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THE SCOTTISH EXPERIENCE IN ASIA, C.1700 TO THE PRESENT

SETTLERS AND SOJOURNERS

EDITED BY
T. M. DEVINE AND
ANGELA MCCARTHY

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T.M. Devine • Angela McCarthy
Editors

The Scottish Experience in Asia, c.1700 to the Present

Settlers and Sojourners

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T.M. Devine and Angela McCarthy

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Scottish Experience in Asia, c.1700 to the Present: Settlers and Sojourners

T.M. Devine and Angela McCarthy

The remarkable scale and global reach of modern Scottish emigration has been described at length in recent academic writings. Between 1815 and the Second World War more than 2.3 million people left Scotland for overseas destinations, and this from a country with a population of less than 4.5 million at the census of 1901. When the 600,000 odd reckoned to have crossed the border to England over the shorter time frame of 1841 to 1911 are added to that total, it is easy to see why some regard Scotland as one of the key emigration countries of Europe in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries. Even when out-migration was significantly less, as it was between 1700 and 1815, 80,000 to 100,000 departures from a population of 1.6 million in 1800 have been estimated over that century.[1]

If that great diaspora can be likened to a demographic flood in relation to the base population of the country, Scottish migration to Asia in

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the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries seems more akin in numerical terms, to a slow, insignificant trickle. In part, this comparatively small flow accounts for the very thin scholarship on the Scots in Asia compared with the rapidly growing historiography of their migrations to North America, the Caribbean, South Africa and Australasia.[2] Moreover, the research that does exist focuses primarily on India, where issues of patronage, networking and Scottish Orientalism have been to the fore. This, therefore, is a pioneering volume which attempts to establish initial parameters which future scholarship can refine and develop. Its primary focus is on the scale, territorial trajectories, impact, economic relationships, identity and nature of the Scottish-Asian connection from before the Union of 1707 to the present. The book does not therefore seek to be comprehensive in content but rather to utilise the expertise and experience of the small number of researchers who are already active in the field in order to bring out key themes and issues.

Importantly, however, the research in this volume connects with other developments in studies of Britain's empire. On the one hand, the book's engagement with Scottish enterprise fits with the increasing reincorporation in imperial history of economic and trade issues which in recent years has been overshadowed by a focus on empire as a cultural project. Also included is out-of-favour 'high politics' through consideration of the tenure of an influential Scottish governor in nineteenth century Ceylon. But we also attempt to embrace the new imperial history's focus on such issues as colonial knowledge, the construction of identity and cross-cultural encounters.[3]

Demographic Patterns

Before the Union of 1707 and soon afterwards, a few Scots were already active in the East India trade, particularly in the Swedish East Company (Svenska Ostindiska Compagniet: SOIC), the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compangine: VOC) and, to a lesser extent, the Ostend (Austrian) Company.[4] Their numbers did visibly start to rise within the United English East India Company (EIC), especially from the 1740s, and by the early nineteenth century Scots had undeniably made their mark in that enterprise as civil servants, army officers, physicians and mariners. This was partly a result of the turn to the East (and Australasia and Africa) after the loss in 1783 of the 13 American colonies. Absolute numbers still remained unimpressive, however, in large part because the

Company's administrative cadres were themselves relatively insignificant overall.

Nevertheless, over the 60 years between 1720 and 1780 a minimum of around 2,000 Scots males were recruited to the EIC, or over 33 per year on average, although numbers fluctuated to a considerable extent over time. Data drawn from Company records at a later date in 1806 suggest 21 Scottish writers, 80 cadets and 14 assistant surgeons (115 in all) in its employ at that date out of a total of 644 in these positions across the EIC.[5] One authoritative estimate suggests that even when the EIC's territorial responsibilities had expanded very significantly by the early 1830s, leading to authority over 45 million Indians, it still employed only 895 civil servants and 754 medical officers.[6] By the same period, it is reckoned that there were perhaps fewer than 5,000 additional British males resident in the subcontinent who were not on the Company's payroll. Overall, indeed, in the 1830s, the total number of Britons in India was probably little more than 65,000–70,000 and of these over four-fifths were soldiers in the army of the EIC or in the regular forces of the Crown. Scots tended to be over-represented among the officer class in the military but were much fewer among the rank and file than the Irish and the English. Ship rolls for the years between 1775 and 1781, for example, indicate a total of 4,949 troops sent to the East from Britain. A mere 170 (3.4 per cent) of these were from Scotland.[7]

Scots had a much higher profile by the early 1800s among the 'free' or independent agency houses and shipping interests which linked India to the burgeoning and lucrative markets of South-East Asia. Their activities are examined in Chapter 4. By the early nineteenth century, 50 such enterprises were reckoned to be active in the presidency of Madras alone. These men of business and their successors eventually reached deep into the East by the middle decades of the nineteenth century in the trades of coffee, tea, opium, textiles and raw materials such as rubber and tin. Scots were also to be found throughout the many diverse countries of Asia, including Ceylon, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaya, Burma, China and, by the 1870s, even in the formerly closed and insular society of Japan. No precise figures are available for the numbers in these pursuits. However, a rough guestimate, based on the 300 odd Scots free merchants and mariners active in the Asian trades by the 1830s, and the likely number of their Scots-born employees and figures for incomers to Ceylon and Malaya, would suggest little more than 2,000 to 2,500 in South-East Asia as traders, managers, planters, physicians, missionaries and ships' commanders by

the 1850s, and perhaps somewhat more by 1900. Even by that date the Scottish presence in the East remained overwhelmingly masculine, unlike the white settlement colonies of Canada and the Antipodes.[8]

As outlined in Chapters 8 and 9, Scots had considerable visibility as owners and superintendents in the coffee, and later, though perhaps to a lesser extent, in the tea plantation economies of Ceylon. At one point, indeed, Ceylon could be described as a 'Scotch colony' where the influence of Scots was not only evident in the plantation economy but also in journalism, the law, brokerage, manufacturing and banking. Yet here again, numbers were limited. According to the 1901 *Census of the British Empire*, there were a recorded 275 Irish-born, 2,210 English and 647 Scots in residence at the time the census was taken. In the Indian empire, meanwhile, Scots were 9,325 compared with 9,682 Irish and 77,411 English and Welsh. In Hong Kong, Scots numbered 476 compared with 155 Irish and 1,254 English born.[9] Some caution, however, is needed with these statistics due to the absence or erratic nature of census data for many areas and the temporary nature of much migration. The key point is that any Scottish influence on Asia did not in the final analysis depend on absolute numbers. This is also true of the legacy of Scots in Hong Kong where even today some sojourners think of it as something of a 'Scottish colony', as indicated in Chapter 13, despite them being only a minor part of the total population.

It is reckoned that Scots constituted around one-third of all colonial governors between 1850 and 1939.[10] Needy Scottish aristocrats, lairds and retired military men often sought employment in the colonial administrations and when they achieved influential positions regularly acted as patrons to aid their fellow countrymen to gain employment in other posts. One such example is that of Governor James Alexander Stewart Mackenzie. His attempts to bring Scots to Ceylon are noted in Chapter 9 while his overall career is considered in Chapter 7. Migration from the middle and upper classes also characterised those joining Scottish associations in Singapore and China as outlined in Chapters 11 and 12.

Explanations for the relatively small scale of Scottish migration and that of other nationalities from the British Isles to Asia are not hard to find. One reason was that the EIC was resolutely opposed to colonisation and European settlement in its domains.[11] But also, unlike the Americas and Australasia, the Asiatic world was unlikely to attract family migration of any magnitude. Even British spouses of EIC officials and army officers were uncommon in India until after the 1830s. For the most part, the majority of Scots, as with the British in general who were drawn to the

East over much of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were young, single men who went out to make money, hopefully as quickly as possible, and then return home with their gains. Only a few stayed on willingly before 1815, once they had survived the many threats to health, although after that date some strikingly different patterns began to emerge in India, as described in Chapter 6. In the eighteenth century, however, the vast majority saw themselves as sojourners rather than settlers. That tradition endured into the nineteenth century with the great Scottish companies of Victorian and Edwardian times, described in Chapter 4, which engaged in the eastern trades, shipping and the plantation business and were usually family-owned. The senior managerial generation gradually ceded power to the kindred at home, be they sons, nephews or cousins, while their elders eventually retired back to Britain. In due course, the same cycle would begin all over again. There was therefore constant movement among family members between their locus in the homeland and their businesses in Asia. This coming and going served to maintain a continuing sense of ethnic identity through the retention of close links with Scotland, bonds which were less likely to be sustained after the first and second generations in the colonies of settlement.

Also, unlike Canada, the USA, South Africa and Australasia, but similar to the Caribbean colonies, Asia was unsuited by climate and environment for mass European emigration. Indeed, like parts of tropical Africa, India in the eighteenth century had the reputation of being the white man's grave. The chances of becoming rich before 1800 were counterbalanced by the very real possibility of succumbing to disease soon after arrival. Thus, between 1707 and 1775, 57 per cent of the EIC's servants died in India. Before the 1760s, two-thirds of those in the writer grade of the Company's administration never came back. A return of casualties of officers and cadets in the army in Bengal between 1770 and 1776 revealed that only six had fallen in action but no fewer than 208 had perished from disease.[12] Into the nineteenth century, Scots in the EIC civil service became more dependent on Company pension provision than immediate riches. As a result, the period of time they were likely to spend in India had to become longer, as Ellen Filor confirms in Chapter 6.

Nevertheless, while Scottish migration to Asia may have been relatively insignificant in number compared to that in other parts of the world, the evidence presented in this book suggests the impact was nonetheless conspicuous and arguably disproportionate in some spheres. This was especially so in the Indian empire from the second half of the eighteenth

century and thereafter in Asian trade, shipping, the plantation economies, the scholarly dissemination of ideas about the East and Japan's transformation from feudalism to capitalism in the late nineteenth century. One of the objectives of this collection of essays is to examine these effects and how they might be explained.

Impact

Of the global Scots diaspora, only migration to the sugar islands of the Caribbean perhaps invites comparison with the movement to Asia. The West Indies also never attracted much permanent European settlement. Almost all who went there were also young male sojourners and, like their counterparts considered in this book, were intent on making money quickly and then returning home. As in Asia, too, these Scots were a tiny minority among vast non-European populations, though in the Caribbean these were not natives of the islands but black Africans who had been sold into lives of chattel slavery and transported across the Atlantic from their homelands to the Americas. As in India, many young men succumbed at an early stage to the endemic diseases of the tropics and never saw their native land again. In addition, connections with both the Caribbean and Asia benefited the Scottish economy as sources of capital, raw materials and markets, and aided the country's unusually rapid industrial and agrarian transformation from the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Also, both destinations revolutionised the diet of the Scottish people as a result of the consumption of such exotic imports as sugar and rum from the West Indies, coffee from Ceylon and tea from China.[13] As the nineteenth century progressed, the reliance on Chinese tea was circumvented by the successful cultivation of tea firstly in India and then in Ceylon. By 1887, Indian and Ceylon tea consumption in the UK surpassed that from China.[14]

But such comparisons should not to be pressed too far. Scottish sojourning in the West Indies soon fell away after the emancipation of the slaves in 1833 and the associated trading connections swiftly collapsed thereafter. They were already insignificant by the 1860s when only around 2 per cent of export tonnage from the Clyde was shipped to the West Indies, a quite spectacular decline from the share of around 60 per cent of tonnage at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.[15] Indeed, as Tom Barron shows, some Scots émigrés to the Caribbean left the sugar islands after the emancipation of slaves in 1833 and several sailed for Ceylon where they found new oppor-

tunities in the coffee estates there and put their skills in plantation management and cultivation techniques to very good use. The immense spatial differences also have to be taken into account. By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Scottish enterprise in the East stretched over thousands of miles from the Persian Gulf to the Sea of Japan, so enabling the development of the giant corporations in banking, trade and shipping which are described in Chapter 2 and which had few parallels on that scale in the West Indies.

To tease out in detail the implications of these Asian commercial relationships before 1914 for the homeland would require another book. However, some brief preliminary suggestions can be put forward here. Indeed, despite the relatively small scale of Scottish migration to Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the impact, not only overseas but on Scotland itself, was significant, as later chapters suggest. It arguably deserves wider recognition in general studies of the empire, the global Scots diaspora and of modern Scottish history than so far received.

The over-representation of Scots in the governance, administration and trade of India from the 1750s until at least 1850, as described in Chapter 2, meant that a minority of sojourners returned home as very rich men earlier in that period. Between 1720 and 1780 there were an estimated 1,600 Scots in EIC service as military officers, mariners, surgeons and administrators. One suggestion by George McGilvary is that at least 124 came home between 1720 and 1780 with 'middling', 'large' and 'small' fortunes, 82 per cent possessed wealth of £20,000 and above, while over a quarter (37) had 'large' fortunes of £40,000 or over.[16] These returning 'nabobs', together with the tobacco and sugar tycoons of the Atlantic trades, provided much of the external capital which was one factor helping to power the unusually rapid industrial and agricultural revolutions in a relatively poor country from the 1760s until the 1830s, after which domestic sources of finance in Scotland for continued growth started to become much more plentiful. Profits seeped home through a number of channels, not only via direct investment from returnees but also as remittances from expatriates to their families in Scotland together with credit often advanced by EIC servants on mortgages to Scottish borrowers.[17]

The precise scale of the stream of Indian wealth which found its way to the homeland in the eighteenth century will probably never be known for certain. The recent bold attempt to provide an estimate which has been described above has already attracted overt scholarly criticism. However, the most recent student of the issue has concluded, 'In no other part of

the UK, except London, was the importance of returning personnel and resources as pervasive'.[18] The difference was of course that Scotland was very much poorer in the eighteenth century than London and its hinterland and so funding from overseas was likely to have a greater multiplier effect especially during the so-called 'first phase' of Scottish industrialisation when financial demands for investment across the entire spectrum of manufacturing, agriculture and infrastructural development were most pressing. It was a happy coincidence for Scotland that, as Chapter 6 shows, the influx of great wealth from India died away from the early nineteenth century precisely at the time when the domestic economy was starting to generate internal resources for future investment.

The career opportunities which became increasingly available within the ranks of the EIC bureaucracy, marine and officer classes of the army also had significant implications for Scottish political history in the era of the French Revolution and beyond. Historians of eighteenth century Ireland point to the shortage of colonial posts for the Catholic elites and middle classes up to that point as a crucial factor helping to trigger the social unrest which built up from the 1770s and eventually became one factor in the Irish rebellion of 1798.[19] There were just too many younger sons of these elites in Ireland with frustrated career ambitions who were becoming steadily alienated from the British state.

The patterns in Scotland could not have been more different. As shown in this volume, the Scots were able to exploit imperial opportunities to a much greater extent than the Irish, or indeed the Welsh, not least in Asia before 1800. In 1790, for instance, over a quarter of Scottish constituencies were held by former EIC servants, a rate of political penetration unmatched anywhere in Britain or Ireland.[20] The purchase of landed estates by returning 'nabobs' in several Scottish localities was also often noted at the time.[21] The fact that much of this became possible as a result of patronage and clientage networks within the elites helped to bind most of the smaller lairds and middle classes to the political establishment of the day, reinforced their social position, secured the Union with England and stifled the potential for destabilisation. This was one of several reasons why the radical campaigns in Scotland against the unreformed state disintegrated so rapidly in the 1790s. Only much later, in the Reform Act 1832, were even minor concessions offered within the notoriously unrepresentative Scottish franchise. But even they can be seen as attempts to perpetuate the old order through the provision of limited concessions rather than the surrender of power to any meaningful extent. The hereditary privileges

of the landed elite were therefore perpetuated for a much longer time in Scottish society not only through inherited historic authority but also because of new imperial opportunities.

The onward migration of Scots from the career platforms they had built up within the EIC to Ceylon, Singapore, Malaya and as far as China and Japan, also had important domestic repercussions. The great Scottish shipping firms which emerged to service Asian trade regularly awarded contracts to Clyde shipbuilders, while Scottish industry in general gained from the booming markets in capital goods, especially locomotives, railways, machinery, bridges, docks and much else, as Asian infrastructures expanded to manage the massive increase in exports to Europe of primary products, foods and beverages, tea, coffee, rubber, palm oil and raw jute. Even the plantation economies in the East needed equipment, as shown in Chapter 8, and Scottish engineering companies became sources of supply for coffee crushers, pulpers, dryers and turbines as well as sluices and pipes for the development of irrigation works on the estates of Ceylon.

Data for the cumulative tonnage clearing from ports of the Clyde between 1886 and 1911 are instructive in this respect. They reveal that almost a quarter of total volume over that period was destined for India, the East Indies and China. Overall, therefore, Asia ranked second for export tonnage in that period after Europe, above the USA and Canada, and well above Australasia and Latin America. Banks, insurance companies and investment trusts also gained through the Asian connection.[22] Between 1862 and 1914, 76 Scottish investment trusts had interests in Asian tea and rubber plantations.[23] From the 1850s, Scottish Widows, Standard Life Assurance and Scottish Amicable also became active in India and East Asian markets.[24] The most famous industry in Scotland which grew out of these linkages to the East was the processing of Bengal-sourced raw jute in Dundee, a city which soon attracted the soubriquet 'Juteopolis'. At its height in the late nineteenth century Dundee boasted around 60 jute mills and more than 50,000 workers, the majority of them married women. The industry brought great wealth to a small circle of 'jute barons' and their families but those riches coexisted with a regime of poverty, low wages and slum housing for most of their employees.[25]

The expansion of the middle class labour market in the East for Scots officials, engineers, clerks, accountants, physicians, missionaries, journalists, planters, managers, foremen, technicians, administrators, surveyors and bankers was also a striking feature of much of the nineteenth century. This trend not only helped to expand professional opportunities but

also sustained the growth of schools, technical colleges and universities in Scotland which helped to train and educate these skilled emigrants. And there was another bonus. The professional émigrés often looked to their homeland for insurance, legal, investment and banking services, so cementing the commercial linkages between Scotland and Asia even further. A striking feature also was the way in which changing economic circumstances in Asia could generate secondary diasporas to other places across the globe. Chapter 8 shows that one result of the decline of coffee production in Ceylon was the dispersal of experienced Scots planters as far afield as Central and South America, Natal, Java, Sumatra and Fiji.

The scale of these Scottish commercial activities both within and beyond the formal empire has on the whole tended to be neglected by British historians. This is not entirely surprising since London and the Home Counties, the heartlands of Victorian economic imperialism about which much has been written, were often bypassed by the big Scottish syndicates as channels of trade and investment to the empire before 1914. The well-known thesis proposed by P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins is fairly typical in this respect. They see the drive to British overseas expansion as firmly rooted in the 'gentlemanly capitalism' of the City of London and its affiliates in banking and financial services.[26] Barry Crosbie's work on the Irish in India also highlights the importance of London in the creation and sustenance of professional networks.[27] For all its explanatory power, however, these arguments do not take fully into account the business strategies of companies in the North of England or Scotland. Most Scottish enterprise in Asia as elsewhere after c.1850 emanated directly from the homeland as well as via Scots expatriate firms in India and South-East Asia rather than intermediaries in London. A significant part of British economic activity in the East can therefore easily be omitted from the account when taking a Londoncentric approach.

The impact, however, was not solely confined to commercial activities. Scots were also prominent in the creation of an Orientalist school of thought with a strong Scottish philosophical stamp, particularly evident in previous work on India.[28] Here they were at the forefront of this intellectual endeavour, with Irish understanding of Indian languages and cultures coming through much later.[29] John MacKenzie, in Chapter 3 of this volume, revisits this Scottish cultural and religious effect on Asia, encompassing not just Orientalism, which attracted interest throughout the Scottish universities, but also missionary activity. Joanna Frew, meanwhile,

provides a case study in Chapter 5 of the powerful influence of Scottish ideas for agrarian improvement on the Madras presidency in the later eighteenth century. Yet the extent to which Scottish Enlightenment thought or a Scottish background more generally influenced the actions of Scots abroad is still uncertain. Some suggestive comments are made in relation to Governor Stewart Mackenzie's actions in Ceylon, but there is precious little evidence of his overt borrowing of theory and practice from the homeland of the kind demonstrated in Chapters 8 and 9. Ascertaining what ideas shaped his rule—and those of other governors—is an important consideration for future research.

We should also recognise that the adverse social impact of Scottish enterprise on native peoples in Asia ought not to be overlooked or forgotten. The new free-market capitalism which British adventurers brought to the East was red in tooth and claw and their deep-seated determination to make money as quickly as possible ensured that the traditional rights of indigenous inhabitants could often be ruthlessly subordinated to the profit motive. Scots in the EIC were just as deeply involved in the uninhibited plundering of India in the years after the Battle of Plassey in 1757 as English servants and officers, as T.M. Devine shows in the chapter which follows this. They also played a central role in the opium trade to China, with the Scottish house of Jardine, Matheson & Co. becoming the dominant enterprise in a commerce which in the view of many historians had a devastating impact on Chinese society in the nineteenth century, though this view is now contested by other scholars (see Chapter 10). The remarkable expansion of large-scale plantation agriculture for coffee and tea cultivation in Ceylon, charted in Chapters 8 and 9, in which Scots managers and planters were often to the fore, could not have taken place without the dispossession of some peasant farmers, a process which was enthusiastically supported and facilitated by successive colonial governments on the island.[30]

But cross-cultural encounters were not solely negative and relationships were not confined to the diverse peoples of Asia. Superintendents of coffee and tea estates in Ceylon had contact with a range of peoples, albeit from a position of authority, and often learned from them. In some instances they formed intimate ties.[31] Agency houses, as George McGilvary indicates in Chapter 4, similarly needed native support and alliances to achieve success. Scottish ethnic associations, meanwhile, facilitated connections between Scots and other ethnicities though such cross-cultural contact

was largely confined to others of white ethnicity. Overall, however, different forms of cross-cultural engagement were sporadic and limited compared with Scottish ties to their own ethnic group. Even in Hong Kong today, as Chapter 13 reveals, Scots reside in distinct expatriate neighbourhoods segregated from local communities.

The Challenge of Exceptionalism

To evaluate the impact of a single ethnicity in relation to others on the historical development of overseas societies is a challenging undertaking as the approach is obviously open to charges of exceptionalism and ethnocentrism. This is perhaps especially so in recent years when global and transnational history has become more fashionable within some circles of the academy. Some recent work highlighting similarities between European and Asian migration flows, such as free migration and networking,[32] also tend to elide consideration of the diversity of those flows and their differential impact. But despite historiographical trends, the findings of this book would suggest that a national focus in imperial and diasporic history remains essential. The distinctive histories of colonialism across different European countries which led to outcomes in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Australasia were in large part dictated by the particular political systems, economies, religious structures and cultures of their metropoles. Nonetheless, trying to bring out national narratives and variables in a convincing manner often requires the use of hard data and the contextualising of numbers by comparison with other nationalities if the pitfalls of exceptionalism are to be avoided in whole or in part.

Perhaps special care should be taken in relation to the presumed impact of Scots migrants. As citizens of a small but historic nation in a political and economic union with a much larger one from 1707, Scots had developed a more assertive and collective sense of national identity by the nineteenth century, not least in relation to the English 'elephant' or 'other' with which they shared the British bed. When abroad this clannishness could and often did result in an outpouring of Scottish self-congratulation, a habit which was common not only in the rituals of Burns Suppers and St Andrew's Day speeches, where boosterism was usually rampant, but also in newspapers, articles and books which celebrated the achievements of Scots as the marks of an exceptional race. Even non-Scots in the empire were prone to praise Scottish contributions as Chapter 9 shows. Such praise was not always based on fact but was sometimes the result of veiled attempts at

comparative denigration of the perceived inferiority of the Catholic Irish. Nevertheless, this form of ethnic conceit fashioned mythologies which endured over generations, even down to the present day, as the study of modern Scottish expatriates in Hong Kong conducted in Chapter 13, confirms.

To some extent, too, this parading of Scottish achievement within the empire was an external manifestation of developments in the homeland during the mid-Victorian era. Enormous pride was now taken in the transformation of Scotland over only a couple of generations from a historically poor country to a global powerhouse of modern industry. By the 1870s books were being published in large numbers glorifying this achievement. The Scots were equally conscious of the role they played in partnership with the English in the creation and administration of the greatest territorial empire the world had ever seen. This was always referred to as the *British* Empire, never the *English* Empire. It was publicly reiterated north of the border that the massive growth of empire only took place *after* the Union of 1707 and hence should be considered a joint Anglo-Scottish project from its beginnings. Celebratory publications, hagiographies and speeches made by renowned public figures, ranging from prominent politicians on election hustings to university rectors at graduation ceremonies, heaped praised on the Scots as a special nation of born 'empire builders'.

Earlier in the nineteenth century some among the Scots intellectocracy had expressed real concern about the threat of English cultural assimilation within the union state and the risk that the national status of the country might decline to provincial mediocrity as North Britain. By the mid-Victorian era, however, that anxiety had vanished. Instead, the potent survival and influence of Scottish institutions after 1707 in church, law and education, the limited role of Westminster in routine governance north of the border and the unprecedented economic miracle bred a new self-confidence, sometimes bordering on arrogance, among the Scottish elites. This was the time when heroes like Burns, Wallace and Knox were publicly lionised in print, song and statuary as the historical symbols of a remarkable people. Scottish education was praised as at least a match for any other system globally and the nation's outstanding success in manufacturing proudly showcased to the world in the great International Exhibition in Glasgow in 1901.

Part of this cultural reinvention of Scottish distinctiveness within the union state was the forging of a new middle class identity based partly on laissez-faire ideology in which such traits as hard work, thrift and self-

help were presented to the world as intrinsically Scottish values. It was no coincidence that Samuel Smiles (1812–1904), the author of *Self Help* (1859), the great Victorian bible of prudence and personal responsibility, was a Scot from Haddington. Scots had also achieved a much higher profile in the governance of the UK. In the eighteenth century, there had been but one Scots-born prime minister, John, Lord Bute, who provoked hostility in southern political circles during his brief period of office. The later nineteenth century, however, was dominated politically by the figure of W.E. Gladstone of Scottish ancestry, who served four times as premier between 1868 and 1892, while, in the three decades before the Great War, there were three Scots-born prime ministers, Rosebery, Balfour and Campbell-Bannerman, who were then followed by Asquith, who was the sitting MP for East Fife. The celebrity won by the Highland regiments during the Indian Rising (Mutiny) of 1857 and in numerous colonial campaigns after that across Africa and Asia rejuvenated Scottish pride in the old martial tradition. Victoria, the Queen Empress herself, added royal lustre to all this by openly proclaiming her attachment to Scotland as a special place among all her dominions.[33]

A final speculation might be appropriate on this theme. Social Darwinism, the stadial theories of the Scottish Enlightenment and racial writings became of considerable interest among the reading public in Scotland in mid-Victorian times. George Combe's racial analysis, *The Constitution of Man* (1828), became an instant bestseller and Robert Knox's *The Races of Men* (1850), written by one of Edinburgh's best known medical teachers and anatomists, also achieved considerable fame. Both these and other contributions at the time in newspapers and periodicals as well as books praised the racial superiority of energetic and industrious Teutonic Lowlanders over the indolence and sloth of Highland and Irish Celts at a time when Irish Catholic migration to Protestant Scotland had reached unprecedented levels during the Great Famine. It is possible that these new insights into racial differentiation may in popularised form have helped to hone even sharper awareness of the characteristics of different peoples for émigré middle class Scots. Only further research can confirm, refine or deny that suggestion.[34]

Avoiding the intellectual obstacles of exceptionalism can best be achieved through the employment of representative evidence linked to systematic comparison with other ethnic groups. Where possible, contributors in this volume have tried to do just that in order to 'weight' the

Scottish factor by placing it in broader international contexts. Other studies beyond this volume have likewise embraced a comparative approach when studying the Scots abroad, such as Andrew Mackillop's important work on the East India Company, described in Chapter 2, and that of the editors of this book.[35]

Scots were of course not alone in their encounters with Asia. Research on the other three nations of the British Isles has also progressed, though the results are often uneven. It is clear, for instance, from a recent study of Ireland and India that connections with the subcontinent have been underestimated and that, especially in the nineteenth century, a whole range of military, intellectual, political and economic relationships can be traced. Nevertheless, in a comparative sense, the Scottish factor in India remains striking. The Catholic Irish in the eighteenth century were mainly confined to the rank and file of the military, both EIC and state. Those Irish who managed to achieve more prestigious positions at that time were mainly drawn from the middling and upper class Protestant elites. Furthermore, the Irish contribution to Orientalism seems to have been limited until the later nineteenth century and confined on the whole to Trinity College Dublin.[36] Nor is there much evidence in this new work on Ireland and India of the overarching Scottish impact in Asia via the houses of agency, commerce and shipping which is described in Devine's Chapter 2 in this volume. One important similarity, however, is that both Scottish and Irish adventurers drew heavily on contacts and patronage in London, especially during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[37] The capital was clearly the transitional route for migrants from the non-English nations into empire. By contrast, recent work does point to connections between Ireland and India, especially over issues of nationalism and the struggle for freedom, but also famines and the land question, areas of investigation which find little parallel thus far in the Scottish literature.[38] On the whole, however, the Irish impact on Asia on the basis of current knowledge must be considered much weaker than its Scottish equivalent.

Less consideration is given in scholarly writings to Welsh engagement with Asia, partly because the Welsh apparently moved there in much fewer numbers than the English and the Scots and so were disproportionately under-represented in the historical record. Difficulties in determining Welsh origins also hamper historians' attempts to locate them. The Scots, on the other hand, often developed a significant collective public profile abroad in Scottish-populated colonial militias and St Andrew societies as

revealed in Chapters 11 and 12 below on China by Isabella Jackson and Tanja Bueltmann, which render them easier for historians to spot among the mass of British expatriates. When the Welsh have been studied, however, the conclusion is striking: 'Across a diverse range of civil, mercantile and military occupations it is clear that Wales was conspicuous for its lack of engagement with the empire in Asia'.[39] This might have been due to demographic factors in Welsh society where, unlike Scotland, it is argued young men tended to move mainly to careers in England rather than abroad. But the Scots (and Irish) also migrated to England in large numbers. A deeper analysis of the contrasting experiences is therefore needed, preferably through a comparative review of Scots and Welsh societies and their differential links to empire.[40]

Consideration of a *distinctive* English engagement with Asia has attracted even less attention, in part due to a tendency in the wider migration literature which has long perceived the English as 'invisible immigrants'.[41] This is variously attributed to them being the majority Anglophone ethnic group in the places where they settled, the fact that English institutions formed the basis of governance in the colonies and the familiar conflation of 'English' as 'British'. There are indeed some examples of English expatriates establishing ethnic associations and celebrating St George's Day (for instance, as described in Chapter 12) but the number and longevity of such associations not just in Asia but elsewhere is still to be calculated. In general, the English seemingly did not feel the need to loudly proclaim their identity in the same way as the smaller ethnicities of the United Kingdom. They doubtless felt comfortably secure in their demographic, economic and cultural ascendancy.[42]

Throughout the chapters which follow, contributors grapple with perspectives on Scottishness and seek through engagement with the wider literature to identify whether there was a distinctive Scottish experience and if so the effect that it might have had on the East. Did Scots bring different skills to Asia and how far did their educational traditions prepare them in different ways? Were their networks distinctive or unexceptional compared to those of other ethnicities? What was the pull of Asia for them? Did they really punch above their weight, as some contemporaries thought, or was that just exaggerated rhetoric? If there was a distinctive 'Scottish effect' how is that to be explained? These questions and others are discussed in this the first book-length study to consider the role of the Scottish diaspora across Asia from the late seventeenth century to the present.