Two Kinds of War?
Brutality and Atrocity in Later Medieval Scotland

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Introduction: Approaches to Brutality in Anglo-Scottish Conflict

Later medieval Scotland was profoundly shaped by war. Following the invasion and conquest of the kingdom by Edward I, king of England, in 1296 there was swift rebellion; Anglo-Scottish warfare continued for centuries thereafter. The most intensive conflict was in two periods usually labelled as the first (1296-1328) and second (1332-1357) wars of independence. There were, though, frequent and sometimes lengthy recurrences of Anglo-Scottish hostilities later in the fourteenth century, at intervals in the fifteenth century and with renewed intensity in the sixteenth century.[1] The role played by war in the political development of the later medieval Scottish kingdom is enormous and has received deservedly detailed scholarly attention.[2] These conflicts were also fundamental in shaping the self-perception of the Scots as a warrior people whose identity was located in unwavering commitment to a communal struggle for freedom against external domination.[3]

1 From 1357 I estimate there was open Anglo-Scottish warfare in roughly one in three of the next 150 years.

2 War and politics were absolutely intertwined as the title *The Wars of Scotland* for a general history of this era would suggest: BROWN, 2004.

3 See, for instance, COWAN, 2003.

With frequent warfare so firmly at the heart of fundamental historical developments like these it is no surprise that there has been much academic examination of the topic, albeit mostly not until the last couple of decades.[4] Despite such attention many aspects of war, especially within wider cultural and social rather than purely military contexts, remain somewhat neglected. A case in point is the specific subject of the present article, which aims to investigate the level of brutality and atrocity in later medieval Anglo-Scottish conflict, and to suggest appropriate strategies for understanding such manifestations. By far the most detailed engagement with conduct in these wars has been offered by Matthew Strickland.[5] He gives close attention to the period up to 1307, but not beyond. The present article considers evidence from later years and is also written partly as an attempt to engage with some of the approaches and interpretations offered in Strickland's work. Other than this, coverage of military behaviour is much patchier. Iain MacInnes deals with aspects of the topic for the second wars of independence period; and the present author touches on some themes in various articles.[6] There is good coverage of specific aspects of martial behaviour, such as treatment of prisoners and ransoms.[7] Chivalry, of course, has been covered in a Scottish context, although overwhelmingly in terms of its political importance and its presentation in the late fourteenth-century romance by John Barbour, *The Bruce*, rather than in how a chivalric ethos might have influenced military practice in reality.[8] Impacts of war have been widely studied, but the conduct of warriors and soldiers, although these themes may emerge implicitly, are rarely the focus of attention.[9]

4 The welcome arrival of the *Military History of Scotland* came only in 2012 (SPIERS et al., 2012). See also: DUNCAN, 1992; MCNAMEE, 1997; MACDONALD, 2000; CORNELL, 2009; KING/SIMPKIN, 2012.

5 STRICKLAND, 2000, 2008a.

6 MACINNES, 2008; MACDONALD, 2012a, pp. 167f.; MACDONALD, 2013b, pp. 332f..

7 KING, 2002. See also the consideration of military ethics in: KING, 2008.

8 Engagements with Scottish chivalry and/or the works of Barbour include: KLIMAN, 1973; CAMERON, 1998; STEVENSON, 2006; FORAN, 2010; BOARDMAN/FORAN, 2015.

9 Studies discussing the impacts of war on particular regions and groups include: SCAMMELL, 1958; BARROW, 1962, 1992; NEVILLE, 1993.

Despite a lack of detailed scholarly attention to the conduct of war there is still an impression in mainstream Scottish historiography that, in the 1296-1328 period at any rate, war was indeed marked by particular brutality.[10] This is because there is broad acceptance that the Scots pursued guerrilla war in this period, a mode of combat operation taken by its nature to entail a pronounced level of viciousness. One of the main intentions of this paper is to offer a critique of the use of guerrilla war as a concept in the extant historiography in relation to the themes of atrocity and brutality. The widely accepted story goes like this. The Scots started off fighting a conventional war in 1296 adhering to accepted standards of aristocratic-led martial conduct common in western Christendom, with disastrous results. They offered honourable, open battle to Edward I's powerful host at Dunbar and were routed. Resistance was broken, and the conquest of Scotland followed swiftly.[11] Then, first under William Wallace from 1297 and later Robert I from 1307, the Scots adopted guerrilla war – a form of combat alien to the knightly forces of their English enemies that ultimately brought military success and hard-won independence to the Scots. It is an image of there being a binary divide in the types of war practised in the later middle ages, a clear demarcation between 'accepted conventions' and 'guerrilla tactics'.[12] The binary paradigm is most starkly represented in Geoffrey Barrow's hugely influential *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, where chapter 5 is entitled 'Two Kinds of War', and in which the alleged transition from one to the other is described.[13]

A second concept which has been deployed to explore levels of barbarousness in Anglo-Scottish conflict is also examined here. This draws on the typologies discussed in *Transcultural Wars*, edited by Hans-Henning Kortüm.[14] The scheme laid out there posits an initial divide between 'intracultural' and 'transcultural'. Intracultural war is

10 This being so my focus will mainly be on this period, although there is a perception that long afterwards Anglo-Scottish warfare was still more brutal than that practised in other zones: GRUMMITT, 2011, p. 194.

11 PRESTWICH, 1997, pp. 470-4; BARROW, 2005, pp. 91-9.

12 CAMERON, 1998, p. 15. See also: ALLMAND, 2000, p. 21; MCNAMEE, 2006, pp. 127f., 288. There is a fuller discussion of Guerrilla warfare in MACDONALD, 2016.

13 BARROW, 2005, ch. 5.

14 KORTÜM, 2006.

fought within a culture, in which the clash occurs between societies sharing fundamental values and outlook and in which ethics and conventions guiding military activity are shared by the combatants. In transcultural conflict there is no such agreement and the differences tend towards enhanced levels of atrocity. Transcultural conflict has in turn been split into two categories,[15] both of which have been applied to Anglo-Scottish warfare. The sub-divisions are 'intercultural' wars, which feature a clash between fundamentally different ethnic and cultural groups with divergent understandings of accepted martial behaviour, and 'subcultural' wars. This last categorisation is taken to occur where there are many shared cultural factors (a shared 'big culture') between enemies at war, but there are crucial divergences that lead to a high level of intensity as the combatants fight for ownership of the larger culture which they share. A suggested exemplification is conflict between heretics and doctrinally conventional Catholics, for instance as seen in the thirteenth-century Albigensian Crusades.[16] There were numerous cultural similarities between the combatants but the differences were of such importance that the scale of violence in the conflict was very extreme.

There have been attempts to apply the intercultural typology to Anglo-Scottish conflict. This has overlapping aspects with the paradigm of 'two types of war' but is not precisely identical. It is widely accepted that from the eleventh century military encounters between the English and their Welsh and Irish neighbours were of notable brutality. 'Celtic' practice in war was unrestrained by the chivalric conventions which normally moulded post-Conquest English military behaviour. Faced with enemies who could be depicted as both brutal in war and barbarous by nature the English in turn abandoned the normal constraints in their military activity and engaged in a heightened level of atrocity.[17] It has been recognised that a similar intensification was one part of warfare between England and Scotland at the same time: the

15 IBID., pp. 23-6; MORILLO, 2006, pp. 29f. Confusingly, the terms 'transcultural' and 'intercultural' are also used in the volume as oppositional terms rather than one being a sub-category of the other as in Kortüm's scheme (STRICKLAND, 2006).

16 MORILLO, 2006, pp. 36-41.

17 GILLINGHAM, 1992a, 1992b; STRICKLAND, 2000, pp. 49, 52f.; STRICKLAND, 2008b, pp. 306-10.

armed forces of Scottish kings drew heavily on manpower from a Gaelic linguistic and cultural background, although it has been recognised that much of the aristocratic military leadership was aligned perfectly well with an Anglo-Norman cultural milieu.[18] For the wars from 1296 it has similarly been suggested that an intensifying factor lay in the Gaelic ethnicity and martial culture of some of the Scottish forces and English reactions to these circumstances.[19] While this 'Celtic'/ Anglo-Norman opposition is how the intercultural approach to war has been applied in an Anglo-Scottish context the subcultural categorisation actually seems more promising as an approach to explaining levels of brutality, so it will also be given consideration here.

In the attempt to scrutinize brutality in Anglo-Scottish conflict in the light of the approaches mentioned above three categories of behaviour in war are examined. These are extreme behaviour towards non-combatants, towards combatants, and deployment of violence with symbolic intent. By reference to these themes the question of whether Scotland was an especially brutal war zone will be addressed. The two major models already outlined (a binary divide in war; and the transcultural typologies) will also be discussed to seek to assess how useful these approaches are in practice.

Non-Combatants

It is very difficult to assess whether especially brutal treatment was inflicted on non-combatants in specific war-zones at particular times. This is because medieval warfare by its intrinsic nature was targeted at ordinary communities, and devastating impacts on civilians was the normal currency of war, as has been demonstrated abundantly in many scholarly investigations.[20] The typical mode of war was to raid enemy

18 For discussion of the 'markedly hybrid' Scottish forces in the twelfth century see STRICKLAND, 1992, pp. 221-5.

19 STRICKLAND, 2000, pp. 39-55.

20 A considered discussion of the wide acceptance of doleful impacts of war on non-combatants is in DE MARCO, 2000, pp. 29-35. For the brutal nature of medieval warfare more broadly see: WRIGHT, 1998; ALLMAND, 1999; ROGERS, 2002. For the tricky issue of defining non-combatants see STRICKLAND, 2006, pp. 109-17.

territory with a view to damaging economic capacity and undermining the morale of the targeted communities. This might have the intention of forcing a ruler whose territories were attacked to offer battle, or it might be intended to terrorize non-combatants into changing allegiance, if unprotected by their overlord.[21] Both of these goals were regularly at play in the waging of Anglo-Scottish war. Destruction of the fabric of societies was the intention of warfare, not a by-product. The infliction of suffering on ordinary people was normal and accepted and we must embrace this before even beginning to investigate the extremes of atrocity and brutality that are the subject of this article.

To identify what was regarded as extreme the best place to start is with contemporary chronicle accounts, specifically the allegations raised against enemies forces. As is often stated, chroniclers tended not to have military experience, and there are limits to how far we can suppose their vision of unacceptable behaviour in war accords with the ethics of combatants.[22] Nevertheless, soldiers did also write chronicles; and historical writing was increasingly aimed at secular audiences and must be accepted as reflecting wider than purely clerical opinion.[23] The consistency of the communal evidence of chronicle writing is strongly suggestive of firm and widely held attitudes towards what was regarded as extreme behaviour in war. It was thought despicable to kill certain categories of people: children, especially infants; women, notably those who were virgins, pregnant or nursing, or elderly; and clerics. Sexual molestation of women was condemned, with violation of virgins seen as especially reprehensible. Spoliation of churches, and church property, was also widely condemned. Finally, the infliction of deliberate or ostentatious cruelty, not just towards the groups already mentioned, might attract the opprobrium of chroniclers.[24]

If these categorisations form a basic guide to what was regarded as extreme behaviour in relation to non-combatants in war, the chroniclers

21 The latter has been covered in a Scottish context in MACINNES, 2007.
22 GIVEN-WILSON, 2004, pp. 99-111.
23 LE BEL, 2011; GRAY, 2005; TAYLOR, 2009.
24 Other categories of evidence are tracts discussing military ethics and regulatory ordinances for armies. They suggest similar taboos in relation to women, clerics and ecclesiastical property: BOUVET, 1949; CURRY, 2011. It has recently been argued that such stipulations had very limited practical effect: COX, 2013. See also, in general: KEEN, 1965.

remain frustratingly poor guides as to when these taboos were actually broken on a significant scale. For the very reason that chroniclers convince us that they demarcate what are regarded as outrages – their consistent listings of the same categories of transgression in war – there is a strongly formulaic feel to chronicle reportage of military action. All chroniclers, on all sides, bemoan the same sorts of abuses among soldiers – ravaging of virgins, massacres of women and children and so on, so that it becomes very hard to take these as real descriptions rather than renderings of a grizzly template aimed at disparaging an enemy.

We sometimes get more circumstantial details. But that does not necessarily make war descriptions any easier to deal with. The St Albans chronicler Thomas Walsingham writes with great specificity about a Scottish raid on northern England in 1379, during which the invaders, 'enemies of the human race', decapitated local men and played football with the severed heads.[25] Is this garish tale true? The chronicler is highly prejudiced towards the Scots and was certainly prone to embellishment and fabrication when it suited his purposes. On the other hand, Walsingham was a strictly contemporary writer, had excellent sources of information, and was often accurate regarding Anglo-Scottish border affairs.[26] Maybe the Scots did kick severed heads around in 1379; but even if so it is hard to generalise about conduct in war from such cases.

A further concrete example from the same era is instructive. Another contemporary chronicler with good sources of information on northern English affairs, Henry Knighton, provides a different specific example of a Scottish atrocity enacted against non-combatants. In 1389, he records, the Scots invaded, killing and burning. They assailed members of society usually mentioned in such accounts: nursing infants, women pregnant and in childbirth, and helpless old men. The additional circumstantial detail is that the attackers are stated to have shut two hundred of their victims in their houses, fastened the doors and set the dwellings on fire.[27] What to make of this? We must certainly be cautious: the very wording used by Knighton echoes an atrocity allegation from almost one hundred years before. In 1296 the Anglo-

25 WALSINGHAM, 2003, pp. 306f.
26 GOODMAN, 1992, pp. 5f.
27 KNIGHTON, 1995, pp. 526f.

Scottish war commenced with a Scottish raid into northern England. This was described in graphic terms in the *Lanercost Chronicle*, the product of a local priory of Augustinian Canons, and then reproduced in English royal propaganda, reaching its final form in a letter to Pope Boniface VIII in 1301. The Scots, in their attack, are depicted enacting great devastation, including burning of churches. More specifically, they are described as:

> "slaying children in the cradle and women lying in childbed with brutal and inhuman savagery and, terrible as it is to hear, vilely cutting off the breasts of women. Small school-children of tender years learning their first letters and grammar, they burned, in the school where they were, to the number of about two hundred, by blocking the doors of the school and setting it on fire."[28]

Clearly Knighton has picked up on the earlier report, changing some detail but sticking with the unlikely two hundred fatalities. This does not mean that we need absolutely to reject the account given by the later chronicler. People may well have been burned alive in 1389, and Knighton's adaptation of previous propaganda does not rule this out. But the plagiarism of an earlier account adapted to a new setting does force us to question whether this sort of specific detail is ultimately very helpful in identifying patterns of particular brutality towards non-combatants.

The alleged atrocities of 1296, in particular, also raise immediate questions about the utility of the two models mentioned at the beginning of this article. If there was particular Scottish savagery in this year's invasion it certainly cannot be placed in a straightforwardly intercultural context. There will have been Gaelic-speaking forces among the invading Scots, but English-speakers will have outnumbered them, given the linguistic balance in southern Scotland.[29] The noble leaders, meanwhile, were culturally similar to their English counterparts – there was clearly no great ethnic or cultural divide between the

28 STONES, 1970, p. 107.

29 Geoffrey Barrow long since dispelled the notion that 'English' Scots were uncommitted to the independence struggle: BARROW, 1976.

Scottish and English aristocracies.[30] Clearly, also, the usefulness of a binary divide between conventional, chivalric war and a nastier guerrilla alternative is also brought under immediate question. The 1296 Scottish raid is described as featuring atrocities rendered in as lurid a fashion as anything that would follow – yet by the traditional conception in the historiography the Scots at this stage were fighting conventional war, having not yet learned that a guerrilla strategy would be essential for success against the might of England. Leaving the alleged extremes to one side, there was nothing remotely unusual or unchivalric about burning and devastating the lands of one's enemies, and this is exactly what the Sots were doing in 1296.

One period when we might imagine particularly brutal policies towards non-combatants were pursued is between 1307 and 1314. In these years Robert I, having seized the throne, was seeking to establish his authority as an independent king of Scots in the face of English garrisons and domestic Scottish opponents. The means of enforcing his rule on recalcitrant communities was by terrorising them into changing allegiance. This was no doubt a vicious process, although specific evidence of its operation is normally lacking. One well known moment in the process of marking out the king's regional authority, taken to be of particular brutality, was the 'Herschip', or harrying, of Buchan, a district in northern Scotland, in 1308.[31] We actually have very little concrete detail, the notoriety of this episode resting instead on a brief account in Barbour's *Bruce*. Whatever one makes of the level of atrocity inflicted in this process, it again does not fit well with the models at issue. The systematic devastation of Buchan was not guerrilla activity, but represented, as we have seen, a widely practised and thus 'conventional' form of conflict. Nor are there clear-cut ethnic or linguistic fault lines that might allow a neat intercultural model to be applied: in 1308 Robert I's forces were no doubt largely Gaelic-speaking in his operations in northern Scotland – but the people of Buchan they preyed on were mainly Gaelic speakers as well.[32]

30 STRINGER, 1995, pp. 87f.

31 BARBOUR, 1997, pp. 332-5.

32 HORSBURGH, 1994, pp. 15f. It is argued here that the Herschip of Buchan itself was an important engine of linguistic change in the region, encouraging the move from Gaelic to English. That seems questionable, though, given that the ejected magnate family (the Comyns) was not

That there was no simple divide in these years between guerrilla and conventional war can perhaps be shown best in another part of Scotland, the south. Up to 1314 there were many strongholds in southern Scotland in English hands, notably Stirling, Roxburgh, Edinburgh and Berwick, as well as many Scottish communities continuing to withhold their allegiance from Robert I. The king's forces assailed recalcitrant Scots in these areas until they changed allegiance, just as in northern Scotland. And they also fought against English forces in a manner that might fit with depictions of guerrilla warfare as usually understood: swift movements, avoidance of major battles, surprise attacks. But at precisely the same time English forces known as 'schavaldours' were coming to prominence.[33] These were garrison soldiers, irregularly paid and provisioned, who engaged in essentially unregulated military activity. They lived off the communities, both in northern England and Scotland, which surrounded their strongholds. This was criminality, banditry, irregular warfare; and it was practiced by forces notionally under the control of the English crown. There is, in this theatre of conflict, emphatically no divide between a supposed Scottish guerrilla war and a conventional form of military behaviour pursued by their English enemies.

From 1311, and especially from 1314, there was regular raiding of northern England as Robert I's position became more secure in Scotland.[34] The rationale of such attacks was often to extort money from the target communities. This was carried out with great success by the Scots and helped provide the financial basis allowing for a generally better resourced military establishment, and more ambitious activities, notably major campaigns in Ireland between 1315 and 1318. This extraction of resources was brutal, no doubt, but its intention was not to kill non-combatants, nor to ruin completely economic productivity.[35] As such, it is hard to see that in these particular episodes of Anglo-Scottish conflict there was unusually severe atrocity directed at non-combatants. There was great suffering of non-combatants in these wars.

Gaelic-speaking and that many of the lesser aristocratic kindreds were not displaced: YOUNG, 1993, pp. 193, 199.

33 KING, 2003.

34 MCNAMEE, 1997, pp. 72-115.

35 A punitive, rather than extractive, intention did mark Scottish raiding from 1318, however: DUNCAN, 1992, pp. 147f.

But the periods and places where this was most acute are not explained by the models being considered, and specific circumstances beyond the typologies at issue seem more promising as a strategy of explanation.

Combatants

Atrocities inflicted on combatants will be taken to be the massacre or mistreatment of captives. Such instances can certainly be found in Anglo-Scottish warfare. One famous atrocity occurred after the capture of Douglas Castle in 1308 by one of Robert I's foremost commanders, Sir James Douglas. He beheaded the prisoners taken and threw the bodies into the castle cellar before setting them alight.[36] Less well known, but attested in both English and Scottish sources is the execution by the English king Edward III of prisoners after his victory at the battle of Halidon Hill in 1333.[37] Such events are not, however, attested with frequency. Both sides might threaten the execution of combatants, but shirk from following through with such actions. The English earl of Salisbury, besieging Dunbar Castle in 1338, threatened, if the fortress was not surrendered, to execute the captive earl of Moray, whose sister, Agnes, countess of Dunbar, was leading the defence.[38] In a similar incident later in the same year the Scots sought to enforce the surrender of Edinburgh Castle's English garrison by indicating that a prisoner in their hands, Sir John Stirling, would otherwise be executed.[39] In neither case were the threats carried out.

Such restraint, and the limited evidence of other executions, suggests that conventions of captivity and ransom widespread in war elsewhere in western Christendom were usually observed in Anglo-Scottish conflict as well.[40] There is in fact only one phase of the Anglo-Scottish wars, in 1306-7, when we have evidence of systematic flouting of accepted practices in relation to captured enemies.[41] This is dealt

36 BARBOUR, 1997, pp. 202-11. It should be noted that some doubt has been cast on whether this event actually occurred: CAMERON, 1999, p. 73.
37 NICHOLSON, 1965, p. 138.
38 STEVENSON, 1839, pp. 296f.
39 CORNELL, 2008, pp. 114f.
40 KING, 2002.
41 BARROW, 2005, pp. 209f.; STRICKLAND, 2008a.

with in more detail below, but the bald circumstance in itself again challenges both of our models: that Anglo-Scottish war can be fitted into a simple pattern of ethnically-based intercultural conflict; and that there was a clash of clearly distinct types of war, guerrilla and conventional, with attendant erosion of mitigating conventions. Put simply, the contention that the Anglo-Scottish war-zone was a particularly vicious one has not actually been established by any detailed survey of evidence.

A lack of regular massacres of combatants in Anglo-Scottish war might seem especially surprising given another feature that offers prospects for lower levels of restraint in such conflict: the Scots' forces were from a wider social spread in society than their English enemies. This is clearly accepted as being true by most authorities, but has received little detailed academic scrutiny, referred to, if at all, usually in passing.[42] It was essential that the Scots drew on a broad spectrum of society to oppose the far larger and more wealthy kingdom of England that they faced in war from 1296. Soldiers were frequently unpaid, allowing a wide spread of the peasantry to be mustered in arms in performance of obligatory military service. Barbour's writing, for instance, makes the peasant basis of Scottish armed forces in the reign of Robert I clear and the same pattern persisted throughout the later middle ages, evident for instance in the *mediocres* of the region capturing Jedburgh Castle from its English garrison on their own initiative in 1409.[43]

Given the truism that the lower orders were not included in chivalric convention, and so not protected by it, alongside the related idea that they were more likely to massacre aristocratic opponents in response, the paucity of evidence of atrocities enacted on captured enemies in Anglo-Scottish warfare seems strange. The cross-social element of conflict would seem to invite, among our typologies, a categorisation of subcultural struggle, with attendant expectation of heightened levels of

42 It is argued that the social make-up of Scottish forces had significant effects on how the Scots represented themselves in war in MACDONALD, 2013b, pp. 328-32. Caldwell deals with the social class issue in a military context: CALDWELL, 2012, pp. 286-8. For the social spread of Scots involved in war see also: DUNCAN, 1992, pp. 138-46; MACDONALD, 2012b, pp. 276f.

43 BARBOUR, 1997, pp. 706-9; BOWER. 1987, p. 72.

brutality.[44] Again, that this expectation is not matched by the evidence raises questions about the usefulness of such typologies: yes, Scottish forces featured a greater proportion of the lower orders than English ones, as well as a deeper penetration down the social scale in recruitment. But in all western war in the Middle Ages there were commoners on the battlefield – it is problematic indeed to try to define the point at which this trait assumes a weight sufficient to dictate our categorisation of the whole conflict.

This is not to deny that the presence in greater numbers of soldiers drawn from the lower orders led to higher mortality in later medieval warfare.[45] The battlefield in particular became a more dangerous place, partly because commoners fought in large units and their spear-bearing ranks or missile troops of necessity killed with limited discrimination. Such developments made aristocrats more liable to be killed, but lower order troops were clearly even more vulnerable. They were less well protected by armour than their social superiors, and there was less incentive in fiscal terms for enemy combatants to capture them. Commoners died in awful numbers in some of the great Scottish battlefield defeats in this period. There is strong evidence that many thousands of infantry were killed in the major defeat of the Scots at Dunbar at the outset of the wars with England, in 1296.[46] The last great battle of the Anglo-Scottish wars was at Pinkie Cleuch in 1547, and the story was the same: in the encounter, and especially in the vigorous pursuit of the fleeing footsoldiers, thousands of Scottish commoners were cut down.[47] But the evidence that the lower orders were habitually excluded from mercy when captured (or indeed less likely to show mercy to aristocrats) is not strong, in the Anglo-Scottish setting anyway.

Turing to the phase of war when there is clear evidence of systematic brutality towards captives is illuminating in this context. In

44 That other authorities (such as MORILLO, 2006, pp. 52f.) can see this social opposition as having intercultural rather than subcultural resonances shows how ultimately subjective the various typological categorisations are (in this case, it has been decided that different classes from similar societies do not share the same 'big culture', but why?).

45 ROGERS, 1995, pp. 62f.

46 MACDONALD, 2013a, p. 203; CALDWELL, 2012, p. 270.

47 CALDWELL, 1991, pp. 85-7.

1306 when Robert I rose up to seize the Scottish throne and make his bid for independence, Edward I of England, who after a decade of labours thought he had finally pacified Scotland, was enraged. From the English king's perspective the crimes Robert I was guilty of could not be forgiven. He embarked on his bid for power by killing his chief domestic political rival, John Comyn of Badenoch, in a church. Thus guilty of sacrilege and murder, by having himself crowned king of Scots Robert was also a usurper and a traitor. There could be no mercy now for this miscreant, whose previous transgressions (in Edward's view) had already been treated with considerable leniency.[48] The prominent male secular figures who fell into English hands as Robert I's rising met with initial failure were invariably executed. This was a transgression of normal ethical boundaries in the treatment of captives, starkly shown by the execution even of a cleric, Hugh the Chaplain, taken at the battle of Methven in 1306.[49] Aristocratic women were not killed, but might be imprisoned in ostentatiously punitive fashion.[50] But Edward I's quarrel was with those who possessed political agency; there was no particular animus against ordinary soldiers, merely serving in war at the behest of their social betters. Orders were issued by the English crown that, despite the febrile atmosphere of rage and revenge, ordinary commons should have their lives spared.[51]

The circumstances of the years 1306-7 were unusual, but the fact of lower order survival after capture was not. One example occurred at the battle of Culblean in 1335. In this encounter supporters of David II (Robert I's son) defeated David of Strathbogie, earl of Atholl, a key supporter of the rival, and English-backed, claimant to the Scottish crown, Edward Balliol. Strathbogie was killed in battle, but his captured soldiers were allowed to go free.[52] Another case is the great Scottish battlefield defeat at Neville's Cross, near Durham, in 1346. One of the deponents in a legal case that took place in York in 1364 was a low status Scot (a skinner from Peebles) who had been captured in the battle. Despite being part of a force that had plundered its way through a swathe of northern England, he had clearly been spared after capture;

48 STRICKLAND, 2008a.
49 LUARD, 1890, pp. 132f.
50 See below, p. 211.
51 BAIN, 1884, no. 1755; PALGRAVE, 1837, pp. 361-3; BLACK, 1898, p. 509.
52 BOWER, 1996, pp. 116f.

and his fate had been sufficiently comfortable for him to settle among his erstwhile enemies.[53] These examples are anecdotal, but they could be added to. They quite clearly show, in any case, that commoners might be shown mercy in war, contrary to the frequent assumption that they were excluded from such chivalric niceties. The topic requires more work, but the completeness of the exclusion of the lower orders from martial codes has surely been overstated.[54] To this extent, chivalry was for warriors, and not just aristocratic ones.

Symbolic Violence

One of the most fruitful contexts in which to examine brutality and atrocity in Anglo-Scottish warfare is where there is a symbolic quality to actions in which a message, often in visual form, is presented to a viewing 'audience'. Going to the trouble of such symbolic communication is suggestive of a high level of engagement by the perpetrators of violence: they have a statement to make and want it to be seen. Edward I's actions in 1306-7 are collectively a good case in point. The English king's furious response to those rising against him, whom he felt guilty of the grossest crimes and betrayals, was to enact highly visual torments on those he regarded as traitors.[55] Appeals for mercy for the earl of Atholl, in recognition of his kinship to Edward I were met with a further visual statement: his elevated status, a status that he had disgraced, was recognised to the extent that he was hanged on a gallows higher than other miscreants dealt with at the same time.[56] Much notice has been taken of Edward's treatment of two captured Scottish noblewomen, Mary Bruce, Robert I's sister, and Isabella, countess of Buchan, the latter having assisted at his inauguration. They were imprisoned in cages in public view at Roxburgh and Berwick respectively.[57] The English king did not feel able to execute aristocratic

53 OWEN, 1978, pp. 332, 343f. Another deponent was an English cook who had been held captive by the Scots in seemingly benign conditions.
54 KEEN, 1984; ABELS, 2008.
55 STRICKLAND, 2008a.
56 BARROW, 2005, p. 209.
57 NEVILLE, 1993, pp. 124-6; SEABOURNE, 2011, pp. 74-9.

females, but in stark visual display their disgrace was made clear nonetheless.

The attempt to view Edward I's brutality within an intercultural typology cannot succeed, at least not in terms of seeing heightened ethnic hostilities pitting Gaelic Scots against English.[58] Edward I's fury was not that Robert I and his fellow rebels were culturally or ethnically different. It is the opposite: he was enraged that Robert and others had broken their faith to him as true knights. Their behaviour was unpardonable precisely because people like the earl of Atholl (and even more Sir Simon Fraser, who had been a household knight) lived in a shared cultural world with Edward I.[59] Grotesque humiliation at best, or the full horrors of exemplary execution, was the lot of such people. Edward I in 1306-7 exhibited a strongly-felt response to particular intensifying circumstances located in the precise politics of the time; his behaviour is not easily accounted for in the current typologies on offer to us to aid our understanding of heightened atrocity in war.

Symbolic violence enacted by the Scots is equally telling. One of the early acts in the rising of William Wallace in 1297 was his killing of the English sheriff of Lanark, William Heselrig. There is evidence that he was dispatched with furious violence, literally hacked to pieces.[60] This savagery was expressive of deep hatred, made visible by the manner of killing. Something similar was enacted on the remains of Hugh Cressingham, Edward I's treasurer in occupied Scotland, killed at the battle of Stirling Bridge later in the same year. The hated representative of Edward I's rule in Scotland, he was flayed and his skin put to disparaging use by the Scots, either by being cut into tokens and circulated among the Scottish host as macabre momentos of victory, or by being made into a sword-belt for Wallace himself (both could have happened, of course).[61] Finally, a hated enemy of the Scots, Elias the Clerk, was displayed in death with his severed head protruding

58 Prestwich sees the incidents of 1306-7 as amenable to an intercultural reading: PRESTWICH, 2006, p. 48.

59 Fraser was subjected to mockery and humiliation before his execution: LUARD, 1890, pp. 319f.; STRICKLAND, 2008a, pp. 97, 108f.

60 DUNCAN, 2007, pp. 58f.

61 GUISBOROUGH, 1957, p. 303; STEVENSON, 1839, p. 190.

from his anus in 1317, a grizzly statement of disparagement and contempt originating with Sir James Douglas.[62]

There was a highly charged backdrop to all of these incidents in the intensive conflict being waged at the time, a conflict which was of an existential nature in regard to the continuance of an autonomous Scottish kingdom. But each of these cases suggests something beyond this. Personal animus of one kind or another was the intensifying factor leading to these prominent displays of brutality. In the case of Heselrig there is a later tradition stating that he murdered Wallace's lover and that the latter acted in a spirit of revenge.[63] Absence of sources means that we cannot be sure, but the suggestion of a particular hostility being acted out against Heselrig is persuasive. Cressingham's rapacity and viciousness, meanwhile, is well attested in a variety of sources, including English authorities.[64] It is not surprising that the Scots would want to make an emphatic statement of revenge on their chief oppressor. We do not know what particular intensifying factors caused the hatred which Sir James Douglas expressed for Elias the Clerk in the display of his corpse. In the circumstances of continuous frontier war there were abundant prospects for the formation of deep enmities. Elias was one of the schavaldours, the English garrison forces making a living in the troubled badlands of the early fourteenth-century Anglo-Scottish border. He had plenty of chance to come to blows with, and for grievances to form in relation to, the most unflinching of the border warriors among the Scots, Sir James Douglas.

A final example of visual and symbolic brutality again relates to Douglas. There is good evidence from different source witnesses that at least some captured English archers in the early fourteenth century were subjected to hand amputations before being released.[65] Again, this does not fit comfortably with the typologies under discussion. The atrocity cannot be seen as being caused by an intercultural clash featuring divergent elements of language or ethnicity or mode of fighting. Sir James Douglas was not a savage Gaelic-speaking warlord, but an

62 GALBRAITH, 1928, p. 208. The likely veracity of this story is considered in MACDONALD, 2013b, pp. 332f.
63 HARY, 2003, pp. 114-18.
64 GUISBOROUGH, 1957, pp. 298-303.
65 STEVENSON, 1893, p. 192; KNIGHTON, 1889, p. 460. The mutilations are discussed in MACDONALD, 2013a, p. 199.

English-speaking aristocrat. Similarly, while he was an expert at small-scale warfare which might be defined as 'guerrilla' in nature, this did not require him to operate beyond the bounds of accepted chivalric norms. He was quite explicitly lauded as a flower of chivalry in Scottish sources, but also further afield.[66] Chivalry related to warriors – and war, as they all knew, but modern commentators can seem to forget, was a very nasty business. The context for understanding the hand amputations practiced by Sir James Douglas is a specific one. From the Scottish viewpoint archers were a dangerous aspect of the English military set-up. He thus sought to convey a stark message of the ruthless treatment such soldiers might receive if they dared to operate against the Scots. The mutilated archers returned home; they became walking propaganda illustrating Douglas's point in England. Anglo-Scottish war had raged, without much interruption, for two decades when the amputations were carried out. It was an existential war, in which hostility was based on the desperate nature of the struggle and the intertwined imperatives of increasingly national conflict alongside the quest for personal and familial political power.[67] Particular circumstances produced specific instances of ostentatious, symbolic brutality, instances that are not easily accounted for in the extant typological categorisations.

Conclusion

I suggest a rejection of the typological models mentioned at the start of this paper and the embrace instead of more complex patterns of shifting circumstances to account for brutality and atrocity in Anglo-Scottish war. It is easy, in my estimation, to reject a straightforward binary divide between guerrilla war and conventional war in the Anglo-Scottish sphere, and indeed in medieval conflict more broadly. In warfare in this era most soldiers were not full-time professionals and standing armies had not developed in either England or Scotland. Uniforms were not routinely worn.[68] All armies had common people

66 CAMERON, 2000, pp. 111-15.
67 The latter theme is explored in detail in: BROWN, 1998.
68 JONES, 2010, pp. 57-67.

among their forces – determining regular and irregular troops, a key aspect of a guerrilla war identification, is thus an impossible task. Raiding of enemy territory remained the ubiquitous military strategy of the time, by no means the preserve of notional guerrillas. Small unit operations, trickery and surprise: these, again, were characteristics rooted in conventional military activity.[69]

We can also reject a simple intercultural model, certainly in the way it is usually applied to Scotland. In the wars with England from 1296 the equation of Scotland with other 'Celtic' zones is deeply problematic. Anglo-Scottish war was not fundamentally a clash of alien cultures, one Gaelic and one Anglo-French. There were certainly Gaelic-speakers in Scottish forces.[70] But there were many English-speakers also; and there were many 'Celtic' warriors, Welsh and Irish, among 'English' forces ranged against the Scots. Edward I employed thousands of such troops, often many more than there were Gaels in Scottish forces.[71] Aristocratic leaders on both sides, meanwhile, were culturally of precisely the same stock and the pre-war linkages between a vibrant cross-border society have long since been outlined in detail.[72] There are other problems with seeing Anglo-Scottish war as influenced by an intercultural opposition of Gaelic against English ethnic groups. One plank of the case is the suggestion of continuity between English perceptions of the Scots at war in the twelfth century, who were indeed stigmatised as akin to the allegedly barbarous Welsh and Irish, with the situation in 1296 and beyond.[73] This suggestion of continuity ignores the fact that Scotland had been subject to many Anglicising influences in the intervening period: it had become a very different polity and society on the cusp of the fourteenth century. By 1296 there had been two centuries of acculturation and accommodation between various ethnic groups, including an influential Anglo-French aristocratic elite and long-established, including Gaelic-speaking, populations. In the

69 MACDONALD, 2013b; HARARI, 2007.
70 BOARDMAN, 2012.
71 For Irish forces in Edward I's armies see LYDON, 1954-6, 1961-2a, 1961-2b, 2008. The Welsh infantry contingent of nearly 11,000 men at Falkirk in 1298 was more numerous in itself than all but the greatest of medieval Scottish hosts. PRESTWICH, 1997, p. 479.
72 BARROW, 1966; STRINGER, 1995, pp. 87f.
73 STRICKLAND, 2000, pp. 39-52.

context of war in royal service the evidence is of a wide degree of homogeneity emerging from the ethnic mix.[74] The Scots were indeed castigated in English chronicles for their military outrages after 1296, and sometimes there are suggestive inferences that Gaelic-speakers are to blame.[75] But more commonly there is no sense at all of this angle: the Scots are vilified as national enemies, but not ones that emerge from a notably alien cultural or linguistic background.[76]

A final problematic feature of positing a more brutal, Gaelic way of war which impacted on the wider Anglo-Scottish conflict is the question of whether there was indeed a significantly more ruthless military culture within Gaelic Scotland. There has been a considerable body of recent work exploring attitudes within mainstream Scottish political society to the kingdom's Gaels. Hostility, in various manifestations, was expressed to them, both before and during the later middle ages.[77] Military issues feature in these negative stereotypings: the Gaels are warlike by nature, and they are also lawless, at times expressed in a militarised context. But nowhere in the later medieval characterisations is there the suggestion that they are especially *vicious* in war. There are clear signs of this perception, of barbarian brutality, being linked to Gaelic-speaking Scots in the twelfth century and (decreasingly) the thirteenth, but this motif has much less force and

74 In Barbour's writing (from the 1370s referring to the early fourteenth century) there is a depiction of Gaelic forces functioning harmoniously alongside other Scottish soldiers: BROUN, 2009, pp. 56-8. See also: BOARDMAN, 2012; MACGREGOR, 2012. Barrow depicts a thirteenth-century army in which there are divergent service obligations and legal mechanisms, but this relates to social class and conditions of tenure rather than language and ethnicity: BARROW, 1990.

75 The Scots shown enacting atrocities in the margins of the early fourteenth-century Luttrell Psalter were perhaps intended to be barbaric Gaelic-speakers. Atrocities in William Wallace's 1297 invasion of England were attributed to Gaelic-speaking natives of Galloway. CAMILLE, 1998, pp. 284-91; STRICKLAND, 2000, pp. 45f.; MCNAMEE, 1990.

76 In Laurence Minot's highly anti-Scottish poetry of the mid fourteenth century, for instance, 'wild' (Gaelic-speaking) and 'tame' Scots are equally castigated: MINOT, 1887, p. 3.

77 MACGREGOR, 2009; BROUN, 2009. Broun has shown that a hostile attitude to the Gaels was not first formulated in Scottish historiography in the late fourteenth-century chronicle previously attributed to John of Fordun, as traditionally thought.

explicitness by the time of the wars from 1296. One of the traits singled out for condemnation in the twelfth century, for instance, was the enslavement of captives in war. This practice had died out among Scottish forces by the thirteenth century.[78] The attempt to suggest that a culture of more than normal brutality in war persisted in the Scottish *Gàidhealtachd* right through the medieval period has leaned heavily on the poetry composed for Archibald, earl of Argyll prior to his involvement in war with England in 1513. The poem exhorts him to enact graphic cruelties on the English, including the burning of women and children.[79] Yet this isolated evidence has surely been read too literally as a guide to actual military practice. The genre of Gaelic praise poetry is consciously hyperbolic and bombastic: Argyll is being represented as a great chief because of how terrible he can be in war, but to this reader it seems an almost playfully overblown image rather than a description of real military ethics.[80]

If it is accepted that viewing Anglo-Scottish conflict through the lens of a Gaelic/English intercultural typology is unsuitable, there remains a more suitable angle. This is to deploy a conception based on social class. As we have seen, Scottish forces were drawn from a wider social spectrum than was the case for England. While this has been noted by a number of historians, discussions of the ramifications of this circumstance have been very limited.[81] Hostility based on social class can certainly be seen on both sides: one core depiction of Scottish forces by English witnesses is as uncouth brigands, of low status and manners, and there is a mirroring Scottish motif of lampooning perceived English elitism and bombast.[82] There seems more promise in

78 STRICKLAND, 2012, p. 117.

79 WATSON, 1937, pp. 158-164; STRICKLAND, 2000, p. 49; STRICKLAND, 2006, p. 122; STRICKLAND, 2008b, p. 117.

80 It is worth noting in this context that the *The Vows of the Heron*, a poem concerned with the outbreak of the Hundred Years War, also contains bombastic statements, in this case of the brutality to be visited on French non-combatants (DE MARCO, 2000). The Anglo-French cultural environment of this poem is of course located far from the allegedly rougher world of Gaelic Scotland.

81 See above, note 42.

82 For English accounts of Wallace as of lowly stock, leading a vicious army of brigands see FRASER, 2002, pp. 5-15, 19f.. For Scottish mockery of English social pretensions see MACDONALD, 2013b, pp. 327-32.

seeking to locate intensification of Anglo-Scottish hostilities in social make-up rather than ethnicity. But in any case, our questioning of whether Scottish Gaelic warfare was especially vicious raises the same issue in relation to Anglo-Scottish warfare more broadly. Were the wars from 1296 actually especially brutal? In their impact they undoubtedly were devastating for the communities exposed to regular war.[83] But the evidence is far less persuasive that this was because normal constraints were routinely flouted. There are few studies on this topic, but for the Anglo-Scottish wars after 1328, at any rate, there do not seem to have been engrained patterns of particular brutality.[84]

The prospect of social class operating as a better category for approaching the theme of atrocity than Gaelic-English ethnic hostility suggests a subcultural rather than intercultural typology. Scotland and England shared a larger 'big culture' with many commonalities of society and politics. But they had divergences, as we have seen, in the social make-up of armies and in the national aspirations of the Scots, the legitimacy of which was denied by their enemies. These factors may have led to intensified conflict, and demonization of the enemy, as combatants expressed their deep differences. This does not escape, though, from fundamental problems that seem to bedevil all of the available typologies – intercultural, subcultural and intracultural – questioning their general utility.[85] The categorisations are in this author's opinion too subjective and shifting to provide meaningful, overarching explanatory frameworks for medieval warfare. This is because all of these things could be argued to exist simultaneously, and it is a highly subjective decision to decide which military characteristics should be privileged as the ones that best define and shape the conflict.[86]

83 BARROW, 1992.

84 MACINNES, 2008, pp. 239-46; MACDONALD, 2000; KING, 2002.

85 A different approach, advancing the concept of 'assymetry' as a tool to understand conduct in war is suggested in COX, 2012.

86 For example, one of Kortüm's diagrams (KORTÜM, 2006, p. 26) categorises the Franco-Prussian war as intracultural and the American Civil War as subcultural. Presumably a silently subjective process has allowed combatants who shared a language and nationality (Americans) to be regarded as more alien to each other in conflict than those who did not (Germans and French).

Anglo-Scottish war could be intercultural: it *did* feature troops of different languages and ethnicities clashing. But it could, at precisely the same time, also be subcultural, as essentially similar societies fought a war charged by social class and contested national aspirations. And it could also be intracultural: Anglo-Scottish war could and often was combat within a culture where shared conventions applied and where respect and even friendship might develop.[87] There has been little examination of that side of things in this paper, but one excellent example is the case of Sir Thomas Gray. Captured by the Scots on the border in 1355 he was held captive in Edinburgh Castle. In what must have been a benign enough confinement he was given access to the writing and research materials to enable him to embark on his chronicle, the *Scalacronica*.[88] It is a work not marked by any great animus towards England's regular foes for the last half century, the Scots.[89]

With intracultural, subcultural and intercultural typologies all being visible at the same time I would argue that these categorisations are not very useful in offering general frameworks for understanding Anglo-Scottish war. In my opinion we will have better success with a more common-sense approach, taking account of specific circumstances that might have a moderating or exacerbating effect on the levels and nature of violence. One final example might prove to be useful. At the start of the wars, in 1296, English forces stormed and sacked Berwick, a process in which all the sources agree there was considerable loss of life among non-combatants.[90] Scottish historians have tended to view this as a particularly appalling atrocity.[91] It is, naturally, hard to divine much meaning in this event viewing it from the available standpoint of guerrilla vs conventional war (the Sots are not taken to have started guerrilla war yet), nor an intercultural clash of English vs Gaelic (there were Flemings among the victims at Berwick but it must be doubted if Gaels were). So what accounts for the sack of Berwick? One explanation is that a loss of leadership control led to the ferocity of the attack. That may be the case, or it may have been an exacerbating factor

87 GOODMAN, 2007; KING, 2007.
88 GRAY, 2005, pp. xvii-xviii, xl-xli.
89 KING, 2000.
90 There is a full account in STRICKLAND, 2000, pp. 64-7.
91 BARROW, 2005, pp. 92f.; GRANT, 1998, p. 20.

in the nature of the resulting rampage.[92] But there are ample reasons why Edward I would have wanted to sack Berwick. For one thing, it was quite within his rights to do so: it was widely accepted that a strongpoint taken by storm might be subjected to pillage.[93] The Scots also deserved to be punished: they had invaded Edward's realm, they were defying their rightful overlord, and the people of Berwick had been given and had refused the opportunity to submit. But more than this, there was a perfectly understandable and practical policy reason for the sack of Berwick: a salutary lesson could be given to the Scots about the consequences of resisting the English king. It was a lesson that bore fruit for Edward in the ensuing rapid conquest of the kingdom. Specific circumstances, rather than typological models account for the sack of Berwick. The key factors that explain abnormal atrocity and brutality in Anglo-Scottish war are specific ones: the level of desperation of the struggle at any given time; issues of personality, class, ethnicity and religion; particular policy aims (as at Berwick). All might, and did, profoundly shape the way that war was waged.

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92 STRICKLAND, 2000, pp. 65f.
93 STRICKLAND, 2006, p.113.

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