

Mutual intelligibility of timber trade terminology in the North Sea countries during the time of the 'Scottish Trade'¹

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Introduction

This essay developed as a side-shoot out of an investigation into the possibility that the distinctiveness of the Scots dialect of the North-East of Scotland, often referred to as the Doric, may to some degree be a result of lexical borrowing from Norwegian in particular. Scandinavia is after all the area of Northern Europe closest to Scotland, with Norway having easiest access straight across the North Sea, especially to the North-East. Historically Scotland and Norway have a long record of contact back to the distant times of Viking rule and to the alliances between Scottish and Danish-Norwegian kings (Smout 1963: 153). Then there have been not only royal marriages such as that of James VI and I and Anna of Denmark-Norway, but also emigration of Scots to, and military service by Scots soldiers in, all the Scandinavian countries, all of which Murdoch (2000) describes and documents.

The possible lexical borrowing from Norwegian to Scots in the North-East would have taken place in or after the late Middle Ages. This was long after what is recognised as the main period of Old Norse influence on the Old English Northumbrian dialect from which Scots is descended, and also after the period of immigration from Northern England into Scotland during the Normansisation process in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The borrowing would have occurred as a result of fairly close contact of some sort between North-East Scotland and Norway. In the course of searching for likely scenarios, there was one particular activity that stood out, for which there exists documentation in both Scotland and Norway from the

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second half of the sixteenth century onwards, namely trade, especially in timber. However, this trade was certainly not restricted to the North-East of Scotland but rather included the whole of the eastern Scottish coast, as customs records from the sixteenth century, for example, have shown (Lillehammer 1986: 105). It is therefore unlikely that, as far as timber terminology is concerned, any lexical borrowing would only have been evident in the dialect of the North-East. Therefore it is Scots in general which is the focus of this essay.

Descriptions of this trade activity, written by present-day historians in both English and Norwegian, were consulted to find out more about the contact between the two linguistic communities. Some of these descriptions refer specifically to the main types of timber products involved. For that reason it was decided to examine some terms used for these products against the historical background of the timber trade, to try and find out to what extent they were either common to the two languages or mutually intelligible, or indeed bore similarities to terms in the languages of the other countries involved in the North Sea trade too. As Lythe points out, when Hansa control of trade was weakening even in the Bergen *kontor*, 'a cosmopolitan mercantile community was created by Dutch, Danish, Scottish and native merchants, under whose influence Norway's external trade acquired a greater degree of geographical flexibility' (1976: 147). How did they all communicate, in order to do business?

Historical background

There were fairly close trade links between Scotland and Norway due to several factors. As already mentioned, Norway was the nearest to Scotland of the Scandinavian countries. Also, there had been close contact for several centuries between the Northern Isles and Norway for political reasons. In addition, the east-coast ports in Scotland were responsible for the vast bulk of medieval Scotland's overseas trade and the west-coast ports in Norway were the most easily accessible by sea (Ditchburn 1990: 82). It was in fact easier to transport goods to Norway by sea than it was to send them over land, for example, to the central lowlands.

It was only after the water-driven sawmill was introduced into Norway early in the sixteenth century that trade in timber from Norway to Scotland became significant (Worm-Müller, ed, 1923: 328). As Lythe puts it:

In both countries geographical and economic conditions facilitated the expansion of this sea-borne timber trade. For a timber user in Edinburgh or Aberdeen it was certainly simpler and probably cheaper to arrange direct shipment from a Norwegian port, for the alternative involved a devious cross-country haul from a forest in a remote glen. During the winter freeze, great stocks of timber were accumulated at the ports of south-west Norway from Larvik and Christiansand round to Bergen. The crossing from Scotland, given reasonable weather, took only about four days; there were no hostile waters to penetrate; there were no delays or complications such as those which skippers encountered on entry to the Baltic; the cargo was easy to handle and not liable to damage in transit. Hence it is hardly surprising that from the spring to the late autumn a substantial part of Scotland's merchant tonnage, supplemented by some Dutch and some Norwegian, was engaged in this movement of timber. (1976: 147)

This so-called Scottish Trade (*skottehandelen*) with Norway, according to Lillehammer, lasted from the mid sixteenth century till the beginning of the eighteenth in the fjords north and north-east of Stavanger. Other areas mentioned include Sunnhordland, Agder on the south coast and further east to Telemark, and the area around Oslofjord. Later the Møre-Trøndelag districts to the north were also involved (1986: 97). Lillehammer quotes a traditional story from the period which 'illustrates how one family got to know the trading foreigners so well when they arrived in their vessels during the summer that they looked upon them almost as relatives'. Some would have come on a regular basis almost every year and perhaps even two or three times each year (Lillehammer 1986: 107).

Lillehammer points out that the North Sea had become the centre of European trade, which was of benefit to mercantile communities in the Low Countries and Britain, and also that forestry had become one of the principal industries of Norway. Changes in agriculture as a consequence of the Black Death (Lillehammer 1986: 99) had resulted in the growth of dense woods that then had to be cleared to regain land for cultivation. The introduction of sawmills from the beginning of the sixteenth century onwards was an important technological advance that increased the volume of the trade (Lillehammer 1986: 100). While efforts were made to control trade generally and restrict it to citizens and burghers in towns, the timber trade was exempt from these regulations, which meant that the farmer in the fjords could do business directly with his customers. The oldest source of information about this trade is a list from 1567 detailing the vessels that had visited Ryfylke. Out of 38 no fewer than 28 were Scottish (Lillehammer 1986: 101).

After the turn of the century there is more detail to be found in the Norwegian Customs Books, including the names of skippers and their origin, and what and how much they loaded onto their ships. The books show that the Scots brought with them considerable quantities of grain, which was their most important medium of exchange for the timber. Four types of timber goods dominated, 'boards or deals, beams or baulks, barrel hoops and firewood' (Lillehammer 1986: 104). The books also show that, while the Scottish ships were more numerous, they were smaller in size than, for example, the Frisian/Dutch and the German ships (Lillehammer 1986: 102). With several Scottish ships sailing to this area regularly, there could have been a fair chance of lexical transfer, simply because those on the ships were being repeatedly exposed to Norwegian, some of which they may then have taken home with them. If several sailors were exposed in this way, there would have been a greater chance, in that respect, of borrowing.

Details about the origin of the ships reveal that most of the vessels came from 'the central part of Scotland's east coast', Montrose, Dundee, St. Andrews, St. Monans, Kirkcaldy and Leith. The others were from as far north as the Northern Isles and as far south as the English border (Lillehammer 1986: 105). Fraserburgh and Aberdeen are mentioned as 'in the first decades of the century [having] had repeated contact with the area' (Lillehammer 1986: 106). Some Scottish ships made several calls in the main trading period, from March till September, and stayed at their place of call for days at a time, even weeks, and in one particular case David Walker stayed for four months in 1642 for repairs to his ship (Lillehammer 1986: 107). As Lillehammer points out, 'frequent calls and long stays ... must have resulted in close connections between seller and buyer, between the east and the west side of the North Sea, just as the oral tradition reveals' (1986: 107).

The triangular trade in the North Sea

Much later in the seventeenth century the Norwegian Customs Books indicate a greater variety of imports to Ryfylke, and record that there was now a triangular trade, including Holland as well as Scotland (Lillehammer 1986: 108). Based on the evidence in the Customs Books, Lillehammer concludes that 'the Scottish vessels sailed from the burghs along the shores of the Forth and Tay, to Holland, traded there, and on their way back sailed to Ryfylke in order to change some Dutch goods for Norwegian timber before returning home to Scotland' (1986: 108). However, by the end of the seventeenth century the town of Stavanger had gained control of the

timber trade, and the number of Scottish vessels visiting Rogaland had dropped considerably. By early in the eighteenth century the time known as 'the Scottish Period' had come to an end (Lillehammer 1986: 109).

However, that was not by any means the end of Scotland's trade generally with Norway or indeed in the North Sea area, which carried on in many ways as before. Scotland's trade directly with the Low Countries had long been significant too, dating far back into the Middle Ages, and centred at the Scottish Staple in Veere in Zeeland (Smout 1963: 185). The dominance of the Staple reduced somewhat after 1661, but this did not really have any great effect on trade with the Low Countries (Smout 1963: 188). Customs statistics for 1680-86 show that '41 per cent of all far-trading vessels leaving Scotland, and 31 per cent of all incoming vessels' were engaged in this trade (Smout 1963: 188). Smout describes what was frequently the trade route and cargo as follows:

... [M]ost of the outgoing ships were loaded to capacity with coal, some of them sailed on to Norway to pick up wood, and a high proportion even of those that returned from the Netherlands came back to Fife and the Lothians with no more than a barrel or two of Dutch goods. [...] Four-fifths of the vessels engaged on the Dutch trade sailed to and from the Firth of Forth, and almost all the remainder were based on the other east-coast ports (1963: 188).

After the decline of the Staple it was Rotterdam that attracted Scottish ships, this being given by about 85 per cent of those involved in the Dutch trade as their Dutch port of origin (Smout 1963: 189). However there were other Dutch ports as destinations too, and Dutch imports 'were overwhelming in their variety' (Smout 1963: 190).

Heerma van Voss talks, in fact, about a North Sea cultural area in the early modern period, based on intensive trade contacts (1996: 22), commenting that even the contacts between two relatively undeveloped areas such as Scotland and Denmark were extensive. He specifies North Sea contacts as follows:

Norway provided wood for shipbuilding and other construction work in England and Holland. [...] Denmark exported grain and cattle to Holland and the North German cities. Denmark and Norway exported fish, as the Dutch did to the Baltic coasts. The fish trade carried the salt trade in its wake, which in its turn was followed by the trade in Mediterranean products. The Scottish lowlands and the Shetlands depended for many primary products

upon imports from England, Holland and Scandinavia. In exchange the Shetlands exported fish to Bremen and Hamburg. Lowland Scotland exported grain to Norway and Rotterdam, coal – as did Northern England – and salt to the whole of Northern Europe and coarse textiles, fish and cattle. (1996: 24)

Trade was also carried on with the rest of the world but those contacts 'within the North Sea area were much more frequent and intensive than those with the outside' (Heerma van Voss 1996: 24).

Language and communication in the North Sea trade area

How, then, did merchants and sailors from different countries and linguistic backgrounds communicate in this hive of trade activity? According to Braunmüller, the term 'semicomunication', originally introduced by Haugen to refer to communication in a Scandinavian context, can be applied to the situation in which the speaker has chosen not to use a third or intermediating language, as the addressee can be expected to understand more or less two related codes which do not coincide in every instance and may thus cause some perceptual difficulties (Braunmüller 1996: 150). Using one's own language results in more natural expression. The hearer will concentrate, for instance, on the most meaningful elements, such as nouns, adjectives and verbs, making use of the genetic relationship between the varieties involved (Braunmüller 1996: 150). Scots and Norwegian, for example in the late Middle Ages, would probably only have had a slight degree of mutual intelligibility, no doubt less than Middle Low German and Norwegian, but other factors to consider are the speakers' flexibility and willingness to understand and be understood, to achieve communication of some sort. Giles' accommodation theory, discussed in Trudgill (1986: 2) comes into play here. Focussing particularly on speech, it attempts to explain why, how and how much speakers adjust their language in the presence of others. The point is made that 'if a speaker accommodates frequently enough to a particular accent or dialect, ... then the accommodation may in time become permanent, particularly if attitudinal factors are favourable' (Giles in Trudgill 1986: 39).

Sogner, describing trade contact between Norway and Holland in the early modern period, makes the point that communication at that time was still mainly oral (1996: 191). She comments that 'people in general had a better ear and a higher sensitivity of hearing than we [do], and their comprehension of spoken foreign languages may even have exceeded our

own' (1996: 191-192). Linguistic contacts included trade, mercenary armies, artisans' obligatory wanderings, technology transfer through the movements of workers, but it was also a fact that some states were multilingual (Sogner 1996: 192).

Sprauten refers to the Trondheim merchant Horneman who sent his son to Amsterdam in 1739 to learn the language and trade from Horneman's most important 'commissioner' in Amsterdam, Daniel Wesling. Horneman himself spoke and wrote fluent Dutch as a result of a similar stay in Amsterdam. Nor was he exceptional in this respect, as other young men who were destined to become leading merchants in Trondheim had received the same kind of training (Sprauten 2001: 25). Another son was also sent to Amsterdam to learn the language and trade, though he was to become a bureaucrat (2001: 26). According to Sprauten, at the beginning of the eighteenth century in a European context the Dutch were considered the experts in various areas, but particularly in trade and shipping. He suggests the reason why so many merchants sent their sons to learn the business and the language in Amsterdam was the great influence the Dutch had not only on Norwegian society between 1650 and 1750 but also on the rest of the world (2001: 26). Linguistically, a thorough grounding not only in trade but also in Dutch may well have facilitated, at the minimum, reinforcement of cognates, in trade terminology if not also in the social exchange in the trade situation.

What applied to the sons of Trondheim merchants most probably applied to sons of merchants in the other main trading centres in Norway, for example, Bergen. And it has no doubt also applied to Holland's other main trading partners at the time, such as Scotland. In fact the register of the Privy Council of Scotland contains numerous examples of permission being granted for this purpose, the languages in question being not only Dutch, German and French, but also Scandinavian, Russian and Polish. Often Scots were sent away for two years or so and were expected to pick up several languages (personal communication, Steve Murdoch, 27.03.03). The result would have been that at least certain key figures involved in trade would have been bilingual, to a greater or lesser degree, in the languages of the North Sea area.

A trade pidgin, or lack of such?

In more general terms, it seems reasonable to assume that there was some degree of mutual intelligibility among the parties in the North Sea area, certainly as far as doing business was concerned. Otherwise the language

situation would have been the same as in Finnmark in the north of Norway, where the Pomor trade between Russians and Norwegians resulted in *russenorsk*, the Russo-Norwegian trade pidgin (RN) used from after the middle of the eighteenth century up to the First World War. Broch and Jahr point out that in spite of its history spanning a period of 141 years RN never developed beyond a minimum of grammar and vocabulary, the main reason being its use only in seasonal trade during the summer months (1984: 16).

According to Broch (1992), the first two written examples of RN, one from 1785 and the other from 1807, both found in court records, provide clear evidence that RN was already developing at the end of the eighteenth century. As she points out, the two words displaying typical characteristics of RN would not occur unless the variety already was in use (Broch 1992: 130). She also quotes a conversation in RN written down by a customs officer in 1921 as evidence that it was not enough to understand Russian or Norwegian to be able to comprehend RN (1992: 131). It had to be learned. The vocabulary comprises roughly 390 words, which is the usual extent of a trade jargon. These are mainly from Norwegian, 47 per cent, and Russian, 39 per cent, along with odd words from other sources such as the international seamen's jargon, English, Dutch or Low German (Broch 1992: 133). The terms used for types of fish may indicate that Sami too was involved, which would not be surprising, considering the composition of the population in Finnmark (Broch 1992: 134).

The Pomor trade was in fact very similar to the Scottish trade, in that it was seasonal to a considerable extent, and that traders returned regularly to the same place to do business, thus setting up social contact as well. However, in the Pomor trade, RN developed to provide some common linguistic ground because there were two discrete languages, Russian and Norwegian, in contact. No similar pidgin has been found in connection with the trade further south in the North Sea, which is most probably an indication that there was at least some degree of linguistic mutual intelligibility among the parties involved, possibly even to the extent of what Braunmüller calls semi-communication, as described above. Certainly this would seem to have been the case as far as the terminology in the timber trade is concerned. A sample of this terminology is examined in the following.

Scots terms for timber used in the Scottish Trade

The following list of timber terms was found in the course of investigating Scotland's trade with Norway as a possible scenario for lexical borrowing

between the two languages. Lythe's account of the trade in timber between the two countries includes some of the Scots terms used in documents relating to this trade (1976: 148), and so it was decided to examine these terms closely. They have therefore been investigated first of all for their etymology, for evidence of any linguistic influence or possible borrowing specifically from Norwegian. Where other North Sea languages have also been mentioned, it has not been possible in this study to consider the etymology of each word synchronically. In other words, the approach taken has been one along the lines of that described by Macafee (1997: 202) in connection with the lexis of Older Scots: 'Where an Old Norse etymon is not known, a word may nevertheless be identified as Scandinavian by the discovery of parallels in the modern Scandinavian languages and dialects'.

The following abbreviations have been used for the various dictionaries consulted:

<i>CSD</i>	<i>Concise Scots Dictionary</i>
<i>EO</i>	<i>Etymologisk ordbok (over det norske og danske sprog)</i>
<i>ESO</i>	<i>Engelsk stor ordbok (Norwegian-English, English-Norwegian)</i>
<i>JSD</i>	<i>Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary</i>
<i>NEO</i>	<i>Nynorsk etymologisk ordbok.</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary (electronic version)</i>
<i>SND</i>	<i>The (Compact) Scottish National Dictionary</i>
<i>SNO</i>	<i>Store norske ordbok</i>

The terms have been checked first in *OED*, *SND*, *CSD* and *JSD*. For most of the terms it was possible either to find a form in current use in English, eg deals for deallis or to find an etymological explanation for the Scots form. For example, arrow shaftis is obviously modern English arrow shafts. Norwegian dictionaries have also been consulted, to find out whether those terms, or anything like them, are still in use and to attempt to find out the etymology of the word in Norwegian as well as possible cognates in other North Sea languages. *OED* has also been the source of information about cognates in the other languages involved, namely Dutch, (Low) German, Danish and Swedish, though these languages have been mentioned in some of the entries in the Norwegian dictionaries too. In other words, the etymology has been investigated in order to consider to

what extent these terms indicate that there probably was a fairly international, mutually intelligible terminology in the North Sea timber trade.

It should, however, be borne in mind that in the case of Scots in general, the situation is very similar to what Melchers describes concerning the Low German and Dutch element in Shetland dialect. She states that 'it is often impossible to determine whether a word is of Norse, Scots or [Dutch / Low German] origin. It is also difficult to tell whether an alleged [Dutch / Low German] word is a direct loan or whether it has reached the dialect via Scots or Norn' (1987: 314). Words borrowed into Scots have very often not left clear traces behind them as to which entry route they have followed. It must therefore be remembered that Dutch words could have entered the language directly through contact between Scots and Dutch, or through Dutch words first taken into Norwegian and then passed on to Scots. In the context of trade, however, there is also the likelihood that a means of communication of some sort developed, so that each speaker could use his particular variant of a cognate term and still be understood. There would have been a strong desire to understand the fairly similar term in the other language in order to conclude the deal.

The terms are listed below in the order they appear in Lythe (1976: 148). Lythe's comment concerning the meaning is given beside each term.

deallis - 'boards ... an obvious word ...'

CSD lists dale and dell, meaning 'deal, a plank', dated late 16th – early 17th century and located in Angus and Perth. *OED* lists the third meaning of deal as 'a slice sawn from a log of timber'. It explains that in the timber trade in Britain and N. America a deal is understood to have specific dimensions for it to be thus classified. What is more interesting, however, is the cognates that are listed: modern Dutch deel, modern German diele, and also the fact that the etymology of deal can be traced back to c 1400, when its root was introduced from Low German. Smout states that 'deals', 'sawn fir planks of varying lengths', were the type of timber most frequently listed in the customs books in the second half of the seventeenth century (1963: 155).

No trace has been found in the Norwegian etymological dictionaries of a similar form with the same meaning. However Lillehammer, writing in Norwegian about Scottish and Dutch trade with the Agder and Rogaland coasts of Norway, in the south and the south-west of the country, says in the passing that cut boards were called delar (2001: 20). Also in Næss the word deler occurs, and is explained as meaning bord,

Norwegian for 'boards, planks' (1920: 24). In *Den norske sjøfarts historie*, vol. 1, reference is made first in English to 'Norway deales' and then in Norwegian to 'Norgesdeleer' being delivered to Yarmouth (Worm-Müller, ed., 1923: 367).

The headword here has therefore most probably been one of several very similar forms found previously in the various languages of the North Sea trade area. It has apparently not survived in Norwegian, probably as it was only used in the commercial context of the timber trade.

sparris – 'spars ('an obvious word')

OED defines spar as '1. one of the common rafters of a roof, ... 2. a pole or piece of timber of some length and moderate thickness'. Cognates include Dutch and West Frisian spar, Norwegian, Danish and Swedish sparre, indicating a broad geographical area of use. It is also suggested there may be a connection with French (modern French dialect épare). *EO* lists Norwegian sparre, 'and mentions Dutch spar meaning 'beam'. The entry also says that French espars is a derivative from Germanic. Norwegian sperre, 'bar, barrier; rafter' is also mentioned. These are obviously all cognates.

crukit tymmer – 'would be for roof principals or for ship framework'

This item can be found in English in *OED* under bracket 2 as crooked timbers, in an example dated c 1850: '...short, crooked timbers, resembling knees, for support or ornament'. These are most likely what Smout describes as 'pieces of oak, sometimes of specialised shape like "knee heads"' (1963: 156). *OED* lists Dutch dialect timmer, Swedish timmer and Danish tømmer as cognates of English timber.

In Norwegian there seems to be no equivalent technical term, but native speakers find nothing wrong with the direct translation kroket tømmer, which can be translated literally as 'crooked timber'. This would mean that when the Scots trader used this expression, it would be more or less intelligible for his Norwegian counterpart, and vice-versa.

(arrow) shaftis – 'needs no comment'

For shaft *OED* gives Old English and Old Scots origins, scaft and skaft respectively. *OED* says shaft is a cognate of Dutch schaft, German schaft, and Swedish and Danish skaft. *SNO* lists the Norwegian form as skaft. These forms must all have been perfectly mutually intelligible.

burnewood – ‘emphasises the role of wood as fuel in this period’

Burnwood occurs in one example in *OED* from 1898 under **knapple** in a list of types of timber exported from Norway. It is not listed in *SND* or *CSD*, but occurs in *JSD*, meaning quite simply ‘wood for fuel’. Smout comments that ‘if there was little space left after the loading [of a ship], it was often filled with a fathom or two of “burnwood”, perhaps used for kindling in Scottish households’ (1963: 156). His use of quotation marks would suggest that this was not a standard term, to his knowledge, other than in the customs records.

There is no corresponding compound in Norwegian in the dictionaries listed above. However, both elements in the Scots compound noun have cognates in Norwegian: **brenne**, ‘burn’ and **ved** ‘wood’. It is in fact listed in *Norsk ordbok: ordbok over det norske folkemålet og det nynorske skriftmålet* (1966, Oslo: Det norske samlaget). It has also been confirmed by native speakers that **brenneved**, referring to wood for heating purposes, exists certainly in dialect, differentiating it from **setrved**, which is listed in *SNO*. Here the latter is defined as wood which was used in mines to heat up the rock face so that the stone would break into pieces. The headword here would therefore have been easily understood by both Norwegians and Scots, and may very possibly be a loan translation into Scots.

It is also possible that there is a cognate in Dutch, for example, as ‘burn’ translates as **branden** and ‘wood’ as **woud**. However, judging by the entry for ‘wood’ in *Cassell’s English-Dutch Dutch-English Dictionary*, by far the more frequent form used in Dutch is **hout**, which is a cognate of German **holz**.

trein nellis – ‘wood pegs used as dowels in carpentry or for hanging slates’

JSD lists **trein** as meaning ‘wooden’. *SND* gives Old Scots **treyn**, meaning ‘wooden’. *OED* suggests that there has been reinforcement for the modern English form with **tr** instead of **dr** because of its coincidence with Norse **tré**, a similar form not being present in Old High German, and now being obsolete in Low German and Dutch. Danish however has **træ** and Swedish **trä**.

As for the compound in the entry, *OED* lists **treenail/trenail**, ‘a cylindrical pin of hard wood used in fastening timbers together, especially in shipbuilding and other work where the materials are exposed to the action of water’. **Nail** in this sense is listed under meaning II.4. a., and the cognates Swedish **nägel**, Danish **negl**, Icelandic **nögl** and Dutch **nagel** are given.

According to *SNO*, Norwegian has nagl/nagler, meaning 'short iron or wooden bolts'. For 'wooden' in Norwegian compounds, the prefix tre- can simply be attached. *EO* also gives nagle, and explains that this is a derivative of West Germanic negl. In connection with Norwegian tre, *NEO* refers to an adjective form treen, meaning 'wooden'. Again this is no doubt a case of cognates, though the first element in the compound places the entry more clearly in the northern part of the North Sea.

pype stavis – '“pypes” were barrels'

According to *OED* pipe is derived from French, and has as one of its meanings 'a large cask, of more or less definite capacity ... used for wine, and formerly also for other liquids and provisions (as eggs, meat, fish, etc.), or other goods'. It is now obsolete or used in certain combinations, eg pipe-stave. However, pype is not listed with this meaning in *SND* or *CSD*. Nor is there any trace of a cognate in Norwegian.

Staves, according to *OED*, is the plural form of staff, stave being a singular back-formation. One meaning of stave is defined as 'each of the thin, narrow, shaped pieces of wood which, when placed together side by side and hooped, collectively form the side of a cask, tub or similar vessel'. Pipe staves were used to make pipes or casks, according to *OED*.

While pype, as mentioned above, does not occur in any form in the sense of 'cask' in Norwegian, stav is certainly used in Norwegian. *SNO* gives tonnestav, meaning literally 'barrel stave', which is current usage. Cognates listed under staff in *OED* include Dutch staf, modern German stab, Swedish staf, and Danish stav. There are, however, cognates with pype stav taken from Grimm listed in *OED* under clapholt: Low German pipenstäbe, Dutch pijpstave, Danish pibestaver, Swedish pipstafvar and English pipe staves. As there are so many cognates in the languages under consideration, it is very probable that there was some form used in Norwegian too, particularly as this type of timber product was one of the main exports of the time to Scotland. It is highly likely that if pibestaver occurred in Danish this could also have been the Norwegian form, though the Danish form in itself would have been perfectly understandable for Norwegians.

fathoill wode – '... quhair of the grite pypis are made'

The first word of this combination proved quite a challenge to track down because of its spelling. The only Scots dictionary that lists anything resembling it is *JSD*, which gives fatholt. This is defined as 'perhaps some kind of wood from Norway'. *SND* only gives fat, meaning 'a tub, a

wooden vessel', and says this is the Scots variant of English vat. *OED* indicates that there are many cognates of fat, meaning 'vessel', including Dutch vat, German fass, Danish fad and Swedish fat.

However, *OED* lists fatholt as Scots, obscure and rare, and gives the meaning '?staves for casks'. It also suggests it may be derived from Dutch vathout, comprising vat 'cask' + hout 'wood'. This could well be a case of lexical transfer, but when fatholt was borrowed originally, it was not realised that 'wood' was in fact already a part of the compound, and so wode, 'wood', was added as well. Furthermore, -holt would suggest that it is more likely to have been borrowed from Dutch or Low German, as *OED* in fact suggests. See knapholt below for further comments on -holt.

scowis – 'Some etymologists hold that "scowis" were the offcuts of logs, but Jamieson's *Dictionary* calls them wattle for thatching.'

SND defines skow as 'a barrel stave, a thin plank from which barrel staves are made'. It gives Old Scots as scow, and also draws attention to Dutch schooven, meaning among other things 'a bundle of staves'. It also comments that scows were imported into Scotland from the Continent. *OED* lists scow/skow as Scots and obsolete, meaning 'strips of wood for wattle work, barrel-staves, fixing thatch, etc' and suggests this could be derived from an unrecorded sense of Dutch schouw which has the Low German cognate schalde. Edmonstons's *Etymological Glossary of the Shetland and Orkney Dialect* lists skowis as meaning 'outside boards of trees'.

There is probably a fair chance that scowis was a North Sea word used in the international timber trade in that area. There seems however to be no obvious cognate in Norwegian, though skava, meaning 'to shave' might be related.

steyngis – 'poles'

SND lists as the first meaning for the noun stang 'pole, wooden bar or rod in general'. In *OED* stang is classified as dialect, and steng is given as one of the variations. Cognates listed include modern German stange, Dutch stang and steng, Danish stang and Swedish stång.

In Norwegian *SNO* lists stang, meaning 'long, narrow, straight object, for a particular purpose'. The plural form is stenger. There is, however, a reference in *Den norske sjøfarts historie*, vol. 1, (1923) to a delivery of 'steingis' to Dundee in 1589, where the term is explained as meaning 'barrel hoops' (366). Once again, these are obviously cognates.

knapholt – ‘with numerous variant spellings ... planking or staves, at all events cut and squared wood’

CSD dates this particular form late 15th – early 17th century, and defines it as ‘clapboard, split oak smaller than wainscot, chiefly used as barrel-staves and as panelling or boarding’, with the general dating late 15th – 20th century. *SND* lists knappel from Old Scots knappold, which it states is a reduced form of Old Scots knapholt, the English being clapholt. *OED* comments that the Scots form has knap substituted for clap. The *OED* entry for clapboard explains that this is ‘a partially englished form of CLAPHOLT, with *board* for Low German *holt*, ‘wood’’. The derivation given for clapholt in *OED* is that it is of Low German origin, from klappen + holt.

The form knapholt occurs in the Norwegian article about the Scottish Trade, in Næss (1920: 24). Reference is made to a particular set of accounts dated 1577 (Bergenhuss lensregnskap / accounts for the county of Bergenhuss) and a variety of timber products are mentioned. Judging from the fact that knapholt is mentioned there, it is then a fair assumption that this word in the one form or the other would be mutually intelligible among the timber traders, if not indeed that it was also used in Norwegian. It would now seem, however, to be obsolete in Norwegian.

Knorhald, according to Murison (1971: 165), was the earliest Scots form from ‘Middle Dutch knorhout, a variant of knarholt, knapholt, clapholt, a word of Low German origin from East Prussia. Probably this type of squared wood came to Scotland first through Holland from its original source in the Baltic’.

wainscot - ‘... came predominantly from Danzig, ... was better quality planking’

OED defines this item as ‘a superior quality of foreign oak imported from Russia, Germany and Holland, chiefly used for fine panel-work’, and gives a long list of variant forms. Judging from the many old forms given for various languages, including Middle Low German wagenschot, Flemish waegheschor and Dutch wagenschor, this is a word that has occurred in some form in many of the languages spoken around the North Sea for a long time. *OED* comments that the English examples of the word are earlier than those given in the Middle Low German and Middle Dutch dictionaries. *CSD* states the spelling of the headword dates from the late 16th century, with wanskoth 15th and wynscott 16th century.

There is no trace of this word in the Norwegian etymological dictionaries, probably because this was not something that was produced in Norway. In *ESO* wainscot is translated into Norwegian as veggkledning 'wall covering', and a 'British explanation' of the word is also given, which would suggest that the word is unknown in Norway. As Lythe points out, Scotland's bulk timber imports came from Norway, whereas wainscot was relatively valuable and came in 'smallish consignments' from Danzig and Riga (1976: 146). There is therefore the possibility that this type of panelling was first transported to Norway, perhaps via Holland, and then sent along with the main Norwegian timber exports to Scotland.

What is nevertheless striking is the fact that even Norwegian academics with knowledge of the period of history in question and expertise from museums involved in cultural conservation are not familiar with any term in Norwegian for this type of material (personal communications). One explanation could be that Norwegian buildings similar to those in other countries where wainscot would have been used would most probably have had tapestries or similar wall hangings. Wainscot would certainly not have been high up on the list of possible types of wall covering.

garronis – '... vague'

Garron, according to *CSD* means 'wooden beam'. It is dated 16th century onwards and is now found in Orkney and Caithness. *SND* defines it as 'a length of squared timber, a beam'. *OED* gives Old Scots garro(u)n, 'short wooden beam', from 1543, but this is of uncertain origin, perhaps Old North French garron, from Old French jarron, branch of a tree. *JSD* lists garron nails, 'large nails of different sizes', but there is no explanation for garron. *The Shetland Dictionary* (Graham 1999) lists garron as meaning 'a large, square-shaped nail'. There would seem to be no cognate in Norwegian.

Mutual intelligibility of terms in the North Sea timber trade area

The sample above of fifteen timber terms in Scots is indeed a small one, but it is very probably representative of the linguistic situation at a time when there was considerable trade activity in the North Sea area, particularly in timber as far as Scotland and Norway were concerned. What is most striking is the fact that at least eleven, and probably thirteen, can be said to be cognate with terms used in Norwegian and other North

Sea languages (the two exceptions being wainscot and garronis). They would therefore have been mutually intelligible.

Braunmüller (1997) points out that 'trading contacts differ from other forms of linguistic contacts by being single-minded: the only thing that really counts is to sell as much as possible and to establish firm contacts for expanding these trading relations in the future' (367). He also sees a parallel between the time of the Hansa's influence and the communication situation in Scandinavia today, where:

each participant uses his/her own language, vernacular or even dialect when meeting another Scandinavian. He/she can be sure of being fairly well understood, not only because of some more or less perspicuous linguistic coincidences, but also on the basis of feeling themselves to be members of a common Scandinavian community. These historically and pragmatically motivated dimensions in inter-Scandinavian contact situations of the present-day correspond with the economic aims and vital interests of all trading participants in the Baltic area and in western Norway at the time of the Hansa (in the Middle Ages and later). (Braunmüller 1997: 367)

Jahr comments that with regard to the Scandinavian languages between 1350 and 1500 Low German was a mutually intelligible language that occupied a prestigious position (in Jahr ed., 1999: 127). Scandinavia was then what he calls a large common-language area, and the term Middle Low German refers generally to varieties of Northern German dialects and not to an established, standardised language (Jahr 1999: 128). There was no common 'Hansa language' (128), and no one so far has proved that a pidgin or mixed language of Low German and the Scandinavian languages existed during the Hanseatic period (Jahr 1999: 134). One telling point in this respect could well be the fact that there were early Russian textbooks for Hanseatic merchants, Low German and Russian obviously being two discrete languages, but there are no similar textbooks that are known of for the Scandinavian languages (Jahr 1999: 130). The fact that none have been found suggests that probably none existed, most likely because traders speaking these different yet related languages were able to communicate to a greater or lesser degree.

Scots was not so closely related to the languages in question on the eastern coasts of the North Sea as these were to each other. However, Scots was nevertheless fairly closely related through its Germanic roots in Old Northumbrian, and was no doubt far more similar to them in and immediately after the Middle Ages than it is today. It would therefore not

have been necessary for the traders to develop a pidgin. Instead they could have been what Braunmüller calls 'passive bilinguals', making use of 'correspondency rules as well as some lexical variants' (1997: 366). In other words, they would not have felt it necessary to achieve an active command of the language in question but would have been satisfied with just understanding what the others were saying. Scots-speaking traders would possibly have been in the lucky situation of having a greater chance than those from fairly far south in England of understanding the other North Sea languages. As Heerma van Voss comments, 'in general the dialects of English spoken along the North Sea coasts, especially north of the Wash, have more in common with other North Sea languages than standard English' (1996: 27). This would also have applied to Scots.

It is also worth remembering that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there could be problems of mutual intelligibility between local variants of a language within a state's borders. This was after all the time when states and standard languages were still emerging in Europe, and political and linguistic borders were not necessarily as fixed as they are today. People would therefore have been used to being more flexible in understanding those who spoke a variety of language not quite the same as or even fairly different from their own. A highly relevant, present-day example of this situation is in fact found in Norway, where people are accustomed to communicating with other Norwegians who may speak quite a different, not very intelligible dialect altogether. Braunmüller makes the point in connection with the Hanseatic period that traders in particular would be exposed to different languages and dialects at the various market places and fairs they visited. They would consequently be linguistically flexible and able to adjust to new linguistic situations, gradually becoming 'passive multilinguals' (1997: 372). This must also have applied to the hectic situation in the sixteenth and seventeenth century heydays of North Sea trade.

Such passive bilingualism would have created a situation that facilitated lexical borrowing. Gass and Selinker refer to a study of nonnative speaker (NNS) speech in which it was found that native speakers understood more of NNSs' speech, the more experience they had in listening to it. The study found three factors in particular that facilitated comprehension: (1) familiarity with a particular NNS, (2) familiarity with nonnative speech in general, and (3) familiarity with the discourse topic (1994: 206). These factors would all have been

common denominators in the discourse situation in the North Sea timber trade.

Conclusion

Based on the evidence in the etymological examination above, limited as it is to these fifteen items, there would seem to be an indication that the terms for timber used in the Scottish Trade between Scotland and Norway were very probably mutually intelligible. What also seems to be the case is that the other North Sea languages, such as Dutch, Low German and Danish, also had mutually intelligible terms for the products being traded. Furthermore, the fact that no trade pidgin seems to have emerged from this language contact situation, even though the Scottish Trade had several features in common with the Pomor trade, such as regularity of mainly seasonal visits and duration of the trade, could be seen to support this. This could indicate that there was a certain level of mutual intelligibility among those actively involved in trade, perhaps even what Braunmüller calls passive bilingualism or semi-communication. There must have been a fair degree of comprehension certainly in some cases, considering the more social aspects of the contact described by Lillehammer, for example, and quoted above.

There is little evidence of lexical borrowing among the terms investigated (possibly two), particularly from Norwegian into Scots, certainly in the period in focus here, from the mid-1500s to approximately 1700. However, this limited study seems to suggest that some form of semi-communication, certainly in a trade context, has existed in the North Sea area. Such a conclusion could, of course, only be drawn definitely on the basis of broader and deeper research into this hypothesis.

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