

DOI 10.1515/anglia-2014-0036

**Dan Embree, Edward Donald Kennedy and Kathleen Daly (eds.).** *Short Scottish Prose Chronicles: La Vraie Cronique d'Escoce, The Scottis Originale, The Chronicle of the Scots, The Ynglis Chronicle, Nomina Omnium Regum Scotorum, The Brevis Cronica, The St Andrews Chronicle.* Latin translations by Susan Edgington. Medieval Chronicles 5. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012, ix + 395 pp., £ 60.00.

In the run-up to the referendum on Scottish independence in 2014, heated rhetoric in favour of independence on the part of SNP representatives and pro-Union arguments on the part of the UK government have intensified over the last few years. Viewed in this political context, the publication of *Short Scottish Prose Chronicles*, an edition of seven fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century chronicles of Scottish and English history in Scots, Latin and French, serves as a timely reminder of the historical backdrop of the longstanding Scottish claim for independence.

The seven short chronicles in this volume, which continue an older historiographical tradition in a popularised form, address the topic of Scotland's relation to both its traditional ally France and its archenemy England. They are aimed at a wider audience not literate in Latin and who did not have the time to read the long and digressive chronicles by John of Fordun, Walter Bower, or Hector Boece.

The edition of the French *Vraie Cronique d'Escoce* is based on all four extant manuscripts and is accompanied by an English translation. *The Scottis Originale* is printed for the first time in the three versions from the surviving manuscripts, Dalhousie (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, Dalhousie Muniments, GD 45/31/1–II), Royal (London, British Library, Royal 17.D.xx) and Asloan (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, 16500). *The Chronicle of the Scots* is only extant in one manuscript, BL Royal 17.D.xx, where it follows the *Scottis Originale*. *The Ynglis Chronicle*, too, can only be found in one manuscript, MS Asloan, which also contains a version of the *Scottis Originale* and of the *Brevis Cronica*. A version of the *Nomina Omnium Regum Scotorum* is surmised to have been the source of the two versions of the *Brevis Cronica* written in Scots; therefore, the three texts are presented together. *The St Andrews Chronicle* is a short fragment in Scots, summarising early parts of Hector Boece's *Scotorum Historia*. It is published for the first time in this volume.

The *Scottis Originale*, the *Ynglis Chronicle*, the Latin *Nomina Omnium Regum Scotorum* and the *Brevis Cronica* were intended as propaganda against the English. *La Vraie Cronique*, a briefing note on Scottish history for French diplo-

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mats, does not share this hostile tone towards England. The tone of the *Chronicle of the Scots* is more moderate than that of the other Scots chronicles and the *St Andrews Chronicle* is the most factual account.

The seven chronicles are preceded by an extensive introduction (1–79), which includes an in-depth discussion of each chronicle (27–72) and a detailed description of the manuscripts in which the short chronicles in this volume survive (73–79). This is followed by a short outline of the editorial methods applied in this edition (79). At the beginning of each chronicle, the editors provide a photograph of the first folio of each manuscript. The individual texts are complemented by explanatory notes (237–336) and textual notes (337–340). The bibliography is followed by a glossary of Scots words and an index of persons, places and important events.

The introductory chapter to the seven chronicles is divided into several sections providing information of varying detail. This is one of the strengths of this book. It caters for a wide readership, whose background knowledge and interest in the subject matter may vary considerably. More knowledgeable readers may easily skip certain sections, whereas those who wish to delve into the minutiae of Scottish historiography can do so with the help of the various footnotes in the introduction and the explanatory notes to the texts. In combination with the specific information given on each chronicle, these allow the reader to read individual chronicles without having to consult the whole introduction.

The section dedicated to the “Scots Nation and Nationalism” (2–6) argues that the Scottish sense of national identity developed differently from other nations. There was a general belief, promoted in the chronicles, that Scotland, which was claimed to be nearly 2000 years old, had never been conquered. The English threat to Scotland’s independence furthered national feelings and also gave momentum to the writing of history in Scotland. The section on “Historical Writing in Scotland” (6–19) expands on the topic of Scottish historiography by giving a critical account of its development in response to the English tradition. Geoffrey of Monmouth’s popular *Historia Regum Britanniae* gave the English, who considered themselves successors to the Britons, reason to believe that they were descended from the Trojans. Scottish scholars saw the need to respond to the English claims to their crown with an origin legend that proved superior to the English lineage, tracing its roots to Egypt and ancient Greece. Unlike England, which had been conquered many times, Scottish chronicles boasted an uninterrupted line of kings going back to the Egyptian princess Scota and her Greek husband Gathelos. Sources emphasising Scotland’s distinguished ancestry date back to the late thirteenth century. However, according to the editors, it was later chroniclers who popularised Scotland’s legendary history. John of Fordun’s late fourteenth-century *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* estab-

lished an order of events in Scottish history from Gathelos and Scota, who left Egypt in 1500 BC, via their descendants in Ireland and then Dàl Riata in Scotland, down to Fergus, son of Ferchard, and Fergus, son of Erc. A number of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century chronicles followed in Fordun's footsteps, e.g. Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon*, Andrew of Wyntoun's *The Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland* as well as Hector Boece's influential early sixteenth-century *Scotorum Historia* and its Scottish translations. The "weighty and scholarly histories" (1) were, however, reserved for an educated readership. The short chronicles edited in this volume, while similarly intending to instil a sense of national identity, were written for a wider audience.

The present edition of the *Vraie Cronicque d'Escoce* is based on the same manuscript as Robert Anstruther's edition from 1847, Brussels, Bibliothèque royale, 9469–70. Although the editors explain that capitalisation, punctuation and word division have been modernised, a comparison of the two editions with the first manuscript page (folio 64r) shows that the present edition represents the spelling in the manuscript text more closely. The short genealogy of Scottish kings covers the history of Scotland from Gathelos to King James III. According to the editors, it serves as "a vehicle for a politicized history" (28). The chronicler focused on the English claims to the Scottish throne and vice versa, as well as the alliances between France and Scotland. The *Vraie Cronicque* often remains reluctant to take a pro-Scottish stance when it comes to historical facts and events that could back up the Scottish cause for independence. However, the Scots are clearly presented as indebted to French assistance in their struggle against England. The editors explain that the *Vraie Cronicque* must have served as a briefing note for diplomats, a tool that allowed them to use "sensitive issues in Anglo-Scottish history" (33) against the English in Anglo-French negotiations. One intriguing linguistic aspect of the *Vraie Cronicque*, which was written in France, possibly with the help of Scots residing there, is the phonetic rendering of Scottish names, such as *Macolin* for Malcolm and *Northombelland* for Northumberland.

The *Scottis Originale* is extant in three versions, MSS Dalhousie, Royal and Asloan, all of which are printed on the same page in this edition. This mode of presentation allows the reader to compare both the content and the language of the three versions. The chronicle is highly selective in presenting only parts of Scottish history, with the main focus being on the uninterrupted line of succession of Scottish kings. The editors are of the opinion that the *Scottis Originale* "reads less like history than like political polemic" (36).

*The Chronicle of the Scots* is a series of short annals. According to the editors, it is the least biased of all the Scottish chronicles in this volume and its tone is restrained. The dating of events in this chronicle testifies to its more moderate stance. For instance, it places the origin of the Scots after the foun-

dation of Rome, which amounts to admitting that the Scottish civilisation is younger than England, which claims Trojan ancestry. Its biggest asset is its particularly accurate record of events in the fifteenth century.

The *Ynglis Chronicle*, extant in the Asloan manuscript, focuses on English rather than Scottish history. It recounts important events in the history of England from Harold Godwinson to Henry VI. The chronicler generally presents all the English kings in a negative light. He adduces the legend of Queen Albine and her thirty sisters, who are said to have had children with devils inhabiting England before them. Although the English used this story in their favour, the *Ynglis* chronicler turns it against them by claiming that they are descended from the devil.

The Latin king list *Nomina Omnium Regum Scotorum* and the two versions of the *Brevis Cronica*, extant in the Advocates manuscript and the Asloan manuscript, tell very similar stories. The Asloan version is older, whereas the Advocates version, which breaks off in 1390 at the end of Robert II's reign, has been supplemented with material from Bellenden's Scots translation of Boece's *Scotorum Historia*. The editors of this volume presume that the two Scottish chronicles were either based on an abridged version of the *Nomina* or that the translator had deliberately omitted certain passages. The *Nomina* is more critical of the shortcomings of the Scots than the two Scottish chronicle versions, the "jingoistic" tone (64) of which conveys a more pronounced sense of nationalism. The presentation of the three texts on facing pages invites the reader to draw comparisons between the versions. The Advocates version has been published in David Laing's edition of Wyntoun's *The Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland* (1872–1879). The new edition seems to represent the manuscript more faithfully than Laing's text, which tends to normalise the spelling and to prefer one variant form, e. g. *Ireland* instead of *Ireland* and *Irland*.

The *St Andrews Chronicle* survives as a damaged 281-line fragment. It summarises early parts of Hector Boece's *Scotorum Historia*. The chronicle is described as a "radical [...] reduction" (68) of Boece's *Historia*, which only retained what was deemed memorable. It was probably intended for readers who did not understand Latin and did not have time to read lengthy accounts. The *St Andrews Chronicle* follows Andrew Wyntoun's widely circulated *The Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland* in the St Andrews manuscript, St Andrews University, DA 775. A6 W9. The editors surmise that it may have been added to the manuscript to supplement it with information that was missing from Wyntoun's chronicle.

Overall, *Short Scottish Prose Chronicles* is an excellent resource, which can be used for various purposes. It affords insight into the emergence of the Scots' sense of a nation, both through the edited chronicles and the comprehensive information given on their historical and cultural background, and is therefore a worthy read for historians. Moreover, it is of value to readers with an interest

in the historical development of the Scots language. The texts in this volume could be used as teaching material in a class on the history of Scots, since the presentation of different versions side by side in this volume affords easy comparison not only of content but also of linguistic variant forms. However, the Scots texts may be quite difficult to understand for readers with little experience. It is possible to look up the Scots word forms in the glossary, where they are listed with relevant grammatical information. It would have been better if the editors had also provided base forms, such as the infinitives of verbs, which can be difficult to infer without specific linguistic background knowledge. Generally, variant spellings are cross-referenced to guide the reader towards the correct entry. It is, however, not always straightforward to find the relevant entry for a word form. *Witellis*, for instance, is the third variant form of *wictall* 'victuals', which is not easy to spot for a reader with little practice. Based on my own teaching experience, I think that less experienced readers would benefit greatly from a short introduction to the characteristics of Older Scots, which would have turned this volume into an even more valuable resource.

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