of Browghe to th'incontrie, and not onlie breake pore mens howses and onsettes, but bereave them of- all that they have, bothe Incite, horsse and cattle, and that which is worse, their lyves also...” than they were about a Scottish government force sent from Edinburgh.²⁷ The Johnstones were a tribe of the Scottish West March who were described as treating their neighbors property as though “it had been taken from their lands, and that their acts are but legitimate appropriations.”²⁸ This Border clan had a well-known spot for keeping their stolen cattle, no doubt some of them being the subject of the previous *Calendar* entry. It is a pocket in the midst of steep hills north of Moffat, known affectionately as the “Devil’s Beef Tub.”

Therefore, both Highland and Border clans shared a common practice of cattle raiding. In the Highlands these raids were carried out against other Highland clans, and, in cases where

26 Ibid. It should not be assumed that everyone on this expedition would have borne the name of Hepburn or Douglas. Those in leadership likely did, as well as a fair number of those that followed. There were also likely many who came from loyal yet smaller clans from the same districts.

27 Ibid., 101.

28 W. Robertson Turnbull, *History of Moffat*, (Edinburgh: W. P. Nimmo, 1871): 47.

the clan lived close to the Lowlands they would target Lowlanders. In the Borders, these clans would also target each other but are found in abundance crossing the border and riding off with English livestock and other forms of plunder. In both cases, although killing the men in the targeted area doesn't seem to be a main objective, neither Highland nor Border clans appear averse to this action if it is the difference between a successful mission or a failed one. Although cattle raiding in the Borders seems to lack the ancient foundation it had in the Highlands, the Border Reivers seem to have become equally adept at this practice.

Territorial Transgressions: Territory Disputes

Raiding wasn't the only problem between the clans when it came to territorial problems. As mentioned earlier, feudalism brought by the Normans took a uniquely Scottish shape as the natives adjusted to this new element in the ruling elite. Unlike England, the Normans came to Scotland in a largely peaceful manner. There was no Scottish equivalent of the Battle of Hastings. The Normans came into Scotland invited by David I in the twelfth century and were given land and title. This occurred in all regions of Scotland. Those regions easily accessible by Edinburgh experienced a more profound change than did more remote areas. Yet even in the remote areas of the Highlands and Borders, this new system found a way to form a symbiotic relationship with native institutions. This was facilitated by the fact that the Crown had key players in even the most remote of areas. In the western Highlands, which had a reputation for an antagonistic stance toward central authority, the chief of the Campbells promoted the interests of the Crown. This was one of the major factors in their rise to power. In the northeast the Gordon Earls of Huntly represented the central government. Interestingly, the Campbells descend from native Gaelic nobility while the Gordons descend from Norman settlers in

Scotland. Both leaders could exercise the power of a Gaelic chief while moving comfortably in the royal, Anglo-Norman circles of the Lowlands.²⁹

This uniquely Scottish feudalism saw the old mormaerships transition into earldoms. Wormald articulately describes this concept of fitting feudalism over pre-existing political concepts. As an example she uses the earldoms of Badenoch and Sutherland, the earls of which “fitted comfortably into the role of Highland chiefs, wielding a more or less traditional hegemony over largely Gaelic-speaking clients.”³⁰ This was also true of the Earls of Argyle who also wore the hat of the chiefs of the Campbells (*clan Diarmuid*), styling themselves *MacCailein Mor* (son of Colin the Great). Wormald illustrates how mormaers became earls, “Most ‘provincial lordships’ corresponded to pre-existing regional power structures...” and “Most twelfth-century earldoms were based on pre-1100 mormaerships, and ‘earl’ is merely the English term for ‘mormaer’.”³¹

The chiefs of the Border clans also held titles yet it wasn’t as common for Borderers to be the chief of a clan and hold an earldom as well. Many of the clan chiefs of the Borders did hold some sort of title, yet they weren’t as territorial as those held by Highland chiefs. Anna Groundwater supports this by saying of the Border clans, “...there was no direct association

29 The Gordons are an interesting case when it comes to culture. Were they a Highland clan or were they Lowlanders who owned property in the Highlands? Cathcart points out that “at this time, there was still little clear-cut distinction made between Highlander and Lowlander particularly in areas like Huntly’s Aberdeenshire where Gaelic and Scots were both spoken and cultural differences minimal.” The Gordons, while operating out of a stronghold in the Aberdeenshire lowlands, were very active in the Highlands, as Cathcart effectively illustrates. Cathcart, “Crisis of Identity?” 164. Another source that provides a thorough investigation of the blurred nature of this cultural divide is A. MacCoinnich, “His spirit was given only to warre’: Conflict and Identity in the Scottish Gaidhealtachd, c. 1580 – c. 1630,” in S. Murdoch and A. MacKillop, *Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experience, c. 1550 – 1900, History of Warfare*, 15. (Netherlands: Brill, 2002):132 – 162.

30 Wormald, *Scotland*, 58.

31 Ibid.

between the surname and the lands held by its individual members, in the way that there was, perhaps, an assumption of lands held for a clan in some parts of the Highlands.”³² What the Border chiefs did have was a system of governing the Borders by breaking it down into Marches, referred to previously. Each country had its own east, middle and west March. They did not match up exactly but were close. Each March had its own Warden. These wardenships, at least on the Scottish side, were held by the head of a surname, or clan chief. This was an appointment, not a hereditary title.

The duty of the march wardens was basically to keep order on the Border. The English Crown appointed their own wardens for their corresponding marches. This was a very territorial based position. Unlike Highland earldoms, this position did not originate or grow out from an older position, like a mormaer. The system of governing the border, with marches and wardens, was a solution to a problem that developed and existed in the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries. Both Highland earldoms and Border wardenships changed hands throughout the years. Yet in both regions, certain families came to be associated with the title and position. In the West March, the position of warden alternated between the Johnstones and Maxwells, as well as the Douglasses. In the Middle March, the Douglas, Stewart and Ker clans were the most common appointees. During the sixteenth century, the wardenship of the Middle March “was held almost exclusively by the Kers of Cessford.”³³ In the East March, the position of Warden went back and forth between the Homes and Douglasses.

32 Anna Groundwater, *The Scottish Middle March, 1573-1625: Power, Kinship, Allegiance*, (Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2010): 52.

33 *Ibid.*, 83.

In the Highlands the picture is similar. Certain chiefs were associated with certain titles. The chief of the whole Campbell clan was always the Earl of Argyle. On the other hand, like the wardenships of the marches, Highland titles changed hands as well. There was less bouncing back and forth, as with the Maxwells and Johnstones, yet changes did occur. The Lordship of Lorne started out as a MacDougal title. The Highland Stewarts acquired the title in the late fourteenth century. Eventually, this position became one of the many titles belonging to the Chief of Clan Campbell. Another example of a lordship changing hands is the Earldom of Sutherland. This title was held for centuries by the de Moravia family but changed hands, through marriage, to the Gordons in the sixteenth century.

Understanding the territorial nature of both Highland and Border titles and the fact that they were often held by men who were also chiefs of clans provides the context to understanding the conflicts between these clans over territory. The line between a clan feud and nobility fighting over title and territory was a blurry one. This type of conflict provided some of the greatest civil conflicts within the Scottish nation during the period under study. Clan against clan fielded hundreds, sometimes thousands, of warriors against each other. Sometimes these conflicts were part of a dispute between two different government factions. Other conflicts arose purely between one clan and another. Often they were a mix of the two, with government forces on one side and a clan, or alliance of clans, on the other. Most often the government relied on clan rivalry to bolster their numbers, as they could count on the aid of a clan who was at odds with the clan opposing the government. This provides yet another similarity between the Highland and Border clans. Examples will clarify.

The Earldom of Ross was a hotly contested title and territory and provided the focus for a series of clan conflicts. The territory of Ross is a massive piece of real estate in the northern

Highlands. The possessor of this title controls extensive lands and resources. This earldom was contested by generations of MacDonalds from the early fifteenth century well into the seventeenth century. This mighty Highland clan did not feel it too big of a task to confront government forces over the issue. In the early 1400's, this earldom lost its last male heir and a contest began for the now vacant title. The two claimants were Donald MacDonald, Lord of the Isles, and the Regent Albany, who was a Stewart and was actually pursuing the title or his son, John Stewart, the Earl of Buchan. The Regent, in his powerful position so close to the Crown, was able to secure the title in his and his son's favor. This was unacceptable to Donald, who rallied his supporters in an effort to enforce his claim. The conflict gave birth to a series of battles, the first of which is known as the Battle of Harlaw and took place in 1411.

On the side of the Lord of the Isles, this was a massive clan affair. Not only did the Lord of the Isles command several of their own septs, each a respectable clan in their own right, he also enjoyed the support of several major Hebridean clans.³⁴ Their leaders bore some very colorful names, such as Fierce Iain MacLeod of Dunvegan and Red Hector "of the battles" MacLean of Duart. The Lord of the Isles also had two prominent mainland clans on their side who sported their own descriptive names: Dark Donald Cameron and Little Calum Mackintosh. Most sources give the number of men following the Lord of the Isles as 10,000.³⁵ The forces supporting the government, rather the Stewart, claims were led by the Regent's nephew, Alexander Stewart Earl of Mar, who happened to be Donald's own first cousin.³⁶ The men that Mar brought to confront Donald's troops were largely troops who responded to their feudal duty

34 To name a few of these MacDonald septs which existed at this time: MacDonald of Clanranald, MacDonald of Glencoe, Maclain of Ardnamurchan, and the MacAlisters.

35 One of these is Lynch, *Scottish History*, 347.

36 Fitzroy MacLean, *Highlanders: A History of the Scottish Clans*, (New York: Viking Penguin, 1995): 50.

to the nobility of northeastern Scotland. However, there were clans who rallied to the call of their chiefs in opposition to the MacDonalds and their allies. Members of Clan Ogilvy were among those who rallied behind their chief in defense of their lands.

What seems to be skipped over in many of the histories of this coming battle is the conflict which took place with the MacDonald forces en route to Aberdeenshire. This army took time to stop in the country surrounding Inverness and lay it to waste and collect the spoils. They were met in the vicinity of Dingwall by a force of 4,000 men under the command of Angus Dhu MacKay, chief of the MacKays. The MacKays were defeated in battle and the MacDonalds and company continued on their way to confront the Regent's army. James Browne, in his *History of the Highlands and of the Highland Clans*, asserts that at this point, Donald could have secured his claim to the Earldom of Ross. He became overly ambitious and drove into Aberdeenshire and into his encounter with Mar's troops.³⁷ It is worth stopping to observe that this battle, the Battle of Dingwall, was a clan battle in which there were no government troops. Every man on the field was answering to the call of a chief. These forces each numbered in the thousands. This kind of engagement was never seen in the Border country.

Emerging victorious from their encounter with the MacKays, the Islemen moved on to confront the Regent's forces under the Earl of Mar. Tactically, the Battle of Harlaw was inconclusive as each side sustained heavy casualties and neither side was able to drive the other from the field. Strategically, it was a win for the Regent as the Lord of the Isles and his massive yet depleted army moved back to their homes, leaving the Earldom of Ross for the Regent's son to enjoy. Harlaw marked the beginning of military conflicts over Ross that involved no troops from the central government. Other perspectives need consideration with respect to the

37 James Browne, *History of the Highlands and of the Highland Clans*, IV. (Glasgow: Fullarton & Co., 1840): 435.

argument. Donald brought thousands of men to war who responded to their leaders as clansmen. Their force was big enough to contend with the Crown on equal terms. To restate this, there was a force within the Scottish nation that was independent of the central government and was as large and as capable as the forces of the central government, and was based upon the Highland clan structure. The Border clans had no comparable event or capability. The Douglas clan tried something similar forty-four years later at the Battle of Arknholm. The title in dispute was actually the Crown itself. The principle here is the same but the scale differs so drastically that it cannot be compared with Donald's efforts at Harlaw.³⁸

Another instance which serves to illustrate the conflicts that Highland clans had over territory occurred in 1517 between the MacKays and the Earl of Sutherland. The reader should understand that this example is but one in a long history of feuding between these regions. This particular battle is known as Torran – Dhu. The occasion was the change of ownership of the Earldom of Sutherland from the Clan Sutherland to the Gordons through marriage. Seeing the opportunity to take advantage of the change of ownership and a possibly associated lack of leadership, John MacKay rallied men from Strathnaver, Assynt, and Eddrachillis to invade the lands of Sutherland. What he didn't count on was the bond of loyalty between Alexander Sutherland and the current Earl of Sutherland, Adam Gordon, his brother –in -law. Upon hearing of the invading MacKays and the ensuing destruction, Alexander called upon John Murray and William Mackames, with their men, for help. Exactly how many warriors were in each force is not given in *History of the Feuds and Conflicts*. However, there is mention of casualty numbers.

38 Alastair J. Macdonald, "The Kingdom of Scotland at War, 1332-1488," In Edward M. Spiers, ed., *A Military History of Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012): 172.

MacKay would have been at the head of a considerable force. Upon his defeat, MacKay retreated to a safe place and selected “a number of the ablest men in all his host, and with these he himself returned again to the conflict.” When considering that MacKay has lost men already, and then, of those who remain only a portion are selected to return to the fight, the force he returned to engage the Sutherlands with must have only represented a small number of the original. The second engagement went poorly for MacKay. He barely escaped with his life. Recall that MacKay set out with men from three districts: Strathnaver, Assynt, and Eddrachillis. No numbers are given for the men from Eddrachillis. Of those from Assynt, their chief, Niell Macean – Macangus was slain, with “divers of his men.” Only for the men of Strathnaver are exact numbers given. 216 died on the field of battle in the second engagement, with more dying in the route that ensued.³⁹ The original force that MacKay entered Sutherland with must have been numbered by the hundreds. No numbers are given for the other side, led by Alexander Sutherland but considering they won the battle, even if they didn’t have quite as many as MacKay had, they were at least more than competitive. The picture emerges of two forces led by alliances of clan chiefs, numbering in the hundreds, and facing off for battle.

This same Alexander Sutherland who so valiantly opposed John MacKay at the Battle of Torran – Dhu, ended up marrying MacKay’s sister, thus building an alliance between the two clans. This alliance became very beneficial in Alexander’s bid for the Earldom of Sutherland. So much for that bond of loyalty between Alexander and his brother-in-law, Adam Gordon. There is more detail to this struggle than given for the Battle of Torran – Dhu, but less of numbers. Alexander’s initial offensive included enough men to take Dunrobin Castle, the seat of

³⁹ *History of the Feuds and Conflicts*, 19-20.

the Earls of Sutherland. Adam Gordon, who was in Strathbogie at the time, arrived in Sutherland with enough men to retake Dunrobin.

A final clash occurred between the forces of Alexander and Adam. Adam discovered Alexander walking on the beach as though he had already won the conflict. What the record relates next does give some hint about numbers engaged on either side. Adam instructed his friends, Alexander Leslie, John Murray (or Morray), and John Skorrigh – MacFinlay to engage Alexander Sutherland in a skirmish while he (Adam) went to bring more men to the fight.⁴⁰ Through his marriage to a MacKay, Alexander would have had access to a significant pool of men. This was important for not all Sutherlands were loyal to Alexander, some preferring to side with his sister, Elizabeth, and her husband, Adam Gordon. When Alexander took Dunrobin castle, he killed such of these clansmen as would not support him in his contest for the earldom. Those loyal to and serving with Alexander Sutherland must have presented a large enough for that Adam felt unprepared to engage him in a direct conflict. As a member of the leading family of the Gordon clan, Adam had plenty of men to send for.

In the Borders, most of the conflicts over titles or land seem to be centered on which clan will occupy the wardenship. This was definitely a source of contention between the Maxwells and the Johnstones. Up until the battle of Dryfe Sands, the conflict took the usual shape it did amongst the Borderers: raid and counter raid. Occasionally the numbers involved were large, approaching those commonly seen in the Highlands. More often they were smaller numbers. In the Johnstone/Maxwell feud, the Johnstones could “put no more than 300 men in the saddle.”⁴¹

40 Sir Robert Gordon, *A Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland from its Origin to the Year 1630*, (Edinburgh: George Ramsay and Co., 1813): 96

41 Fraser, *Steel Bonnets*, 173.

The *Memoirs of Robert Carey* contradict this. He claims that, during the same time period, the chief of this notable Border Reiver clan could “wave his hand and a thousand men would leap on horseback.”⁴² So this conflict may not have been as lopsided as Fraser would have us believe. The Maxwells were apparently better off when it came to manpower. In a raid which took in 16 miles of Johnstone territory, the Maxwells brought along 1700 lances.⁴³ This, however, did not end in a pitched battle, which was probably fortunate for the Johnstones. Eventually things did come to a decisive head. At Dryfe Sands, the chief of the Maxwells arrived at the head of 2000 men. Johnstone, by this time, was able to muster 400. Fortunately, he could count on the alliance of members of the Elliots, Scotts, Irvines, and English Grahams.⁴⁴ Despite having numbers in his favor, Johnstone proved tactically superior and turned a victory into a rout, pursuing his enemies into the town of Lockerbie, cutting the fleeing Maxwells down as they ran.

Another feud that centered around a contention for the wardenship of the Middle March was that of the Kers of Cessford against their kinsmen, the Kers of Ferniehurst. A branch of this feud involved a unique case where the Kers of Ferniehurst found themselves at odds with the town of Jedburgh during the 1570’s. This unusual feud came to a head in February, 1572 when Ker of Ferniehurst assembled a force of 3000 men, providing one of the instances where a Border chief did bring a large force to bear, completely independent of any part in a larger scale conflict that involved the government. Fraser claims that part of the feud between this branch of the Kers and Jedburgh had to do with these Kers being in favor of Mary, Queen of Scots and Jedburgh choosing the side of James VI.⁴⁵ There is something important to understand when it

⁴² Robert Carey, *Memoirs of Robert Carey, Earl of Monmouth*, (London: De La More Press, 1905): 58.

⁴³ Fraser, *Steel Bonnets*, 175.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 177.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

comes to this kind of matter. Often, factions which are at feud with one another will use ongoing conflicts as a premise to legitimize their violence against each other. This was true of the Scots at this time, as well as of different American factions during the Revolutionary War, and during the Civil War. Perhaps there is a grain of truth in the causes these factions claim to espouse. Usually, there was already bad blood which was started by something much more personal. Fraser gives the Ferniehurst support of Queen Mary as the premise for the Scotts, who also supported the Queen, joining up with them for their descent upon Jedburgh.⁴⁶

Against a marauding force of 3000 Kers of Ferniehurst, Scotts of Buccleuch, “broken men” from England, as well as a contingent of outlaws under a man named Alexander Trotter, the town of Jedburgh stood little chance. A force sent by Ruthven from Edinburgh, however, came to their aid, as did a number of riders under Kers nemesis, Ker of Cessford. In this way a town was pulled into the feud between the Kers of Ferniehurst and Cessford, which had as a major source of contention the wardenship of the Middle March.

In the discussion about why Highland or Border clans decided to fight, this thesis only used examples that dealt with territory. Religion proved to be a major reason for going to war, especially in the sixteenth century, yet it will have to wait for the next research paper. When discussing territorial disputes, the Highland and Border clans look very similar. Both Highland and Border clans turned cattle raiding into a fine art. In both cases, the raid could be a tool for the up and coming men of the clan to prove themselves. On the surface, some of these raids were retaliatory in nature but did not exclude the practical element of getting the clan’s property back. Cattle weren’t just a sign of wealth, they were what’s for dinner.

46 Ibid.

When it came to territorial disputes, the principle was the same yet the form was slightly different in the Highlands than it was in the Borders. In the Highlands, the titles held by the clan chiefs were very territorial in nature, much more so than in the Borders. The holder of the Earldom of Ross possessed a vast tract of Highland real estate, which the MacDonalds and their allies felt was well worth fighting for. In the Borders, the title that was most fought over was that of warden of one of the three marches. This was the premise for the Johnstone/Maxwell feud as well as the Ker of Ferniehurst/Cessford feud.

Chapter 3

Martial Matters: Weapons, Armor and Unit Types

In order to create a clear picture of the military exploits of the Highland and Border clans, a discussion of the tools of their trade is in order. In detailing the instruments of violence employed by the Border and Highland clans as well as the armor worn to protect themselves from such instruments, it is important to keep in mind that Scotland did not exist in a military vacuum. Phillips recognizes that "...Scotland was a European nation, inside the mainstream of thought and practice on the new military discipline."⁴⁷ Many of the same weapons that were employed by the Scots of any region were also seen in other parts of the British Isles as well as on the continent. In Scotland's many conflicts with England, the enemy often employed mercenaries from the continent. Likewise, Scotland made use of their "Auld Alliance" with France on many occasions. Sometimes Scottish clans from both the Borders and the Highlands and Isles, such as the Douglasses and the MacDonalds, entered into alliances with England against the Scottish crown. These factors would mean that the Scots from any region would be somewhat familiar with the arms, armor, unit types and tactics from other parts of Europe. With

47 Gervase Phillips, "In the Shadow of Flodden: Tactics, Technology and Scottish Military Effectiveness, 1513-1550," *The Scottish Historical Review* LXXVII, 2, no. 204 (October, 1998): 164.

that said, within Scotland there were some peculiarities that were peculiarly Scottish and that set the Highlands apart from their countrymen on the Border.

A great visual source of information regarding the arms and armor of the Highlands are the tomb effigies of the Hebrides. The images engraved upon the tombs of notable warriors depict the warrior who lay inside the tomb, usually in his full military splendor. These effigies are valuable because they not only show what weapons and armor were in use in the West Highlands and Isles during the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries, they also display how the armor and weapons were worn. There is some possibility for misrepresentation with these effigies. Examples abound of ornamental weapons and armor worn by tribal elites on special occasions which would never really be carried into battle. On the other hand, the arms and armor of the Hebridean chiefs displayed on their effigies show them as a part of a northwestern European cultural continuum, not entirely unique to their locality, yet with their own approach to these styles.

One fine example of these is that of Alasdair Crotach MacLeod, whose life straddled the border of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. His tomb effigy shows him in full armor, holding his sword. His helmet is conical in shape, possibly a bascinet without an attached face guard, and appears to have a nasal piece. Under the helmet it was common to wear a mail coif, or hood, which provided protection for his neck. Connected to the coif is a mail pixane, which comes down to cover the shoulders and upper chest and back. Next, Alasdair appears to have plate armor on his arms. Underneath all of the steel armor is a long gambeson, or aketon, which reaches down to about the knee. These were padded coats that provided some protection against edged weapons.

Alasdair's sword is unique among those shown in Hebridean tomb effigies. Most of those from other parts of the Hebrides show the warrior holding a single-handed sword, while Alasdair's is a two-handed model. His sword closely represents the stereotypical claymore (*claidheamh-mor*, "great sword"), with its quillons which slope forward and terminate in quatrefoils. The pommel of the sword is circular in shape. In examining the variety of Hebridean tomb effigies, this is the major point of differentiation. Effigies from the Isles of Oronsay and Iona depict warriors with the same type of conical helmet, pixane, and jack or *leine*. Whereas Alasdair rests his hands on his claymore, the other effigies generally depict the one-handed sword being worn in a scabbard attached to the belt. It seems the Gaels of this region of Scotland preferred the forward sloping quillons as the one-handed broadswords also use this design. The rest of Alasdair's arms and armor seem to be quite uniform with the rest. There are several of these tomb effigies dating from the late fourteenth century to the sixteenth century, enough to show that this style of armament was fairly typical in this region of Scotland during this time.

The Iona Abbey Museum contains several tomb effigies that show considerable continuity in the arms and armor of this time and region of Scotland. Alasdair Crotach was very much in tune with the style of his contemporaries. Some of the effigies in Iona come with a name for the warrior. The effigy labeled "Bricius MacFingone" shows the one-handed sword carried in a sword belt around the waist. In his right hand he holds a spear and in his left, a shield. The shield is kite-shaped but is rather small. It is likely that the shield may represent armorial bearings as the engraver took some effort to portray a birlinn (the type of ship used by Hebridean warlords) and what appears to be other heraldic symbols. The shape of the shield may represent the actual type of shield used during this time period. Alasdair Crotach may not

have used a shield if he was using both hands to wield his sword. Bricius, however, may have used the shield in conjunction with his one-handed sword. The rest of his armor looks very much in keeping with Alasdair's style.

Among the other Hebridean tomb effigies, there seems to be two categories. The first shows the warrior in the traditional armor, which is the same as depicted on Alasdair Crotach's tomb: conical bascinet helmet, mail pixane mantle on the neck and shoulders, and knee-length gambeson. Those in this first category only carry the one-handed sword, which seems to be a uniform type among them all. It has the forward-sloping quillons and a similar pommel type, which looks like it could be a take-off from Viking sword pommels. Effigies in this category include Donald MacGill'easbuig's effigy from Finlaggan, on the Isle of Islay, a tomb of a warrior named Lachland from the abbey on Iona, another tomb from Iona whose warrior remains unknown, and another unknown warrior's tomb from the Isle of Oronsay.

Those in the second category carry all the arms and armor of the first group, including swords of the exact same style, but have additional items. They carry small, kite-shaped shields with what looks like heraldic symbols on them. Bricius MacFingone and an unknown warrior, both from Iona, sport shields that show birlinns (the type of ships employed by warlords of the Hebrides) as well as what appears to be a heraldic lion. Perhaps they are from the same clan, whose chief adopted those symbols. The third tomb to fall into this category is that of an unnamed warrior's tomb on Iona. He carries a small shield, roughly the same size as the other two. The top of this shield, however, is concave. The symbol on the shield appears to be a mythological creature which has the upper half of the body of a Pegasus and the lower half of the body of a fish/mermaid/sea serpent. This creature is positioned above a castle. Given the small size of the shields, they may be included on the engraving for the purpose of showing the

symbols, which may have been widely recognized in the Hebrides at the time, and would clearly label the warrior or chief as being from a specific group or clan.⁴⁸ Another possibility is that the artisan shrunk the size of the shield for the purpose of leaving visible the other important parts of the effigy, such as the sword. Unlike Alasdair Crotach, who would have needed both hands to wield his claymore, these warriors, with their one-handed swords, would have had a hand free to carry a shield. In all three effigies from the second category, the warrior carries a spear in his right hand.

There is one effigy that seems to be halfway between the two categories. This effigy comes from St. Columba's Church on the Isle of Lewis and is supposed to represent Roderick MacLeod, a sixteenth century chief of the MacLeods of Lewis (not to be confused with the other branch of the clan, the MacLeods of Harris and Dunvegan). His armor is the same as the rest. He carries the one-handed sword of the same make as the rest. He is the only one, however to carry a spear without a shield.⁴⁹

Overall, the lesson learned from a study of the Hebridean tomb effigies is the remarkable consistency in the type of armor worn in the Hebrides from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. The helmets and body armor seem to be fairly uniform, as do the style of swords. In interesting detail which deserves attention is the one exception to the type of sword depicted. Only one out of the seven effigies analyzed by the author held a two-handed claymore. A quick survey of replica swords available for sale online shows that the two swords most associated with the Highlands of Scotland are the claymore, similar to that shown with Alasdair Crotach,

48 MacGregor, *Warfare in Gaelic Scotland*, 225.

49 Although not a scholarly source, the website which afforded the author the best view of these effigies is Christian Clay Columba Campbell, "Wall Tomb of Alasdair Crotach MacLeod," *Eccentric Bliss*, 13 December 2013, accessed September 13, 2014, <http://www.eccentricbliss.com/2013/12/wall-tomb-alasdair-crotach-macleod/>.

and the basket-hilted broadsword which came into use in the seventeenth century. If the ratio of sword types found on the Hebridean tomb effigies is any indicator of the preference of the Highlands and Islands as a whole, the one-handed broadsword was more common. The possible flaw in using these effigies for information on sword types during this period and in this region is that what looks like a one-handed sword on the grave slab could be a misrepresentation on the part of the engraver. This is unlikely. The engraver of Alasdair Crotach's tomb, as well as those who engraved the other tombs were vivid in their depictions of the swords used. Alasdair's is clearly a two-handed sword as he is shown with both hands on the grip. Lachlan's sword is clearly a one-handed sword as he has his right hand on the grip, taking up all the space for a hand. The author is aware of a possibility for either artistic license or inaccuracy. With that in mind, these engravings are among the most detailed primary sources historians have to go on.

Another detail which is interesting with regards to the information these effigies give is the similarity to descriptions from Ireland of the galloglass which were employed there by Irish nobility. The galloglass is a most interesting character from the period of this study. The word comes from the Gaelic *gallóglaich*, which means "foreign warrior". Another Gaelic term used to describe these men was *Gall Gaidheal*, or "foreign Gael". The Irish used this word to denote Gaelic speakers of mixed Norse and Gaelic ancestry who came to Ireland from the western Highlands and Isles to fight for Irish lords. The arms and armor described as being employed by galloglass are remarkably similar to those shown on the tomb effigies in the Hebrides. This should not be surprising considering the place of origin of the galloglass. The gambeson, conical bascinet helmets, broadswords of either one or two-handed design were employed by both galloglass and local Hebridean warriors.

There were differences worth mentioning. A contemporary observer, John Dymmok, described the galloglass with the weapons they carried. They were the die-hard, core of Irish forces, “crewel without compassion.”⁵⁰ According to Dymmok’s description, their armor consisted of a “shert of maile, a skull, and a skeine.” The skull is easy to understand as the bascinet helmet portrayed in the Hebridean tomb effigies. The “skeine” is taken from the Gaelic word for “knife”. It is in the description of the weapons that the difference appears between the Hebridean grave slabs and the galloglass. Dymmok emphasizes their use of the battle-axe, which is not portrayed in any of the tomb effigies.⁵¹

Another sixteenth century source for information regarding the galloglass and their weapons is a drawing of two galloglass and what looks like three kerns following, by a German named Albrecht Dürer.⁵² Of the two galloglass portrayed in this drawing, one wears a helmet yet appears to lack any mail protection. He wears a gambeson without a protective hauberk or pixane. He carries a spear in his left hand. The second galloglass, which is shown in the foreground, has a large, two-handed sword carried in his right hand and rested on his shoulder. In his left hand and under his left arm he carries his bow and arrows. The battle-axes that Dymmok gave so much emphasis to are carried by their kern attendants. While the Hebridean tomb effigies show the conical helmet, sometimes with a nasal piece, Dürer’s drawing shows a different kind of helmet, perhaps a variation of the morion, which includes a protective visor and neck guard. MacGregor gives valuable insight to the relationship between various weapons

50 John Dymmok, *A Treatise of Ireland*. (Dublin: University Press, 1842): 7.

51 Ibid.

52 Albrecht Dürer, *Unnamed Drawing*, Netherlands, 1521. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Galloglass-circa-1521.jpg> [accessed 13 September 2014].

found in Highland forces. He associates the single handed broadsword with the spear and the shield and the two handed broadsword with the bow and arrow.⁵³

There are major limitations for using the tomb effigies and Dürer's drawing as our information about the Highlands in general for this study's time period. The first limitation is that it only represents the trends of the *western* Highlands and Isles. What were those warriors in the *eastern* Highlands fighting and protecting themselves with? Cathcart notes the similarities in arms mentioned by Gilbert Blackhall between men from the Highland region of Lochaber and men from the Lowlands of northeast Scotland, which consisted of "swords and targes and gunnes..."⁵⁴ This account happened a few decades outside of the bounds of this study but is interesting to illustrate that the firm boundary often referred to as the "Highland Line" was not as clear of a boundary as is sometimes assumed. If this is the case between Highland and Lowland, how much of a boundary would exist between different parts of the Highlands? The conflict over the Earldom of Sutherland, previously discussed, shows that Gordons from the Aberdeenshire area had extensive dealings with and travelled amongst those from Sutherland and Strathnaver.

The other issue with using the tomb effigies and Dürer's drawing to gain a clear picture of Highland weaponry and armor between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries is that it only represents the upper echelons of society. There were clear social delineations when it came to warfare in the Highlands. MacGregor referred to this as "the tiny ruling elite at the apex of clan society."⁵⁵ For instance, a chief would typically be accompanied on a cattle raid by only his

53 MacGregor, "Warfare in Gaelic Scotland," 225.

54 Cathcart, "Crisis of Identity," 85.

55 MacGregor, "Warfare in Gaelic Scotland," 216.

closest relatives and most able fighters/drovers. This elite relative few, when it came to larger conflicts, would form the front line. They were more disciplined and experienced in war and would set the tone for the rank and file who followed. So if the tomb effigies only tell us about the upper layer of Gaelic society, they only tell us about the few.

If there was such close contact between Gaelic Scotland and Ireland, perhaps it would be helpful to look at the warriors who occupied lower levels on the socio-economic ladder. This would be the kern, about whom Dymmok also gives information. They are also portrayed in Dürer's drawing. They are not so heavily armored as the galloglass, with whom they often worked. They carry, according to Dymmok, "a sworde, a target of woode, or a bow and sheafe of arrows with barbed heads, or els 3 dartes, which they cast with a wonderfull facility and nearness, a weapon more noysom to the enemy, especially horsemen, then yt is deadly; within theise few yeares they have practized the musket and callyver, and are growne good and ready shott."⁵⁶ This is a wonderfully detailed look at Irish Gaelic warriors who were from a poorer class than the galloglass.

Dymmok makes no mention of helmets or chain mail. This is consistent with Dürer's drawing, which shows the kern without either of these items. The drawing, however, shows the kern carrying the axe, which Dymmok describes the galloglass as being fond of. Perhaps the kern in the drawing were carrying these weapons for the galloglass. It is interesting that these poorer warriors were equipped with swords, which historically were carried by more wealthy warriors. The other items of bow and arrows and darts (javelins) are consistent with their lowly status. The historiographical advantage of studying the kern and galloglass is that the historian is given a clear delineation between the two classes of soldiers. This is not often the case when

⁵⁶ Dymmok, *Treatise of Ireland*, 7-8.

studying the Highlanders. More often, the records mention a chief at the head of a number of men.

However, certain similarities are visible between Highland forces and those in Ireland. At the battle of Pinkie, the Highlanders arrive with bows and arrows for missile weapons at a time when firearms were available. In addition to this, in 1544 Walter MacFarlane of Taret arrived to assist the Earl of Lennox spoil Kintyre with 140 men, who are described as “light footmen, well armed in shirts of male, with bowes, and two handed swords...”⁵⁷ In listing the families most often associated with galloglass warriors, the MacFarlanes are never mentioned. Perhaps they could represent what non-Hebridean warriors carried into battle. A. Scott gives more information regarding the Highland MacFarlanes and their involvement in the Battle of Langside. Both the Regent’s and the Queen’s armies had considerable numbers of firearms on their sides. In fact, by the sixteenth century these weapons had become general.⁵⁸ Yet at this battle, two hundred MacFarlanes engaged the enemy at a decisive point with broadswords.⁵⁹ Hollinshed and Nisbet give the number accompanying MacFarlane as three hundred. It is unlikely that The MacFarlane had three hundred wealthy men to call to his standard. Either this number included broadsword-wielding commoners or the number includes the chiefs and retinues of his allies. The spear or pole-axe of various sorts were cheaper weapons than swords and would have surely been employed by lower classes of warriors.

Gervase Phillips, in his article on Scottish military tactics and technology post Flodden, details the increasing importance of firearms to the Scottish military from the early sixteenth

57 Raphael Hollinshed, *The Scottish Chronicle*, Vol. I (Arbroath: J. Finlay, 1805): 224.

58 Alexander Malcolm Scott, *The Battle of Langside, MDLXVIII*, (Glasgow: Hugh Hopkins, 1885): 33.

59 Ibid., 34. Hollinshed and Nisbet both give the number following MacFarlane as 300. MacFarlane, *Clan MacFarlane*, 64. This would seem to support MacGregor’s weapon association mentioned earlier.

century onwards. Phillips mentions that “Over the first half of the sixteenth century, the arquebus gradually supplanted the bow as the primary missile weapon of Lowlanders and Borderers.”⁶⁰ Phillips also does well to address an apparent inconsistency in the historiography of the Battle of Pinkie, fought in 1547. In Caldwell’s study of this battle, he points out the lack of firearms on the side of the Scottish.⁶¹ One of his primary sources is William Patten, who wrote *Expedition into Scotland*, and was an eye-witness of the battle, having accompanied the Earl of Somerset. Phillips, however, uses the same source in pointing out that arquebuses were used “by Scottish skirmishers outside Prestonpans, before the battle.” He also points out the Scottish use of firearms, specifically the arquebus, or hackbut, in conflicts closely preceding the Battle of Pinkie, such as at Haddon Rig and Solway Moss.⁶²

Highlanders seem to be somewhat more conservative than Borderers or Lowlanders when it came to adopting new technology. Phillips notes that “over the first half of the sixteenth century the arquebus gradually supplanted the bow as the primary missile weapon of Lowlanders and Borderers.”⁶³ The Highlanders are peculiarly absent from this information, implying their reluctance to adopt firearms. MacGregor supports this by saying “The bow dominated the sixteenth century as the Highland strike weapon *par excellence* and relinquished that status only very slowly in the seventeenth century,” and claims that this had less to do with conservatism and more to do with the fact that the Gaels of the Highlands managed to develop methods of

60 Gervase Phillips, “In the Shadow of Flodden,” 176.

61 David H. Caldwell, “The Battle of Pinkie,” in *Scotland and War, AD 79-1918*, ed. Norman MacDougall. (Savage, Maryland: Barnes and Noble, 1991): 74.

62 Phillips, “Flodden,” 176.

63 Ibid.

warfare that suited their environment and circumstance.⁶⁴ At the Battle of Pinkie, a contingent of Highlanders, referred to as “Irishmen” by Lesley, fought under the command of the Earl of Argyle.⁶⁵ They arrived to fight on the battlefield with missile weapons but carried bows instead of firearms. They would not have the opportunity to use them as they suffered heavy losses from the English naval bombardment. So here is a major contrast between the Highland clans and those from the Borders. The Highlanders at Pinkie and in the Battle of Langside are both reported using bows instead of firearms which also differentiates them from the Irish kern, who otherwise seem to be a close parallel with poorer Highlanders, yet who grasped firearm technology and even became adept at using them.

In no area of warfare were the Highland and Border clans more different from each other than in the types of units each favored. In the Highlands, light infantry prevailed. MacGregor goes so far as to say that the horse is virtually invisible in the Gaelic Highlands.⁶⁶ Supporting this assertion is the *Wardlaw Manuscript*, which describes the forces contending at the Battle of Glenlivet. In this battle, the Earl of Argyle (and chief of all Campbells) received the title of “his Majesties Lieutenant in the North” at the expense of the Earl of Huntly (chief of the Gordons) because of Huntly’s Catholicism. Argyle brought a huge force eastward comprised of the MacLeans, the Campbells, MacGregors, and MacKintoshes. In this whole force, which supposedly numbered 10,000 warriors and would have been comparable to the army raised by Donald MacDonald at the Battle of Harlaw, there was no cavalry. In contrast to this, the smaller and more hastily assembled force under Huntly and Arroll included 1200 cavalry troopers. This

64 MacGregor, “Warfare in Gaelic Scotland,” 223.

65 John Lesley, *The History of Scotland, From the Death of King James I in the Year M.CCCC.XXVI, to the Year M.D.LXI*, (Edinburgh, 1830): 197-198.

66 MacGregor, *Warfare in Gaelic Scotland*, 212.

force included a mix a Highland and Lowland soldiers, the cavalry presumably coming from the Lowlands.⁶⁷

Border warfare was largely carried on by light cavalry. In the Borders, one of the major measures of the power of a chief was how many men he could put into the saddle. These figures were usually expressed in terms which imply cavalry forces. In fact, so associated were the terms “riding” and “raiding” that they became nearly synonymous. Fraser points out, for example, that when the Armstrongs were, “‘ever riding’, it meant simply that they never ceased from foraying. So when one speaks of the riding surnames, the phrase covers those families who were the principal reivers.”⁶⁸ Borland quotes Froissart’s description of Borderers in the late fourteenth century. The description is illustrative of the Border clans’ reliance on the horse. “... for they are all on horseback, except the camp followers, who are on foot. The knights and esquires are mounted on large bay horses, the common people on little Galloways.”⁶⁹ As included in the same publication, Froissart claims that the Borderers could cover as much as twenty to twenty-four leagues, or 70 – 84 miles, in one day.

Even if this was an exaggeration, the point is made clear that their range of operations in a given period of time was considerably greater than that of an infantry force, such as the Highlanders formed. On the other hand, this may not be an exaggeration at all. Robert Carey, upon the death of his Queen, rode from London to Edinburgh in three days, which is a distance of roughly 400 miles.⁷⁰ Granted, this was under duress and was likely not duplicated by Border

67 Fraser, *Wardlaw Manuscript*, 225-226.

68 Fraser, *Steel Bonnets*, 55.

69 Robert Borland, *Border Raids and Reivers*, (Dalbeattie: Thomas Fraser, 1898): 60.

70 Carey, *Memoirs*, xviii.

Reivers pushing stolen livestock. Nevertheless, the fact that Border forces were mounted forces meant that they were capable of operations on an extended scale. Even on short or mid-range forays, they possessed a mobility that dismounted forces were in want of.

Robert Carey relates that “old Sim of Whittram,” of the Armstrong clan and his sons “had not so few as two hundred at their commands, that were ever ready to *ride* with them to all actions at their beck.”⁷¹ As noted earlier, Johnstone of Annandale “could wave his hand and a thousand men would leap on *horseback*.”⁷² This number disagrees with the numbers given earlier for the Johnstones. The important part is that their strength is measured by how many riders they had. In keeping with their reputation as a “riding surname” the Johnstone family crest has at its center none other object than a spur with wings. The Johnstones also gave rise to a term: the Lockerbie Lick. This comes from the Battle of Dryfe Sands. As the Johnstones pressed home their victory over the Maxwells, they pursued them through the town of Lockerbie. In and around this town, the Johnstones swung their swords from their mounted position to finish off their enemies. The same record makes the claim that Sir William Douglas, son of James “Black” Douglas, “could raise over a thousand horsemen in a day and a half.”⁷³ Scott of Buccleuch “could raise 2000 horse at short notice.”⁷⁴

Light cavalry was not just the way that the Borderers went to war; it was the way they lived. They used the same skills needed for herding cattle, whether their own or someone else’s, as they used for their nation, or another nation, in time of war. One activity was surely seen as

71 Ibid., 61. Emphasis added.

72 Agnes Marchbank, *Upper Annandale: Its History and Traditions*, (Edinburgh and Glasgow: John Menzies and Co., 1901): 58. Emphasis added.

73 Ibid., 45.

74 Fraser, *Steel Bonnets*, 86.

an extension of the other. The Borders saw English army after English army move through and take or destroy nearly everything. Never mind the fact that armies crossed both ways over the border. It would be easy for a Borderer to see the livestock he was driving back to his lands as his just due for what he or his people had lost in the last conflict.

Nearly every time the Border clans are spoken of as engaging in a conflict, it was as light cavalry. This was the case in clan vs. clan warfare. In an engagement occurring in 1526, which started the feud between the Scotts and the Kerrs, Scott of Buccleuch “brought 600 lances of Liddesdale and Annandale,” with him.⁷⁵ As the Johnstones were the chief clan of Annandale and were known to be allied with the Scotts, it is reasonable to speculate that they made up a good portion of those from Annandale. The term “lances” was synonymous with “riders” as that was the primary weapon of the Border Reivers. A feud between the Elliots and Scotts in the mid-1560’s involved an Elliot ambush of Scotts in a pass with 400 riders.

This was also the case in raids that crossed the border. In 1532, using a force of pure cavalry, Scott of Buccleuch and the Kers of both Ferniehurst and Cessford descended across the border in retaliation for an English raid on their lands. The force consisted of 3000 Border riders. They commandeered an English village as a command post, sending out smaller raiding parties. When the locals, in concert with an English garrison, rose up to resist, the Scottish raiders made an orderly withdrawal, bringing with them a significant amount of plunder. Just a few years earlier, a combined force of Armstrongs and Irvines, all mounted, raided “eight villages in which they destroyed more than sixty dwelling houses, apart from outbuildings.”⁷⁶

75 Fraser, *Steel Bonnets*, 180.

76 *Ibid.*, 229.

Perhaps a testament to the mounted nature of the Border clans is the approach the English took to defending against them. They relied on their own mounted fighters as the answer to the Scots who came in search of plunder on their horses. In response to raiders from Liddesdale, Armstrongs of course, Carey assembled a force of two hundred riders, rode across the border into Scotland, and plundered Liddesdale. He could not apprehend the offenders, for they were secure in their strongholds. Instead he worked on retrieving what they had stolen. This livestock was returned to the rightful owners. In the course of this action, one of the Armstrongs were killed. This seemed to incite the rest, who vowed revenge. As good as their word, the Armstrongs visited Hartwesell in their fury. In response to this mounted threat, Carey sent word to London that “there could not be less than a hundred horse sent down for the defence of the country, besides the forty that I had already in pay...” Carey received little help from London. Yet from the countryside there arose those who had seen enough of their goods taken by the Scots. These were young men who showed up with three to four horses each. The Scottish side of the border wasn’t the only one that relied on the horse. When Carey took stock of the force assembled it turned out to be “about two hundred good men and horse: a competent number as I thought for such a service.”⁷⁷

There is something extraordinary about these Border clans that bears mentioning. In most places of western civilization, the horse was a possession of only the uppermost levels of society. This was true from ancient times until the westward expansion of the same civilization into the western territories of the United States in the nineteenth century. Those from the lower classes walked west. Yet in the Border country, this seems the contrary. When a Border laird summons hundreds of riders from his own territory, it is unlikely that there are that many

⁷⁷ Carey, *Memoirs*, 59-63.

wealthy people within one district, such as Annandale or Teviotdale. Borland observes that “All classes, from the Chirf of the clan to the meanest serf over whom he ruled, were engaged in it [reiving].”⁷⁸ William Patten seems taken aback at the lack of visible difference between Scottish nobles and peasants at the Battle of Pinkie Cleuch.⁷⁹ In describing the reliance of the Border chiefs on the bonds of kinship with the other members of their surname, even those of significantly lower social standing, Groundwater points out that one of the factors in this reliance was the relative poverty of these chiefs when compared to their English counterparts.⁸⁰ Although the purpose of this thesis is to compare and contrast the Border clans with those from the Highlands, another comparison which illustrates the unique quality of having all men mounted is that between the Border clans and those of Gaelic Ireland. MacGregor, in noting the paucity of horses in the Scottish Highlands, pointed out that in Ireland, the chief maintained “an elite mounted strike force,” which was “basic to combat.”⁸¹ This Irish example was a more typical arrangement throughout European history with the exception of the Eurasian steppe. In both Gaelic Scotland and Ireland, the differences between social classes were more visible than on the Border, where even the most common of warriors was mounted.

In discussing the mounted nature of Border warfare, one should not imagine the reiver cased in plate armor, riding on an armored horse. The clans of the Borders were light cavalymen. They were not the shock troops use to decisively break the enemy’s lines. When fighting for a larger army, they were used more as reconnaissance assets, or as they were

78 Borland, *Border Raids and Reivers*, 2.

79 As quoted in George Lillie Craik and Charles MacFarlane, *The Pictorial History of England: Being a History of the People, as well as a History of the Kingdom Vol II*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1848): 445-446.

80 Anna Groundwater, *Middle Marches*, 39.

81 MacGregor, “Warfare in Gaelic Scotland,” 212.

sometimes referred to, “light prickers”, reserved for skirmishing. This had a decisive impact on their weaponry. The two-handed claymore of the Highland lairds would have been exceedingly impractical to employ from horseback. More commonly, the Border Reiver used a lance. As mentioned earlier, the term “lance” became synonymous with “rider”. The lance was ubiquitous in the Border country. In the previous example of Carey’s punitive expedition into Liddesdale, a Ridley of Hartwesell incurred the wrath of the Armstrongs by killing Sim of Cathill with his lance, with which he “ran him through the body, leaving his spear broke in him, of which wound he died.”⁸² The feud between the Scotts of Buccleuch and the Kers was actually begun by an Elliot who was riding with the Scotts. The day had not gone well for the Scotts and they were in flight, the Kers in hot pursuit. The said Elliot turned his horse and killed the Ker behind him with a lance. The Ker happened to be the Cessford chief and so began the Ker’s feud with the Scotts.

The lance, however common it certainly was, was not the only weapon employed by the Border clansmen. The “Lockerbie Lick” described a downward stroke from horseback with a sword. Most of the swords preserved from the sixteenth century Border country look remarkably similar to the basket-hilted broadswords which would come to be so popular in the Highlands in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Several examples of these are preserved in the Museum of Border Arms and Armour in Hawick, Teviotdale.⁸³ These swords lack the red cloth inside the basket, perhaps at one time they didn’t.

⁸² Carey, *Memoirs*, 60.

⁸³ The author could only find access to pictures of these swords through Keith Durham, *The Border Reivers*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1995): 13, 15, 19.

The Border clans appear to have adopted the firearm earlier than the Highlanders did. Once again, the fact that the Borderers were light cavalry influenced what kind of firearm they used. A large and heavy harquebus (arquebus, hackbut, etc.) would have been unwieldy from horseback. The Border Reiver preferred the pistol, or “dag” (the German term for “pistol”). These firearms were limited in use as they were muzzle-loaders and would have been exceedingly difficult to reload on a moving horse, especially in an engagement. Another limitation the pistol had was its range. It was a short-range weapon, significantly inferior to the bow and arrow in this aspect. Perhaps this is why the bow and arrow held on stubbornly in the Borders, both on the English and the Scottish side. The bow and arrow had a higher rate of fire and greater range. They were also light, which was a major determining factor for a Borderer.

The fact that the Border clans deployed as light infantry was to have a significant impact on their armor. In this preference, the Border clans used armor that was very similar to what the Highlanders wore. The uniting factor here between Highlander and Borderer is the term “light”. The Highlanders excelled as light infantry, the Borderers as light cavalry. This tendency toward the “light” end of the spectrum meant that both shied away from heavy armor. Like the Highlander, the Borderer preferred the “jack”, or padded tunic. The Borderer’s jack was cut shorter than the Highlander’s for more convenience and comfort when mounted. Using the jack instead of plate armor was more conducive to the Borderer’s preference for “hit-and-run” tactics which they used both to conduct raids into unfriendly territory or as employed by their nation, harassing the enemy, in major conflicts of state. Some Borderers could afford to wear a shirt of mail over the jack. This description is reminiscent of the Hebridean tomb effigies depicting their warriors in the gambeson, which is just a long jack, and mail that usually only covered the upper chest and neck.

The helmet worn by the Border Reiver could range from the incredibly simple to state-of-the-art. Perhaps it is with the helmet that it is the most plain to see that the Scots, specifically the Borderers, were but one piece of a larger European pie. Their helmet designs were taken from the continent, with which Scotland had extensive contact, not least through their “auld alliance” with France. In the case of the Highland broadsword, the Highlanders used a weapon that was also in use elsewhere in Europe (although not for as long in most places as it was in the Highlands). Yet the Gaels of the Highlands and Isles had their distinctive Scottish spin on the design. This was not the case with the Border helmet. They seem to be very in tune with styles and designs on the continent at that time. In the earlier days of the Border Reivers, the fourteenth century, the most common form of helmet would have been a simple sallet. Moving into the fifteenth century, two designs gained widespread popularity: the burgonet and the morion. Another helmet type that was very popular in the Borders was the cabasset, a very simple, conical steel hat with a small brim. What the cabasset, the morion, the burgonet, and the sallet all have in common is their conduciveness to light cavalry activity. Perhaps this is why they were not just popular in the Scottish Borders, but all over Europe. Their open face allowed a good field of vision. They were not overly heavy and allowed the head a good range of motion. These were all conducive traits to the type of warfare the Border clans engaged in.

The common thread that seems to run through both Highland and Border clans is the concept of “light”. With the exception of the Galloglass, who may not represent the average Highland warrior, both the Border Reiver and the Highlander were light troops. This governed the weapons and armor they employed. The average Highland warrior, especially those who were not in the very top social layers, may have been analogous to the Irish kern. In fact, the words “kern” and “cateran” (member of a band of Highland warriors) come from the same

Gaelic word: *ceithern*. Their weapons were either one or two-handed swords, axes, spears and bows and arrows. Those who had the money were armored in a bascinet-style helmet and a shirt of mail. The gambeson was worn under the shirt of mail, yet for those without so much money, or who wanted to remain more mobile, there was no mail shirt over the gambeson. The shield was practical for those who were using a one-handed sword, a spear, or an axe. It was not for a man swinging a two-handed sword. In keeping with the light theme, with the exception of fighting from horseback, the Border Reiver followed the same thought process: keep it light. They wore the short version of a gambeson, or jack, which was more conducive for riding. Their helmet styles were the morion or sallet. They preferred the one handed sword, as it wasn't practical to swing a claymore from horseback. The polearm was employed in both regions as well. In the Highlands this took the form of the Lochaber axe, which saw service as late as the middle of the eighteenth century. In the Borders, the Jedburgh axe (or Jeddart stave) was the pole arm of choice.

The glaring difference between the Highlander and the Borderer were the unit types. Border Reivers fought almost exclusively from horseback, while the Highlanders preferred going dismounted. These trends were the same whether they were conducting a feud with a neighboring clan or going to war for their country. The Highlanders entered royal service as light infantry troops, the Borderers as light cavalry, usually in a reconnaissance or skirmishing

role. The use of the horse drastically increased the range, or at least the speed with which a given range was covered, in the case of the Borderers.⁸⁴

Chapter 4

Personal Connections: Kinship and Alliance

It is difficult to overstate the importance of kinship and alliance when discussing the military exploits of the Highland and Border clans. Although not identical, in this category the clans of these regions look very similar. Their structure was of a similar character, as well as the way they functioned, especially when it came to war. Understanding the basics of clan structure and the way allegiances were built can increase the depth of understanding of these two regions during the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries. While learning the basic structures of clan society, it is important to keep in mind that there were no rules that couldn't be broken. Clan chiefs generally did what they felt would be good for the clan and for themselves, not always in that order.

In both the Highlands and the Lowlands there were large clans and small clans. Large or small had to deal both with numbers, positions held and land controlled. There were many factors determining the greatness or meanness of a clan. In many cases, a clan's growth was linked to how well the chief could maneuver in political circles. The chiefs of the Campbells

⁸⁴ These facts naturally lead to a discussion on tactics favored by Highlanders and Borderers. This topic could prompt a completely new chapter and is surely worthy of such attention. Suffice it for this paper to say that Highlanders, despite their reputation as barbarians that mindlessly yet bravely throw themselves at the enemy, they were capable of fighting in a disciplined and concerted manner. Some prime examples land outside of the chronological boundaries of this paper. Alisdair Mac Colla's MacDonal forces employed the "Highland Charge" to great effect against government troops during the War of the Three Kingdoms. During the Jacobite risings of both 1715 and 1745 there were Highland chiefs, such as the Campbells, Munros and MacKays, who raised their clans to fight for the Hanovarians and fought alongside regular British troops. In the case of the Borderers, those on both side of the border saw service in the armies of their respective kingdoms as skirmishers and reconnaissance troops, which accurately reflects their fighting habits at home.

held a consistent policy of siding with the Crown, becoming its agents in the western Highlands. This was to pay off in lands and titles, propelling this clan to be one of the foremost in the country. The Gordons enjoyed a close relationship with the Crown, and were something like the Campbell's counterparts in the northeast. On the other hand, the MacGregors, while proving to be able warriors, lacked the political astuteness to compete with the Campbells, who gained at their expense. The Douglasses, until the mid-fifteenth century, enjoyed a comfortable relationship with the king, gaining lands and titles far beyond their origins in the Borders. In the case of all three of these clans, the Campbells, the Gordons and Douglasses, strategic marriages were part of their political accomplishments

Sometimes the chief just had to pick the right side in a battle or war. This was a hard job as these issues were hardly ever certain until their conclusion. In the wake of John Balliol's term as King of Scotland there were two major parties vying for dominance: the Bruces, originally of Annandale, and the Comyns, seated mostly in the north. Which party a clan decided to side with had major consequences for their future. With Robert the Bruce gaining the upper hand and becoming Robert I, those clans that sided with him, especially through the hard times, were richly rewarded, while those who had taken the side of his Comyn rivals suffered considerably. The MacDougalls represented the senior branch of the kindred descended from Somerled (d. 1164), the other two major branches being the MacDonalds and the MacRauries. As the senior line of the great Somerled, the MacDougall chief's "royal descent was acknowledged by the king of Norway," to whom they were vassal's, "and he styled himself 'King of the South Isles and Lord of Lorne'."⁸⁵ Another position the MacDougall chief, John *Baccach* (Lame John), enjoyed

85 Way and Squire, *Clan Encyclopedia*, 216.

at this time was Sherriff of Argyll.⁸⁶ With all of this going for them, the MacDougalls backed the wrong side in their support of John III Comyn, who was Lame John's nephew, and lost much of their lands and titles. Both the Campbells, and the MacDonalds who followed Angus Óg (Angus' older brother and actual chief of the MacDonalds, Alexander, was on the same side as the MacDougalls) benefited greatly from their support of Robert Bruce, acquiring much of the land forfeited by Lame John. Neil Campbell had been with Bruce through some of his most trying moments. Angus Óg was there when Bruce needed him most, which was to escape Scotland. Angus provided Bruce with a ride aboard a birlinn to Rathlin Island until he was ready to fight again. The irony of this situation is that Angus' and Neil's descendants would become bitter enemies. So the MacDougalls lost power and prestige from siding with the losing party, while the MacDonalds and Campbells rose by their good choices.

In the Borders, there were several clans who received similar good fortune for picking the winning side. In the feud between the Black Douglases and the king, the Douglases were defeated at a small yet significant battle at Arkinholm in 1455. John Johnstone of Johnstone led his clan as part of the king's forces, under the command of the Red Douglas Earl of Angus, against the Black Douglases. Other prominent Border clans that rose against the Black Douglases included the Maxwells, the Carlyles, the Scotts and the Battisons.⁸⁷ There is a close parallel here; the Campbells and MacDonalds on the one hand, the Johnstones and Maxwells on the other. Both MacDonalds and Campbells supported the Bruce and were rewarded upon his success with lands from the defeated MacDougalls. Later, the MacDonalds and Campbells, despite starting the fourteenth century out on the same side, would become bitter enemies and

⁸⁶ Thomson, *The Great Feud*, 9.

⁸⁷ George Chalmers, *Caledonia, or an Account, Historical and Topographical, of North Britain, from the Most Ancient Times to the Present Times, Vol. III*, (London: 1824): 90.

provide Scottish history with one of its greatest feuds. Likewise, at the Battle of Arkinholm, the Johnstones and the Maxwells fought together with the royal forces against the Black Douglases. They would later pursue one of the bloodiest feuds in Scottish history, culminating in the Battle of Dryfe Sands, described earlier.

Sometimes clans could gain lands and titles just by being in the right place at the right time. Clan legends abound in stories of their founder saving the king or other man of prominence at the last moment from a rogue bull/boar/bear/stag, etc. or committing some act of heroism at a key moment. Such is the case with the Armstrongs and Turnbells. The Robertsons, however, are a much less mythical example of being in the right place at the right time. As mentioned before, the murderer of King James I, Sir Robert Graham, fled to Robertson country after his dark deed. Robert *Riabhach* took advantage of the situation and apprehended Graham. For his part in assisting the Crown, Robert had his lands of Struan erected into a free barony, as well as modifications to his heraldry representing his deeds.⁸⁸

Highland and Lowland clans could be layered in structure. The larger the clan, the more layers in the structure. The large clans provide the easiest illustrations of this structure. In this discussion, the term “branch” is preferred over “sept”. A sept is a more general word and a confusion of meaning could follow its use. A branch of a clan is an actual, blood-related sub-clan, whereas a sept could refer to an allied, smaller clan who acknowledge the larger clan as their superior and swore allegiance to it. The sept may or may not be related by blood. The branches were usually descended from a younger sibling of a chief and became men of importance, acquiring titles and lands of their own. In many cases, the branch of a major clan could become a significant clan in its own right.

⁸⁸ Way and Squire, *Clan Encyclopedia*, 302.

The MacDonalds were one of the mightiest of Highland clans. At one time, their chief was styled “Lord of the Isles”. The Battle of Harlaw is a testament to the military strength of this clan. The MacDonald of Islay, the senior branch, could put together a force that could compete with the Crown on equal footing: no small feat. Raghnuill was Somerled’s son and used the title, King of the Hebrides. His son was Dómhnull, from whom the clan takes its name. As the Lordship passed down from generation to generation, it was usually succeeded through the oldest son. A detailed description of how all the branches broke off is not included here. Suffice it to say that after time, many branches of Clan Donald developed. Some of the branches that came to be major clans in their own right were the MacDonells of Dunnyveg and Antrim, the MacDonalds of Glen Coe, Glen Garry, Keppoch, Lochalsh, Sleat, Largie, Clan Ranald, the MacAlisters, and the MacIains of Ardnamurchan. The center of power for the clan was in Islay and it was the MacDonalds of Islay that produced the Lords of the Isles, the chiefs of all Clan Donald. Between these branches, Clan Donald came to dominate extensive stretches of the western Highlands and Isles. Each of these branches of Clan Donald had their own chief who descended from one of the chiefs of the clan. These chiefs owed allegiance to the Lord of the Isles, the head chief of all Clan Donald. Thus, without applying to anyone outside of his kin group, the Chief of Clan Donald could bring to bear a mighty force. The battle of Harlaw is an example of the Lord of the Isles bringing several of these branches on the trail with him, including other clans such as the MacLeans and the Mackintoshes.

While these clans owed allegiance to the chief of all Clan Donald in theory, they were not robots. There were occasions where they acted on their own and in opposition to the chief in Islay. In 1495, MacIain of Ardnamurchan captured and handed over to the Crown his own kinsman, Sir John MacDonald of Dunnyveg and the Glens, who was outlawed and in defiance of

the king at the time. This wasn't the only time MacIain would go his own way. In 1497 he caught and killed another kinsman, Alexander MacDonald of Lochalsh who was also in rebellion against the king.⁸⁹ MacIain had clearly cast his lot on the side of the Crown. While this policy worked well for the Campbells, MacIain was viewed as a traitor to his clan. In retribution for his treachery he was eventually hunted down and killed by Donald MacDonald of Lochalsh.

Other examples could serve to show that branches of a clan were not always in lock step with the chiefly line, yet in most cases the different branches of the clan felt a loyalty to each other and supported each other in times of distress or danger. In this example of MacDonald division, MacDonald unity can equally be seen with the revenge by Donald, not only for the murder of his father, Alexander of Lochalsh, but also for John MacDonald of Dunnyveg, his more distant kinsman. In a series of events related in *Clan Conflicts*, the MacDonalds display a greater amount of cohesion and unity.

In 1586, Donald Gorme MacDonald of Sleat paid a visit to his cousin, Angus of Kintyre. These visits no doubt served to strengthen unity amongst the branches of the clan. The territory of Kintyre was divided between the MacLeans and the MacDonalds. A storm forced Donald Gorme to land in the territory of the MacLean. There were in the neighborhood two men who sought to make mischief between the two clans. They drove away some of MacLean's cattle, intending for the blame to rest upon Donald Gorme. This worked as the men of Sleat were trying desperately to fight off a night attack by the MacLeans, who were under the impression that Donald Gorme's party was there to take their cattle; not a far-fetched notion in this time and place. Donald lost sixty men before his party made good their escape. Before the full story and reason for the MacLean attack became general knowledge, several branches of the MacDonalds,

⁸⁹ Thomson, *The Great Feud*, 43.

“Besides those of Skye and Islay, who were particularly involved,” began to mobilize with the intent of seeking retribution. Specifically “there rallied the Clanranald, the Clanian of Ardnamurchan,” and the “MacAllisters of Loup.”⁹⁰ Other clans that felt loyalty to the MacDonalds prepared for battle, including the MacLeods of Lewis, MacNeils of Gigha, and the MacPhees of Colonsay.⁹¹ These branches of Clan Donald as well as their allies were ready to go to war in the interests of their kinsmen from Kintyre and Skye.⁹²

After a visit to his cousin, now safe in Skye, and contrary to the advice of those close to him, Angus of Kintyre stopped at Duart Castle to reconcile Lachlan MacLean, his brother-in-law, with Donald Gorme. Lachlan received his guests hospitably on the first day, but on the second declared to Angus that unless he was willing to relinquish his claim to Rhinns of Islay he would be spending the rest of his life as Lachlan’s prisoner. Seeing no choice, Angus acquiesced his claim but was forced to leave behind his eldest son, James, and his brother, Ranald, until he made good on the deal. At this point in the story the reader should note that, despite deeply entrenched traditions about loyalty in the bonds of kinship, people are people, in the Highlands or anywhere else, and are subject to all of the same human frailties. Lachlan’s greed got the better of him as he sought to advance his own interests at the expense of his wife’s brother. This

90 John Patterson MacLean, *A History of the Clan MacLean from its First Settlement at Duard Castle, in the Isle of Mull, to the Present Period*, (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1889): 96.

91 Ibid.

92 In MacLean’s account, as quoted from here, Angus is mentioned as being from Islay. Earlier in the story as recounted here, Angus is styled “of Kintyre.” The author found three accounts of this sequence of events. One of them is recently cited. The others are *Clan Conflicts*, 28-36, cited earlier in this thesis, and Thomas Garnett, *Observations on a Tour Through the Highlands and Part of the Western Isles of Scotland, Vol II*. (London: 1811): 204-209. Garnett’s account claims to come from *Clan Conflicts* yet contains more information. Either there is an additional source or he felt at license to fill in the gaps with his imagination. The nature of the differences lends to the author favoring the former prospect. In these latter two accounts, Angus is “of Kintyre”. Kintyre was ruled by the MacDonalds of Islay, the senior branch of the MacDonalds.

account is not overly harsh on Lachlan as a piece of MacDonald propaganda. The account found in MacLean's work on the history of his own background contains a very similar story.

The account continues with Angus, having been so poorly treated, especially under the umbrella of hospitality, and with his son and brother The MacLean's prisoners, Angus devised a plot to recover his family members and seek vengeance on Lachlan. The details of this plot and its execution are tangential to the point. Through a long series of events, the revenge failed to come about as Angus had plotted, yet he did exact a terrible toll on Lachlan's closest men.⁹³ In the later parts of this story, another example of clan branches going to battle at the side of their kinsmen is evident. Lachlan MacLean was lured to Islay under pretexts of hospitality. While he accepted the invitation, he seemed unwilling to whole-heartedly trust Angus and brought with his "86 of his kinsfolks and servants."⁹⁴ Among the kinsmen that accompanied him were MacLeans from Morvern, which was MacLean territory in addition to Mull. This Morvern branch included Lachlan's uncle, John Dubh. John Dubh and Lachlan were the only MacLeans to make it off of Islay alive.

In the Highlands, the MacDonalds were not the only clan to enjoy the alliance of different branches of their clan to bolster numbers when a fight came along. The Campbells, for so long the bitter rivals of Clan Donald, rising to prominence largely at the expense of Clan Donald, had several branches of the clan spread throughout Scotland. Unlike the MacDonalds, Campbell septs were not relegated to the western Highlands and Isles, though their primary seat was deep in the Argyll Highlands. The MacArthurs of Strachur, a branch of the Campbells were seated in Cowal, on the shore of Loch Fyne. The Campbells of Cawdor had their seat on the coastal

⁹³ MacLean, *History of the Clan MacLean*, 99.

⁹⁴ *Clan Conflicts*, 32.

lowlands on the south of the Moray Firth, about twelve miles east of Inverness. This branch put down roots far from the Campbell seat in the Argyll Highlands and would not have been convenient to call upon in the clan's times of need. The Campbells of Loudoun were based out of Ayrshire, in the Lowlands. Not all Highland clans were so far-flung but it was common for them to have branches establish themselves in other parts of the country than where the senior and chiefly line was. These branches could be called upon in times of emergency or opportunity. In the case of the Campbells, they were accompanied to the Battle of Glenlivet in 1594 by their kinsmen, the Campbells of Auchinbreck.⁹⁵

It wasn't just branches of the clan, coming to the aid of or supporting the senior line where kinship within a clan paid off. There were occasions when a chief, no matter how warlike his actions had previously been, deemed it wise to stay out of a conflict, even when he felt he should contribute to the effort. At the Battle of Glasgow Muir, Duncan MacFarlane supported the Earl of Lennox, as they were wont to do. The battle ended in defeat for Lennox and his forces, which meant forfeiture for MacFarlane. He had his lands restored through the intervention of friend in high places. No knowing how many times he would be able to play that card, Duncan chose to stay out of the fight the next time Lennox came to call. Nevertheless, Duncan's heart was in the effort so he sent his uncle, Walter MacFarlane, with a detachment of one hundred forty men to assist Lennox in "taking of the islands of Bute and Arran, the burning of the castles of Rothesay and Dunoon, and in the defeat of the Earl of Argyle."⁹⁶ In this effort, MacFarlane's men arrived in true Highland fashion, as "light footmen, well armed in shirts of

⁹⁵ Gordon, *History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, 229.

⁹⁶ MacFarlane, *History of Clan MacFarlane*, 56.

mail and two-handed swords,” with which they “did much available service in the streyghts, marishes, and mountayne countries.”⁹⁷

The closest parallel to the Campbells which existed in the Borders were the Douglasses. Just as the Campbells’ origins lay deep in the western Highlands of Argyll and branched out from there (no pun intended), the Douglasses were originally a Border clan who were able to expand all over Scotland. They began their rise to prominence through a close relationship with Robert the Bruce. They kept their momentum going with strategic marriages. The two major branches of this clan were the Black Douglasses, who became the Earls of Douglas and challenged King James the second for the throne, and the Red Douglasses, who became the Earls of Angus, and were established in Lothian and very active in the Borders.⁹⁸

The Border clans also often had branches that could be called upon to help the odds in a fight. In mentioning pardons for past offenses issued to the Elliots by the Regent in 1516, several branches of the Elliots come to light. Those numbered as receiving the pardon are “Robert Elwald of Redeheuche, Williame Elwald of Laverokstanis (Lariston), his brother, henry Niksone, james Forestare, and Adam Croser...” Note the alternate spelling of the name “Elliot” of which there were many. Soon after, there were more Elliots receiving pardons from the Regent: “William Elwald of Larestanis, William Elwald in M’Patrik, Robert Elwald in Denly, Rolland Elwald in Thorleshop, John Elwald in Heuchouse, and seven others, and generally to all their kin and friends of the clan and surname of Elwald...”⁹⁹ In the same year, however, things took a turn for the worse for the Elliots. The Master of Hailes was censured for his failure in

97 Ibid.

98 Recall Bain, *Border Papers*, 262-263.

99 George Francis Scott Elliot, *The Border Elliots and the Family of Minto*, (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1897): 29.

properly ruling his stewardship. In response he went to Liddesdale and obtained “pledges” for the “Elliotts of Redheugh, and their gang, and for the Elliotts of the other gang of Gorrumberry, except so many as dwell in Teviotdale...”¹⁰⁰

This is a good point to discuss the pledges obtained from the clans of Liddesdale by the Master of Hailes. The Crown spent a lot of time and effort trying to break the loyalty that the clans of both the Highlands and Isles established with each other at the expense of their loyalty to the king. Eventually, Scottish royalty realized the futility of doing this in the cultural context of the clan system which prevailed in both regions. In the sixteenth century the Crown took a different approach. They tried to use this complex system of loyalties to the advantage of central government. The two most prominent historians to address this concept are Anna Groundwater with the Border clans and Alison Cathcart with the Highland clans. Groundwater does a masterful job of illustrating the social dynamic for the Border clans in *The Scottish Middle March, 1573-1625: Power, Kinship, Allegiance*. Quoting Rae, she notes that the devotion that a member of a clan felt toward his chief “exceeded the cold feudal allegiance of a vassal, being tinged with something of the warmer feeling of the clansman.”¹⁰¹ Aside from the practical reasons for following a chief, “such as greater protection, and chance of success, than operating alone,” there was the very real sense of identity as displayed when the Border Reiver charged into battle shouting his clan’s war cry. Examples include the Johnstones ‘Aye Ready’, the Douglasses ‘A Douglas’, or the Turnbolls ‘A Turnbull’.

In this respect, the Border clans and Highland clans look like brothers. A quick sampling of the Highland clans’ war cries (or ‘slogan’ which comes from a Gaelic word) shows the

100 Ibid.

101 Groundwater, *The Scottish Middle March*, 55.

similarity: the MacKay slogan was “*Bratach Bhan Chlann Aoidh,*” the Mackenzie slogan was “*Tulach Ard,*” that of the Mackintosh was “*Loch Moigh,*” and the slogan of the Comyns was “*An Cuimeanach, An Cuimeanach.*” There is hardly a better totem of clan identity than their war cry, uttered at the top of their lungs as they ran to what may very well be their last moments. The biggest difference here between the Highland and Border clans is the language in which the slogan was screamed.

The entry for the Scottish Parliamentary Register for 29 July, 1587 and sporting the succinct title of “For the quieting and keeping in obedience of the disordered subjects, inhabitants of the borders, highlands and isles,” is the most glaring example of the Crown’s effort at trying to harness this identity and loyalty that clan members felt for their chiefs. The basic premise of this act was to hold the chiefs accountable for any crimes committed by a member of their clan or by anyone residing in or travelling through their territory. The list of clans in this act includes, or targets rather, a who’s who list of Highland and Border clans. This displays the similarity of sentiment the government in Edinburgh felt toward the clans of these respective regions.

Blood relation wasn’t the only factor in creating loyalty of one tribe to another. Another feature of Scottish tribal society that was common to Border and Highland clans was the practice of establishing a “bond” between two clans. This was often written down with certain terms established in the bond. It was signed with witnesses standing by. Usually, the bond was created with one clan being the dominant party and the other promising loyalty to the dominant clan or clan chief. Sometimes these bond were also called a “bond of manrent.”

Groundwater opens her article on this subject using a bond between the Forsters and the Laird of Buccleuch (Scott clan) made in 1599.¹⁰² In this bond, the Laird of Buccleuch is the superior and the Forsters agree to “bind and oblige,” themselves to be “answerable to the said laird of Buccleuch...[if] called for by him, his deputies or officers whatever of them for any charge...”¹⁰³ Groundwater’s argument in the paper was that rather than replacing the old, traditional framework of “obligations of kinship and lordship...such obligations were still significant in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and that processes associated with traditional private justice were now being used in an unprecedented way by a Scottish crown, increasingly intolerant of violent crime.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, rather than fight against this system and replace it with purely governmental power, the Crown was now using this system to work for the law and order of the country. This was the theory anyway. These bonds did not originate with this government policy. It existed prior to this change in government policy, the government decided it could play the game to its advantage. Prior to this policy, the government saw these bonds as an irritant. In Cathcart’s words, “The Crown wanted to put an end to this custom as it believed the creation of such bonds between individuals encouraged the continuation and escalation of feuds in both the Highlands and the Lowlands.”¹⁰⁵ The government policy change in the sixteenth century appears as somewhat of a “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em,” policy.

This bond was not only a one way agreement, with the inferior party agreeing to behave themselves. Buccleuch, in the example just shown, “bound and obliged himself,” to not only

102 Groundwater, “Obligations of Kinship,” 2.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid., 3.

105 Cathcart, “Conflict of Identity?” 166.

take legal responsibility for the subordinate clans, but to also “maintain and defend them.”¹⁰⁶ Just as there would have been another bond signed between Buccleuch and the Crown, on the other side, there would have been an additional bond signed between the head of the Forsters and their dependants. The same is true for other chiefs of clans who signed a similar bond with Buccleuch during this time, namely Robert Elliot of Redheugh, William Elliot of Braidley, Lance Armstrong of Whithaugh and Sym Armstrong of Mangerton. In signing their bond with Buccleuch, they would have signed a similar bond with their followers.¹⁰⁷ The bonds signed by chiefs accounting for good behavior would not have only been regarding those on their property, but also regarding subordinate branches of their kindred.¹⁰⁸

The Mackintoshes were the head clan of a confederation of clans known as Clan Chattan, or Clan of the Cat. Some of the members of this confederation were related to each other and some weren't. The Shaw, MacPherson, Davidson, MacBean, MacThomas and Mackintosh clans were related to each other. The MacGillivrays and the MacQueens were not related to the rest of Clan Chattan but attached themselves to the clan through a bond of manrent. This bond would have put them in the same position with respect to The Mackintosh as the bond mentioned in Groundwater's article put the Forsters to the Laird of Buccleuch. As the chief of Clan Chattan, The Mackintosh, while not quite as powerful as the Lord of the Isles, occupied a similar position with respect to subordinate clans. The feudal superior to all of Clan Chattan was Gordon, Earl of Huntly. In the late sixteenth century, Huntly was becoming ever more unpopular with the other clans in the region. Lauchlan Mackintosh, the sixteenth chief of Clan Chattan, along with his

106Groundwater, “Obligations of Kinship,” 2, 4.

107 Ibid., 2.

108 Ibid., 4

son, Angus, entered into a bond with John Grant of Freuchy, pledging to support him in a matter of contention with Huntly. This bond involved Clan Chattan in a military alliance with the Earl of Moray, Cawdor, William Murray Earl of Atholl, Simon 6th Lord Fraser of Lovat, Stewart of Grandtully, and William Sutherland of Duffus, who had also signed a similar bond with Grant of Freuchy.¹⁰⁹ This particular bond doesn't seem to be expressed in terms of superior or subordinate positions. Rather, it seems that the intent of this bond was to establish loyalties in case a conflict broke out. Judging by the number of men who signed it, along with their positions, Huntly does not seem to have a lot of friends. However, before judgment is passed, perhaps there was a similar bond passed between Huntly and their allied clans such as the Setons in Aberdeenshire, or the Sutherlands in Sutherland. The Earls of Huntly were immensely powerful and it is possible that some of those who signed the bond with Grant were less sympathetic with him than they were desirous to check the power of the Gordons.

There was a third way to establish a link between two clans. The tradition of fosterage is as ancient as it was effective. Of the three forms of tying clans together discussed in this chapter, this sets the Highlands apart from the Borders more than the others, where the clans of the two regions looked very similar. There seems to be little if anything written or recorded on the subject in the Borders. Clan chiefs often gave their sons to be raised by the chief of a branch of their own clan or to another clan to be raised until a certain age. In this manner, strong ties were established between branches of one clan, or between one clan and another, unrelated clan. Through this system, a chief of a large clan could gain more vassals than just the branches of his own clan as well as strengthen existing ties with those clans that were related. These fosterage arrangements were often formalized with a contract. As quoted by MacCoinnich, Cathcart

109 Cathcart, "Crisis of Identity?" 171.

observed that “the primary function of fosterage was the creation of alliances both within clans and between clans.”¹¹⁰ MacCoinnich moves on to claim that “The closeness of this kinship tie is as important, if not more so, as any ideology for the *Gàidhealtachd* in this period and the practice of fosterage seems to have been widespread.” MacCoinnich goes so far as to assert that “People tended to follow such kin-based allegiance to the detriment of ideology within the bounds of the ‘clan’ and it formed a central dynamic in underpinning Gaelic militarism.”¹¹¹ An example he uses in support of this claim is the instance at the battle of Inverkeithing where Hector, 18th chief of the MacLeans, met his end. In a wounded and helpless state, his foster-brothers, seven in all, stepped in front of Hector, one by one offering their life for his. As each took his turn vainly defending him, they cried “*Feár eil airson Eachainn!*” (Another for Hector!)¹¹² Such was the strength of the bond formed by fosterage.

On 12 November 1593 a decree was made which ordered all Catholics out of the country. George Gordon, chief of the Gordons and at this time Marquess of Huntly, was a staunch Catholic and refused to go. In order to enforce the decree on someone so powerful as Huntly, a large force was required. Campbell of Argyll was the man for the job and, reminiscent of Donald marching to the Battle of Harlaw, brought an army numbering in the vicinity of 10,000 men east to enforce the decree on Huntly. True to form though, Argyll was working for the government, not against it as the Lord of the Isles was. Gordon, in haste, raised a force of 2,000 which ended up defeating Argyll. Gordon now had a problem on his hands. He had just

110 Aonghas MacCoinnich, “‘His spirit was given only to warre’: Conflict and Identity in the Scottish Gaidhealtachd, c. 1580 – c. 1630,” In *Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experience, c. 1550-1900*, Murdoch, S. and MacKillop, A. 132-162. (Boston: Brill, 2002) 141.

111 *Ibid.*, 141-142.

112 MacCoinnich, “Conflict and Identity,” 142, with details added from MacLean, *History of the Clan MacLean*, 181.

decisively defeated a force marching on the king's orders. In addition, the king himself was marching north to Aberdeenshire with the intention of destroying the strongholds of the clans siding with Gordon and in rebellion against the government. Upon hearing that the king was waiting for him at Strathbogie, Gordon fled north to his kinsman, Alexander Gordon, 12th Earl of Sutherland, with whom he had been fostered.¹¹³ In providing refuge for George Gordon, Alexander was in open defiance against the king. While this was a grave concern, it was not enough for Alexander to break his fostered bond with George.

The Campbells were particularly good record keepers. In *The Black Book of Taymouth*, records were preserved of the many bonds entered into with branches of their own clan as well as neighboring clans of no relation. These bonds are of a wide variety. The Campbells used bonds to formalize a fosterage arrangement as well as to spell out the details. In a bond between “Duncane Campbell fiar [heir?] of Glenurquhay [Glen Orchy] on the one part and his native servant Gillecreist Makdonchy Duff V’Nokerd and Katherine Neyn Douil Vekconchy his spouse on the uther part,” the latter couple agreed to sustain young Duncan with food until he went to school with his friends, where they would continue to sustain him. Duncan, the heir’s father, agreed on a specified amount of livestock to the fostering family to help with the financial burden.¹¹⁴ This kind of a situation had a significant effect on both parties, the fostering family and the foster child. On the part of the child, when grown and obtaining the lead of the clan, he felt that paternalistic feeling towards others of the clan, especially those of lower social status. That paternal, family feeling provided greater motivation to look after and protect the clan. On

113 Gordon, *History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, 229-230.

114 *Black Book of Taymouth*, (Edinburgh: T. Constable, 1755): 224.

the part of the fostering family, when the chief sent the call out for men to rally around his standard and go to battle, his support was so much more sincere.

Another entry in the *Black Book*,, dated 1510, combined with details from Gordon's *History of the Earldom of Sutherland* shows that this wasn't a relationship with theoretical loyalties. The entry in the *Black Book* records "John M'Neill Vreik in Stronferna and Gregoure his brother to receive Coleyne Campbell lawful third son to Coleyne Campbell the eldest son and heir of Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenwrquhay knight in fostering and to give him a bairns part of gear."¹¹⁵ In return for doing their best to raise young Colin, Duncan promises protection to the MacNeill brothers. This relationship was to have a monumental impact on the lives of those involved. In 1594, Archibald Campbell, son of Colin Campbell, led his clan and those allied with them to the battle of Glenlivet, as already mentioned. Among the host fighting with the Campbells was a man named "Mack-Neill-Warray, ane ilander, and ane of the most resolute men of that pairtie." The dates involved mean that these Campbells and MacNeills were at least the next generation after the fosterage occurred. The bond created through fosterage was to take this branch of the MacNeills to war with their Campbell allies, which provided the Campbells with one of their best warriors, but would also claim the life of this man.

Thus the intricate network between the clans, both in the Borders and Highlands, were established through a stratification of clan structure, with major clans relying on their subordinate branches and bonds of manrent signed between allied clans. In the Highlands, this network was strengthened even more by the practice of fosterage. Through these networks, the clans could build more manpower than they otherwise could. These networks were not failsafe, as shown by the MacDonalds and MacIains. However, without these networks, the kind of

¹¹⁵ *Black Book*, 179.

forces assembled by Donald, Lord of the Isles on his march to Harlaw, or that brought by the Earl of Argyll to Glenlivet would have been impossible. In the case of the Battle of Dryfe Sands, the Johnstones would have been completely outnumbered by the Maxwells had they not been able to use these sort of networks to bolster their numbers. These networks were truly a matter of life or death for the clans of the Highlands and Borders.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Hopefully the last three chapters have been illustrative of the similarities and differences between the Highland and Border clans when it came to conflict. Territory provided the platform for many conflicts, both in the Highlands and Borders. In this respect, the Highland and Border clans are very similar, yet not identical. The clans from both regions were expert cattle raiders, or “reivers”. It was every bit a part of their culture as marriage and funeral services. In both regions, these forays provided a venue for men to prove themselves. For the chief, it was an opportunity to train his men in the arts of war. He also had the chance to prove that he was a capable leader. These raids also provoked an armed response on the part of the victim. In this case, if the clan’s territory was raided by another clan, and the chief did not lead a swift retaliatory counterattack, the members of the clan might see him as weak. This principle was true in both regions.

Both Highland and Border chiefs might also possess another title aside from being the head of the clan. These titles were often contested. In the Borders, competition for Warden of the West March between the Johnstones and Maxwells came to a head at the Battle of Dryfe Sands, where the Johnstones and their allies turned a victory into a rout. In the Highlands, the MacDonals brought a massive army of Gaels against the forces of northeastern Scotland under the Earl of Mar, who was fighting for his kinsman, the Earl of Buchan in order to secure the disputed Earldom of Ross. The Earldom of Sutherland was hotly contested by Alexander

Sutherland and Adam Gordon, who had married the Sutherland heiress. Back in the Borders, the Kers of Cessford and the Kers of Ferniehurst fought over the Wardenship of the Middle March. Fighting over land and title was common to the Border and Highland clans.

In matters of arms and armor, Highlanders and Borderers followed a similar principal but otherwise, this is the area of starkest contrast, militarily speaking. Both regions preferred to fight lightly. In the Highlands, light infantry was the preferred unit type. These warriors enjoyed being able to scramble over rocks and move up and down steep slopes without being encumbered with massive amounts of armor. This tendency proved to suit the terrain of their home well. The rank and file of a Highland chief's force might have worn a gambeson, or padded tunic, with the occasional shirt of mail as an additional covering. When they wore helmets, it was of the bascinet type. The most detailed information on a Highland warrior's armor and weapons come from the Hebridean tomb effigies, yet these might only represent the top rung of the socio-economic ladder. Everyone else might have dressed and fought similarly to the Irish kern. They carried broadswords, some one-handed, some two-handed. When using the two-handed claymore, the warrior probably didn't carry a shield. When carrying the shield, the warrior most likely used a one-handed sword, a spear, or an axe. Another weapon common in the Highlands was the Lochaber axe, which most likely excluded the use of a shield.

In the case of the Border Reivers, light cavalry was the way to go. Their country was also rugged, minus the tall peaks of the Highlands. With their horses and their knowledge of the terrain, these troops could move through the most treacherous ground. The armor they wore was not that of the knight of the Middle Ages, fully encased in plate armor. Rather than plate armor, the Border Reiver used a padded jack, similar to the gambeson only shorter for riding. The helmet was probably more common among the Border clans than it was in the Highlands. This

would have been of a morion or sallet style. One-handed, basket-hilted swords were the most popular in the Borders, as the claymore was not practical for a mounted warrior. The Borders also saw pole arms used in the form of the Jeddart stave.

For both the Highlander and the Border Reiver, the transition from cattle raid to open warfare would have been a smooth one. Highlanders joined royal forces as light infantry and Borderers as light cavalry. The mounted Borderers could extend their range of operations over that of the Highlanders. Another major difference between clans from these regions was the reluctance on the part of the Highlanders to adopt firearms. They much preferred the use of the bow and arrow, which is attested in the accounts of many conflicts.

Warfare in both Highland and Border society was conducted within a social network that looked similar in both regions. The clans of both Borders and Highlands were structured with a chief at the head of the whole surname, with subordinate branches owing allegiance to him. The subordinate branches often became major clans in their own right. In the Highlands, the MacDonalds grew to include many branches, including those of Islay (the senior branch), Lochalsh, Glen Garry, Sleat, Keppoch, Glen Coe, MacIain of Ardnamurchan and Clan Ranald. Similarly, the Clan Chattan septs grew into the major clans of Mackintosh (the chiefs of Clan Chattan), MacPherson, MacThomas, Shaw, and MacBean. The Border clans operated with a similar structure. The Ker clan had two major branches: Ferniehurst and Cessford. The Scotts of Buccleuch enjoyed the allegiance of the Scotts of Dryhope and Goldielands, among many others. While Highland and Border clans could usually count on the support of other branches of the clan, these branches also feuded among themselves, as in the case of MacIain of Ardnamurchan and the MacDonalds of Lochalsh, and the Kers of Ferniehurst and Cessford.

Border and Highland clans could look outside their kindred for support as well. Formal alliances were formed using a bond of manrent. Often these bonds were formed in a hierarchal structure, with one clan pledging allegiance to a more powerful clan. This was a smart choice for smaller clans who were often threatened by larger ones and didn't have the resources to compete. The dominant clan promised protection and the subordinate clan promised loyalty. Sometimes, as in the case of the Mackintoshes and the Grants against the Gordons, the bond wasn't about superiority or subordination, rather, it sealed an agreement of support between two clans against another.

The custom of fosterage provided a bond between two clans that may or may not be related. This custom tended to form bonds that were much stronger than either blood relation or bonds of manrent. A chief would give his son to be raised by a lower-ranking member of his clan until a designated time. The chief gave resources, usually in livestock (the currency of the time) to support the family raising his son. In this manner, the concept of *duthchas*, where the land and the resources within the clan's territory belonged to the clan, with the chief merely acting as steward, seeped deep into the notion of what it meant to be a member of the clan. It intensified the paternal feeling of a chief for his fellow clansmen in his desire to protect and serve them, as well as the loyalty those clansmen felt for their chief when he sent the fiery cross through the territory, summoning his men to fight. This ancient custom set the Highland apart from the Borders where it does not seem to have been practiced, or, if it was, it wasn't nearly as institutionalized as it was in the Highlands.

To these differences could be added those of other categories not covered by this thesis, such as language and origin. There were other subjects that need that might have been included in this study, like the comparison and contrast between Highland and Border clans in relation to

religion being a motivating factor to go to war. It is the hope of the author that through the course of this paper, the reader is able to clearly see the similarities and differences between the Highland and Border clans, for this is important to understand. The Highlanders and Borderers came from completely different backgrounds yet the tribal system each lived in looked amazingly similar in some respects. In others, the difference is like night and day. Perhaps these similarities or differences don't matter for the person who just wants an excuse to put on a kilt and attend a Burns Night dinner. Yet for the person who is really trying to understand who their ancestors were, having this information is fundamental. It will shape the rest of the research they do. For the scholar, the hope of the author is that this thesis might provide a springboard for future research into the tribal societies of the British Isles. Whether a person is a scholar studying the social or martial dynamics of Scotland or a person searching for their roots, understanding that the Highlanders are similar yet not the same as the Borderers is a solid foundation to build from.

Epilogue

I have had numerous moments where the question arose, *Is this family really a clan? What's the difference between the Hamiltons and any aristocratic family from England? What makes a Scottish family an actual clan?* Once again, the material that is out there for the public doesn't address this matter. Through this research, I haven't found an answer but I have discovered that the lines aren't as clearly drawn as I might have earlier thought. The Gordons are a great example of this. They seem to be a hybrid Highland/Lowland clan.

Another direction I am interested in taking in the future is toward the origins of the Scottish clans, specifically those north of the Forth/Clyde line. My suspicion is that many more of them have Pictish roots, in the chiefly line, than we now suppose. Those clans from the Gaelic Highlands are supposed by most to all trace back to the Scots of Dal Rada yet how many of them can provide an unbroken line to that group? My suspicion is that the aristocratic Picts retained their positions and territories and learned to speak Gaelic. I can't wait to take this trail and see where it goes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Bain, Joseph. Ed., Vol. 1 of *The Border Papers: Calendar of Letters and Papers Relating to the Affairs of the Borders of England and Scotland*. Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1894.
- Blackhall, Gilbert. *A breiffe Narration of the Services done to three noble Ladyes*, Aberdeen: 1844.
- Borrowes, Erasmus D. "Tennekille Castle, Portarlington, and Glimpses of the MacDonnells." *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, First Series, vol. 2, (1854): 34-43.
- Bower, Walter. *Scotichronicon*, ed. D. E. R. Watt, 9 vols (Aberdeen, 1987-98), VII, 402-03.
- Brown, P. Hume. ed. *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*. Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1908.
- Carey, Robert. *Memoirs of Robert Carey, Earl of Monmouth*. London: De La More Press, 1905.
- Dürer, Albrecht. *Unnamed Drawing*. Netherlands, 1521.
<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Galloglass-circa-1521.jpg> [accessed 13 September 2014].
- Dymmok, John. *A Treatise of Ireland*. Dublin: University Press, 1842.
- Campbell, Christian Clay Columba. "Wall Tomb of Alasdair Crotach MacLeod." *Eccentric Bliss*, 13 December 2013, <http://www.eccentricbliss.com/2013/12/wall-tomb-alasdair-crotach-macleod/> [accessed September 13, 2014]. This website provided the best views of the Hebridean tomb effigies from Iona, Oronsay, Islay, Lewis, and Harris, which are contemporary engravings.
- Hollinshed, Raphael. *The Scottish Chronicle*. Vol. I. Arbroath: J. Finlay, 1805.
- James VI. "For the quieting and keeping in obedience of the disordered subjects, inhabitants of the borders, highlands and isles." *Scottish Parliamentary Register of 29 July, 1587*. Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707. <http://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/1370/10/1> [accessed July 15, 2014].
- Lesley, John. *The History of Scotland, From the Death of King James I in the Year M.CCCC.XXXVI, to the Year M.D.LXI*. Edinburgh, 1830.
- Records of the Parliaments of Scotland*. University of St. Andrews.
<http://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/1370/10/1> [accessed 30 June, 2014].

Scott, Alexander Malcolm. *The Battle of Langside MDLXVIII*. Glasgow: Hugh Hopkins, 1885.

Secondary Sources

Barrow, G. W. S. *The Kingdom of the Scots*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 2003.

The Black Book of Taymouth, Edinburgh: T. Constable, 1755.

Boardman, Stephen I. "Politics and the Feud in Late Mediaeval Scotland." Doctoral Thesis Submitted at the University of St. Andrews. 1989.

Boardman, Stephen I. and Alasdair Ross ed., *The Exercise of Power in Medieval Scotland, c. 1200-1500*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003.

Borland, Robert. *Border Raids and Reivers*. Dalbeattie: Thomas Fraser, 1898.

British Broadcasting Corporation, "Highland Clans: Episode 1, MacGregor," YouTube, Flash Video file, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24_rXY7GTCU (accessed August 8, 2014).

Brown, Michael. "War, Allegiance, and Community in the Anglo-Scottish Borders: Teviotdale in the Fourteenth Century." *Northern History* 41, no. 2 (September, 2004): 219-238.

Browne, James. *History of the Highlands and of the Highland Clans*. IV. Glasgow: Fullarton & Co., 1840.

Campbell, Christian Clay Columba. "Wall Tomb of Alasdair Crotach MacLeod." *Eccentric Bliss*, 13 December 2013, accessed September 13, 2014, <http://www.eccentricbliss.com/2013/12/wall-tomb-alsadair-crotach-macleod/>.

Caldwell, David H. "The Battle of Pinkie." In *Scotland and War, AD 79-1918*. Ed. Norman MacDougall. Savage, Maryland: Barnes and Noble, 1991.

Carey, Robert. *Memoirs of Robert Carey, Earl of Monmouth*. London: De La More Press, 1905.

Cathcart, Alison. "Crisis of Identity? Clan Chattan's Response to Government Policy in the Scottish Highlands c. 1580-1609." In Steven Murdoch and A. MacKillop, ed. *Fighting for identity: Scottish military experience c. 1550-1900*. History of Warfare, 15. Brill: Leiden, Netherlands, 2002: p. 163-184.

Cathcart, Alison. "The Statutes of Iona: The Archipelagic Context." *Journal of British Studies* 49, no. 1 (2009): 4-27.

- Chalmers, George. *Caledonia, or an Account, Historical and Topographical, of North Britain, from the Most Ancient Times to the Present Times, Vol. III.* London: 1824.
- Craik, George Lillie and Charles MacFarlane. *The Pictorial History of England: Being a History of the People, as well as a History of the Kingdom, Vol. II.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1848.
- Dalglish, Chris. "An age of transition? Castles and the Scottish Highland estate in the 16th And 17th centuries." *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 39, no. 2 (2005): 243-266.
- Elliot, George Francis Scott. *The Border Elliots and the Family of Minto.* Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1897.
- Fraser, Master James. *Chronicles of the Frasers: the Wardlaw Manuscript.* Edinburgh: University Press and T. and A. Constable, 1905.
- Fraser, George MacDonald. *Steel Bonnets: The Story of the Anglo-Scottish Border Reivers.* London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1971.
- Fraser, William. *Introductions and Illustrations of The Annandale Family Book of the Johnstones, Earls and Marquises of Annandale.* Edinburgh: 1894.
- Fraser, William. *The Lennox: Vol. 1 Memoirs (Vol. 2 Muniments).* Edinburgh: 1874.
- Garnett, Thomas. *Observations on a Tour Through the Hihglands and Part of the Western Isles of Scotland, Vol II.* London: 1811.
- Goodare, Julian. "The Statutes of Iona in Context." *The Scottish Historical Review* LXXVII, No. 203 (April, 1998): 31-57.
- Gordon, Sir Robert. *A Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland from its Origin to the Year 1630.* Edinburgh: George Ramsay and Co., 1813.
- Gray, John. "Lawlessness on the Frontier: The Anglo-Scottish Borderlands in the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Century." *History and Anthropology* 12, no. 4 (2001): 381-408.
- Grimble, Ian. *Scottish Clans and Tartans,* New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1973.
- Groundwater, Anna. "The Obligations of Kinship and Alliance within Governance in the Scottish Borders, 1528-1625." *Canadian Journal of History* (Spring/Summer 2013): 1-27.
- Groundwater, Anna. *The Scottish Middle March, 1573-1625: Power, Kinship, Allegiance.* Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2010.

- Hill, George. "Notices of the Clan Ian Vor, or Clan-Donnell Scots, specially of the Branch Settled in Ireland." *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 1st Series, 9 (1861/1862): 301-317.
- Hill, J. Michael. "The Rift within Clan Ian Mor: The Antrim and Dunyveg MacDonnells, 1590-1603." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 24, no. 2 (Winter, 1993): 865-879.
- The History of the Feuds and Conflicts among the Clans in the Northern Parts of Scotland and the Western Isles; from the Year MXXXI unto MDCXIX*. Glasgow: J&J Robertson, 1780.
- Iona Club, ed. *Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis: Consisting of Original Papers and Documents*. Edinburgh: Thomas G. Stevenson, 1847.
http://www.archive.org/stream/collectaneadere00skengoog/collectaneadere00skengoog_djvu.txt [accessed 12 September 2014].
- Keltie, Sir John Scott, ed. *A History of the Scottish Highlands, Highland Clans and Highland Regiments*. Vol. II. Edinburgh: A Fullerton and Co., 1875.
- Lynch, Michael., ed. *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- MacArthur, Margaret Macintosh. *History of Scotland*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1874.
- MacCoinnich, A. "'His spirit was given only to warre': Conflict and Identity in the Scottish Gaidhealtachd, c. 1580 – c. 1630." In *Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experience, c. 1550-1900*. Murdoch, S. and MacKillop, A. 132-162. Boston: Brill, 2002.
- MacCoinnich, A. "Siol Torcail and their Lordship in the Sixteenth Century." In *Crossing the Minch: Exploring the Links Between Skye and the Outer Hebrides*. The Islands Book Trust (2007): 7-32.
- MacCoinnich, A. "'Kingis Rabellis' to Cuidich 'n' Righ; the Emergence of Clann Choinnich, c 1475-1508." In *The Exercise of Power in Medieval Scotland, 1200-1500*, ed. By Boardman, S. and Ross, A., 175-200. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003.
- MacDonald, Alastair J. "Courage, Fear and the Experience of the Later Medieval Scottish Soldier." *The Scottish Historical Review* XCII, 2: no. 235 (October, 2013): 179-206.
- Alastair J. Macdonald. "The Kingdom of Scotland at War, 1332-1488." In *A Military History of Scotland*, Edward M. Spiers, ed., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012: 158-181.
- MacDonald, Alastair J. "Trickery, Mockery and the Scottish Way of War." *Aberdeen University Research Archive* (October, 2013).
- MacDougall, Norman. "'The Greatest Scheip that Ewer Saillit in In gland or France': James IV's 'Great Michael'." In *Scotland and War, AD 79-1918*. Ed. Norman MacDougall.

- Savage, Maryland: Barnes and Noble, 1991.
- MacFarlane, James. *History of Clan MacFarlane*. Glasgow: David J. Clark Limited, 1922.
- MacGregor, Martin. "The Statutes of Iona: Text and Context." *The Innes Review* 57, no. 2 (Autumn, 2006): 111-81.
- MacGregor, Martin . "Warfare in Gaelic Scotland in the Later Middle Ages." Edward M. Spiers, ed. *A Military History of Scotland*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012: 209-230.
- MacInnes, Iain. Review of "*The World of the Galloglass: Kings, Warlords and Warriors in Ireland and Scotland, 1200-1600*." Ed. By Seán Duffy. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007. Accessed August 29, 2014. http://abdn.ac.uk/riiss/content-images/MacInnes_Duffy.pdf
- MacKay, Angus. *The Book of MacKay*. Edinburgh: Norman MacLeod, 1906.
- MacLean, Fitzroy. *Highlanders: A History of the Scottish Clans*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1995.
- MacLean, John Patterson. *A History of the Clan MacLean from its First Settlement at Duard Castle, in the Isle of Mull, to the Present Period*. Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1889.
- MacPhaill, J. R. N., ed. Vol. 1 of *Highland Papers*. Edinburgh: University Press and T. and A. Constable, 1914.
- MacPhaill, J. R. N., ed. Vol. 2 of *Highland Papers*. Edinburgh: University Press and T. and A. Constable, 1916.
- MacPhaill, J. R. N., ed. Vol. 3 of *Highland Papers*. Edinburgh: University Press and T. and A. Constable, 1920.
- Morgan, Hiram. Review of "*The World of the Galloglass: Kings, Warlords and Warriors in Ireland and Scotland, 1200-1600*." Ed. By Seán Duffy. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007. *Scottish Historical Review* 89, no. 1 (April 2010): 102-104.
- Phillips, Gervase. "In the Shadow of Flodden: Tactics, Technology and Scottish Military Effectiveness, 1513-1550." *The Scottish Historical Review* LXXVII 2, no. 204 (October, 1998): 162-182.
- Rigby, S. H. ed. *A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.
- Rodriguez, Gregory. "How Genealogy Became Almost as Popular as Porn," *Time*, May 30, 2014. <http://time.com/133811/how-genealogy-became-almost-as-popular-as-porn/> [accessed June 28, 2014].

- Sykes, Bryan and Jayne Nicholson. "The Genetic Structure of a Highland Clan." The University of Oxford, Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine.
- Scott, Alexander Malcolm. *The Battle of Langside MDLXVIII*. Glasgow: Hugh Hopkins, 1885.
- Spiers, Edward M., ed. *A Military History of Scotland*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
- Thomson, Oliver. *The Great Feud: The Campbells and the MacDonalDs*. Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2000.
- Turnbull, W. Robertson. *History of Moffat*. Edinburgh: W. P. Nimmo, 1871.
- Veitch, Kenneth. "The Alliance Between Church and State in Early Medieval Alba." *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 30, no. 2 (Summer, 1998): 193-220.
- Way, George and Romilly Squire. "*Scottish Clan and Family Encyclopedia*." Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994.
- Wormald, Jenny. *Scotland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.