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"for ye vrangus haldyn of thre bollis of beire fra hyre": Nominal Plurals in South-Western Middle Scots[1]

L'articolo presenta un'analisi degli indicatori del plurale nel più antico testo proveniente dalla Scozia sud-occidentale, il *Wigtown Burgh Court Book* (1512-1534). Le desinenze del plurale sono spesso incluse fra i tratti distintivi del Middle Scots, dunque è importante stabilire come si presentassero nelle diverse aree geografiche. L'indagine prende le mosse tratteggiando le divisioni dialettali del Middle Scots; in seguito, si tratta la posizione geografica del Galloway, prestando particolare attenzione alla presunta persistenza del gaelico in quest'area e alla possibilità di includerla fra le aree dialettali dello Scots del 16° secolo. Successivamente, il contributo si concentra sul profilo linguistico del Wigtownshire nel LALME, compilato usando le stesse fonti testuali. Si osserva così che tale profilo dovrebbe essere rivisto per quanto concerne il morfema {S}, così da riconoscere la prevalenza delle desinenze <-is/-ys>; inoltre, in tale profilo dovrebbe essere omessa la desinenza <-us>, in quanto nelle fonti non compare con valore morfemico.

Nominal plurals were one of the most conspicuous morphological markers in Middle Scots, also in terms of dialectal boundaries. The aim of this paper is to outline the tendencies in the representation of the {S} morpheme in the Scottish South-West, an area deserving perhaps a wider recognition on the part of historical dialectologists. The quotation chosen as an introductory statement for the present paper, "for ye vrangus haldyn of thre bollis of beire fra hyre", roughly translating as 'for the wrongful holding/taking of three measures of beer from her', is an excerpt from the Wigtown Burgh Court Book (1512-1534), the earliest extant example of the south-western Middle Scots dialect. There are two items in this sentence which will fall within the scope of this presentation: *vrangus* 'wrongful' (interestingly enough) and, naturally, *bollis*

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[1] An earlier and shorter version of this paper was presented at the fifteenth International Conference of SELIM (Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature) in Murcia, Spain, in October 2003.

with a regular plural marker <-is>, characteristic for Scots. Why the first item is relevant here, even though it is an adjective, will emerge from the discussion.

1. *Dialectal areas in early sixteenth-century Scotland*

The fact that Scots texts written prior to the fifteenth century and exhibiting regional features have not come down to modern times (McIntosh 1989: 82) forces historical dialectologists to start their investigation at a comparatively late date. For some areas, such as Galloway, the key area in the present paper, the fifteenth century is still too early as the first surviving texts date back to the beginning of the sixteenth century. Bearing in mind that around the year 1520 the first signs of anglicisation can be noticed (and the greatest impact of anglicisation is visible in the years 1560/1580-1659, with 1600 being a pivotal date – see Devitt 1989: 46, 72 and *passim*), the time span for dialectal Middle Scots studies seems limited indeed, stretching only for a century or even just a few decades, depending on the place.

Nevertheless, within that narrow period of textual dialectal material one can find pieces of evidence showing that Middle Scots was by no means a uniform variety used in the whole country (although there was a substantial degree of standardisation in the Edinburgh usage, see Devitt 1989, Agutter 1990, Görlach 2002: 18, fig. 4, and Bugaj in press b). The corpus project which is currently being developed at Edinburgh University aims at gathering and tagging data from non-literary dialectal Middle Scots sources (see Williamson 1992/93 and in preparation). So far, however, a comprehensive outline of Middle Scots dialects on the basis of textual evidence, taking into consideration more than one level of linguistic analysis, has not been compiled.

1.1. *Middle Scots phonological isoglosses*

Dialectal areas can be approached from different points of view, depending on the scope of linguistic inquiry which one chooses to pursue. The research may concentrate on phonetics, phonology, morphology,

syntactic patterns or lexicon. Chambers and Trudgill (1980 [1993]: 112-116) argue that the linguistic variables connected with different levels of linguistic structure can be categorised and graded according to their significance.[2] It seems that lexical and phonetic isoglosses reflect more superficial dialectal features, while morphological and syntactic features (put by Chambers and Trudgill under one heading of *grammatical isoglosses*) would be connected with the 'deeper' structure of language, hence their greater importance.

Dialectal research carried out for the Middle Scots period has been usually concerned with phonological aspects. Macafee (1989) recognised the connection between geographical and dialectal areas in Scotland, which enabled her to 'extrapolate' the current phonological isoglosses 'backwards'. Following the reflexes of Aitken's (1977) Early Scots vowels, she established a connection between the modern north-eastern variety and its Middle Scots counterpart. The research shows that some Middle Scots features which seem orthographic in nature should, in fact, be treated as phonological. Hence, the North-East has been confirmed as a separate dialectal area in the Middle Scots period, at least on the phonological level.

Johnston (1997) has been, to the best of my knowledge, the only attempt at a comprehensive description of Middle Scots dialectal areas, trying to cover the whole country. The study is phonological in nature and, as in Macafee's case, traces the modern dialectal map of Scotland back to its Older Scots roots. As for the dialectal divisions emerging from his research,

> the main North/Mid/South split is in place, and a number of types of Mid and Northern Scots can be differentiated, at least by 1600. The further extensions of the Scots area, to the Northern Isles, Caithness, *Galloway*, the Clyde coast and Ulster, are also *in various stages of formation* [emphasis mine – JB], so that by 1700 the modern map is virtually complete. (Johnston 1997: 55)

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[2] The grading of isoglosses can be difficult and controversial. As Chambers and Trudgill have it (1980 [1993]: 116), "there is no reason, given the present state of research into isoglosses, why some other researcher could not claim that their rank order is exactly the opposite to the one posited here". In this paper the very *possibility* of grading dialectal isoglosses is interpreted as a sign of differences in their significance, regardless of the order of importance.

In a detailed analysis of phonological traces, incorporating geographical, historical and onomastic evidence, Johnston (1997) establishes the following dialectal divisions: the Anglian core (southern and east-mid Older Scots), the 'Old Frontierland' (northern and west-mid) and the burgh-borne dialects depending in their age on the surges of urbanisation and Anglo-Saxon linguistic influence. In general,

> [t]he classification of Older Scots dialects that seems to be most reasonable is the following: there is a Southern group of dialects, spoken in all the Marches, from Berwickshire to east Dumfriesshire, up to the southern Upland watershed. The Mid group can be divided into an East Mid group, spoken in Mid and East Lothian; a West Mid subgroup, either with the tripartite structure evident today, or with Perthshire vs a Fife/Stirlingshire/West Lothian subdivision. The Northern group is divided as today, though North Northern is still in the process of formation. *A second-language, Gaelic-influenced variety, South-western Scots, exists in Galloway* [emphasis mine – JB], while Insular Scots is still in its 'birth stage'. (Johnston 1997: 63)

The question why Galloway is not considered to be a part of the Scots dialect continuum, and whether it should be included, is going to be addressed in the next section. As for the whole territory of Scotland, unfortunately Johnston does not provide a graphic representation of his dialectal areas, although this would certainly help to trace the connections between historical and modern divisions. Nevertheless, his account is detailed enough to inspire the production of such a map (see Map 1). Following Johnston's (1997) classification, this map obviously reflects the phonological patterns set against the historical and geographical background. Ideally, though, a well-founded description of dialectal areas should also incorporate aspects of morphology, syntax and lexicon, which opens the floor for further research. In this paper, one aspect of south-western morphology, the plural {S} marker, is going to be analysed (see section 3).

Map 1. Older Scots dialectal areas (based on Johnston (1997):

1 - the Southern group
2 - the Mid group A (East Mid)
3 - the Mid group B (West Mid)
4 - the Northern group

1.2. Galloway on the map of Middle Scots dialects

The south-western part of Scotland is known as Galloway (left out-side the Scots dialect continuum on Map 1). This place has always been a witness of language contact. Originally a Brythonic-speaking area (from the fifth century onwards (Romaine and Dorian 1981: 1)), Gal-loway passed from British to Anglo-Saxon hands. There is also place-name evidence suggesting early contacts with the Irish (elements such

as *slew-* or *carrick-*, see Nicolaisen 1965).[3] The Viking settlement is confirmed by the name of the province itself, whose original form *Gall-ghàidhil* translates as 'foreign Gael', a name given to the Scandinavians in Galloway most probably because they were arriving from Ireland which they had settled earlier. Further evidence of language contact is provided by the so-called *inversion compounds*, in which Anglo-Saxon or Norse elements are combined according to Gaelic word-formation patterns, e.g. *Kirkcudbright* 'St Cuthbert's church'.

The impression one gets from the place-names in this area is that the Celtic influence must have been strong and long-lasting. Murray (1873), in his seminal outline of the southern Scots variety, makes a comment on Gallovidian place-names: "The instant we leave the dales of the Esk and Annan, in Dumfriesshire, and cross into that of the Nith, we find ourselves in the midst of a foreign nomenclature, that of the Ersch of Galloway. Drumfries, Sanquhar, Auchencairn, [...] and hundreds of other examples of Dal, Drum, Auchen, [...] testify to the ethnological change" (1873: 17). On another occasion (discussing *th*-dropping under the influence of the Scandinavian variety), he notices that "this peculiarity [*th*-dropping] crops up again in Galloway, a district *which was Celtic in the sixteenth century* [emphasis mine – JB]" (Murray 1873: 26). However, as pointed out by Nicolaisen in a comment to his maps in the *Atlas of Scottish History* (McNeill and MacQueen 1996), one needs to be careful with a hasty interpretation of the Celtic onomastic data in Galloway. On the one hand, the limited productivity of the Celtic element suggests an early instance of language contact (the fifth-sixth centuries); on the other, it may point to the much later influences of Irish Gaelic in the aftermath of the eighteenth-century migrations. The initially complex linguistic situation is thus blurred even more by those later contacts with Irish Gaelic, while in fact little can be inferred about the language in the fifteenth or early sixteenth-century South-West from the

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[3] Unfortunately, I did not have access to the recent publications on Gallovidian place-names by Daphne Brooke, Gillian Fellows-Jensen or Doreen Waugh, which are quoted in the *Scottish Bibliography* maintained by Marina Dossena (http://www.unibg.it/anglistica/slin/scot-bib.htm). My hope is that these papers are in line with the findings of Nicolaisen (published by *Scottish Studies* in the years 1958-1965, and summarised in his 1976 and 1977 books) who is by all means a widely recognised authority and source of information on Scottish place-names.

place-names alone. Consequently, the impression of a strong Celtic influence in that area in the sixteenth century appears to be misguided.

In spite of that fact, mostly because of the influence of early linguistic accounts and the onomastic evidence taken for granted, Galloway is usually considered to have been a Gaelic-speaking area, even until the eighteenth century (Withers 1979: 51), and its Scots dialect is not included in the Lowland Middle Scots dialect continuum (see the quotes from Johnston (1997) in the previous section and Map 1).

Nevertheless, some scholars would see Galloway as a region which becomes part of the Scots dialect continuum at an earlier date. Catford (1957: 115), when analysing the structure of vowel systems in modern Scots dialects, finds that

> [t]hough the 12-vowel system is not now found in this metropolitan area of Scotland [Fife and the Lothians], it is found along its northern periphery. This suggests that the 12-vowel system is a survival, and that sixteenth century 'standard' Scots may have had such a system. This hypothesis is supported to some extent by its occurrence again in Galloway. In this area Scots replaced Gaelic at about the same period (sixteenth century) as it replaced the Shetland Norn – perhaps a little earlier.

It seems, then, that in structural terms the vowel system of Galloway confirms the use of Scots on that territory in the sixteenth century and can be treated as an argument for including this area into the Scots dialect continuum of the period.

Other south-western Scots dialectal features emerge from the studies of personal correspondence carried out by Anneli Meurman-Solin. Authors of letters of south-western origin (Wigtown, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries) can be found in the collection of the *Correspondence of Mary of Lorraine* (1542-1560) (Meurman-Solin 2000: 232). The features under scrutiny were the so-called *i*-digraphs, a characteristic Scots spelling feature. The findings for the south-western authors show, for instance, that the /i:/-diphthongisation must have come late as there were no <yi> spellings for /i:/ (similarly to the neighbouring counties) (Meurman-Solin 2000: 235). There seems to be a transition from <ey> and <ei> spellings for /e:/ used in Wigtown and Kirkcudbright to Dumfriesshire which has a mixed system and reflects English influences (Meurman-Solin 2000: 240). In Dumfries there were also some cases of /a:/ round-

ing while Wigtown and Kirkcudbright have <ai/ay> or <a> in the final position (Meurman-Solin 2000: 249). It follows that Dumfriesshire, located between the Galloway counties and the Southern Scots region, was a transitory area in the dialect continuum. This divide, which is, in fact, still visible on the map of Modern Scots dialects (e.g. in the *Concise Scots Dictionary*, Robinson 1985), seems to have survived since the early sixteenth century.

Another author of south-western provenance was sir Patrick Waus of Barnbarroch, a member of a local aristocratic family. His letters from school are abundant in phonetic spellings providing evidence for, among other features, short realisations of initially long vowels (Meurman-Solin 1999).

Bearing in mind that letter-writing, especially by inexperienced authors, is close to speech (phonetic spellings, dialect features – see Meurman-Solin 1999), one can treat letters from the South-West as a body of Middle Scots dialectal evidence. The very presence of such records indicates that people not only wrote but also spoke in Scots, which constitutes another argument for including that area in the Scots dialect continuum. It is true that the authors belonged to the higher classes of society and cannot be treated as representatives of the whole local population, which could still be Celtic-speaking. The question whether there are any Celtic influences on the Scots language of sixteenth-century Galloway letter-writers (see the quote from Johnston (1997: 63) on the Celtic-influenced variety) remains to be answered. Of course, one cannot rule out a possibility of bilingualism in that area. It seems more probable, though, that even if Celtic was still in use in that area, it was restricted to spoken communication of the lower classes, which can be interpreted as a typical *diglossic* situation (one language – Scots – enjoying a higher status and therefore being used for official purposes and employed by higher strata of society).[4]

Apart from private letters, there are also municipal records coming from this area, written entirely in Scots. In fact, the earliest extant text

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[4] In fact, I have not come across any south-western sixteenth-century texts written in Gaelic. The lack of written material in the variety of lower prestige seems to be typical of a diglossic setting. Interestingly enough, neither have I found references to the Celtic variety (Gaelic speakers, the need to translate or learn or use some Celtic vocabulary, and the like) in Scots texts.

from Galloway is the Wigtown Burgh Court Book (1512-1534), the material under scrutiny in the present paper. Burgh court records seem to be a genre which could reveal some traits of the social make-up of the province. Since there are no allusions to Gaelic being used by the people on trial or in the council and there is no interference or translation from Gaelic, it is possible that the alleged persistence of Gaelic in Galloway is in fact only a statement based on impressionistic onomastic evidence and repeated from one history book to the next.[5]

There is still much work to carry out from the point of view of historical dialectology in Scotland. As for Galloway, the above outline shows that only the phonetic features of south-western texts have attracted some attention. Of the scanty linguistic data bearing on other aspects of language, most informative seems to be LALME's Linguistic Profile (LP) of Wigtownshire, based on the first 53 folios of the Wigtown Burgh Court Book (1512-1534). It includes a summary of morphological markers used for the most important categories and also spellings of some diagnostic vocabulary items. One of the features which looked especially peculiar in this LP as well as on the item map, were the nominal plurals. The results obtained by LALME on the basis of the 53 initial folios of the Wigtown records promised interesting results for a study of the whole extant MS.

2. The material

2.1. Burgh court records

The advantage of administrative records for historical dialectology is that, unlike literary texts, they can be easily traced to a particular location and a specific time of compilation (very often referred to *verbatim* in the text). Sixteenth-century Scots records are not standardised in the sense that they follow the dialect of Edinburgh, the aspiring standardising variety of the period. "In the case of Scots, the norm considered prestigeous may consist of practices followed by the local administration (in the roy-

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[5] A rarely quoted but valuable voice in the discussion is Lorimer (1949, 1951), who hints at how this alleged persistence of Gaelic may have arisen from misinterpreted historical accounts.

al burghs of Scotland) or those adopted by the regional central adminis-
tration (in Edinburgh)" (Meurman-Solin 1997: 4). Browsing through the
records, one can indeed notice differences in spelling, morphological
markers or even varying preferences in sentence structure (Bugaj in press
a). The question which arises, though, is whether local administrative
records, conforming to certain stylistic and formal requirements, would
still retain dialectal features. This problem seems to apply to syntactic
and lexical studies, where the register plays a major role in the choice of
syntactic patterns or vocabulary. In the case of phonology or morpholo-
gy, however, one may assume that the local notary used the spelling and
morphological marking which reflected the pronunciation and inflection
used in that particular area.

As for the South-West, there are quite abundant unedited records
from the later part of the sixteenth and earlier seventeenth century (e.g.
from Stranraer 1596-1663). This material, though, comes from too late
a period. Because of the anglicising tendencies operating at that time
these records would not be appropriate for a study of Middle Scots di-
alectal features. The only example of a suitable text is the aforemen-
tioned Wigtown Burgh Court Book (1512-1534), composed before the
period of anglicisation and retaining the local linguistic peculiarities.

2.2. The Wigtown Burgh Court Book

The present study is based on the whole extant text of the Wigtown
Burgh Court Book (Wgt Ct Bk), which is about 75,000 words long and
was written in double folios. There is a gap in the text between Folios
99a and 175b, then the records continue with occasional pages missing
and stop at Folio 293a. The spelling and some morphological prefer-
ences change from the first part to the second, so it is necessary to keep
the findings for both parts separate.

The text is rather formal in style, although there are passages refer-
ring to daily matters of the burgh inhabitants in which casual vocabulary
occurs – see for instance the following excerpts from the Wgt Ct Bk:

> ye samyn day Jamis hamylton to thom mᶜkneys vyffys .ch. ffor ye vrangus
> stroblyn & strekyn of hir & takyn of a quart ffray hir & mᶜkneys vyf
> to Jamis hamyltonnys .ch. for ye vrangus takyn fray him of apot

comperit in curt & denyit till as defferit to thom m^cknesys viffys hand
to suer apon ye mes bouk quhat show vas hurt pleg Jamis hand
& gudis ffor ye gu at hir awn quentyans [folio 6a]

ye samyn day daue gibson to michell m^cgarwais .ch. for
ye vrang ocupyn of his half of ye barn [folio 16b]

ye samyn day Artor acarssan is cumyng be for ye
alderman & balzeis & rassingit our his part
of ye small coustum to Nicoll frissell for certane
mony yat ye said Nycoll gaff to artor acarssan[e
for his kynes [folio 22b]

ye samyn day Johne mc calman to thom mc garuais .ch.
for ye vrangus ettyn of a swyn of his [folio 23b]
etc.

2.3. *Wgt Ct Bk nominal declensions misinterpreted in LALME*

Studying nominal plurals in Wgt Ct Bk did not promise any revolutionary results. After all this category was included in LALME's LP and such a search could only add some details for the remaining part of the MS (as mentioned above, LALME used a sample of 53 initial folios for creating the Wigtownshire LP). However, the morphological markers for nominal plurals in this text were quite intriguing:

Wigtownshire LP 1362
sb pl: *-us*, *-es* (-ys, -is)

It follows from the LP that abbreviated <-us> and <-es> were most frequent and the typically Scots sequences <-ys> and <-is> came second. The appearance of <-us> as the primary choice of the Wigtown scribe is especially intriguing because this plural marker was not used in Scots texts at all. Indeed, when looking at the distribution map, one can see that this sequence was typical of the west-Midlands, for instance Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire or Oxfordshire (LALME, vol. 1: 465, Map 10) and the spot in the South-West of Scotland looks rather unusual.

Therefore, it was necessary to undertake a thorough analysis of the text to find out more about this morphological peculiarity.

3. Data analysis

3.1 Regular plurals (Wgt Ct Bk, part I)

The regular plural marker for the vast majority of nouns in Older Scots was the {S} morpheme, a continuation of the Old English inflectional heritage, the *a*-stem nominal plural marker. The orthographic (and phonological) realisation of this morpheme is a diagnostic variant which distinguishes between dialects of Scots and of English. The Scots dialects would exhibit the spelling <-is/-ys> whereas the dialects of English would take the familiar-looking <-es>, with a confusion of these two variants in the areas bordering Scotland. Thus, <-is/-ys> points to the 'northerness' or 'Scottishness' of a text in which the feature is found (King 1997: 160-161). The <-us> ending given in LALME as the primary choice of the Wigtown scribe looks quite intriguing when set against this background.

In fact, in the Wgt Ct Bk, the *only* lexical item possessing the <-us> ending is *wrangus* (*vrangus*, *wranguis*). It becomes apparent after a few lines' reading because this word is extremely frequent in the text, appearing in almost every line in the same syntactic context:

> for **ye vrangus stoppyne** of ye cynyng [1a],
> for **ye vrangus haldyn** fray him off iii cronys [2b]
> ffor **ye vrangus haldyn** fray him off iii merk [2b]
> ffor **ye vrangus shadyn** off him of halff ane pec of mell [3a]
> etc.
>
> ffor **ye wrangus shadyng** off hym [3b]
> for **ye wrangus haldyn** of a pec [4a]
> for **ye wrangus takyn** of awob fray him [8b]
> for **ye wrangus haldyn** fray him of astane of cheis [10a]
> etc.

There are no other items with this ending in the corpus. At first glance, if we disregard the syntactic context this word can actually pass

for a noun as it seems to be a member of a typical prepositional NP, with a preposition and determiner preceding it. However, when looking at the whole context it becomes apparent that this word has clearly been misinterpreted by LALME as a plural noun (maybe because of the definite article preceding it), while it is in fact an *adjective* meaning 'wrongful' or, simply, 'wrong' (in the OED this item is quoted as an antonym to *richtus* 'righteous', parallel in its morphological structure). Indeed, this is why an adjective has been included in the title of the present paper as something relevant for the discussion.

On closer inspection one can easily notice that *wrangus* is often used in the text interchangeably with the form *wrang*, an adjective which itself serves as a modifier to the following noun, most frequently a gerund describing a certain action:

> for **ye wrang haldyn** of apec [3b]
> for **ye vrang haldyn** fray yam of xx cronys [5b]
> for **ye vrang takyn** of ane led of his seruandis fray his barne [6a]
> for **ye vrang withhaldin** fray him of xviii d of herdin Syluer [15a]
> etc.

There is one more type of usage proving that this item is, in fact, an adjective and not a noun. An adverbial derivation from *vrangus* has been found in the corpus, which is a clear example of a de-adjectival word-formation process:

> for halding of covrnis **vrangusly** [95a]

The graphemic sequence <us> is clearly not an inflectional ending but a derivational morpheme, which means 'causing or giving a certain feature'. There should be no doubt that the ending given in LALME's LP of Wigtownshire as a primary scribal choice is an evident error. What is more, the ending given by LALME is spelled in italics, which, according to the atlas's methodology, means that it was an expansion of an abbreviated form. Even when we disregard the fact that the item in question is an adjective and not a noun, and put aside the unreliability of any expansion, it must be mentioned that in the manuscript the ending is equally often (if not more frequently) spelled out in its full form, so it is not really clear why the abbreviation was chosen by LALME as the pri-

mary choice of the Wigtown notary. One may only wonder whether this error has already caused misinterpretations in other analyses based on the LP in LALME. Hopefully this has not been the case yet because, as mentioned earlier, the Middle Scots dialect of the Scottish South-West has not yet been subject to a comprehensive linguistic analysis. But this slip should certainly point to the need of more caution in relying on such vast projects as LALME.

Coming back to the analysis of plural nouns, no noun in the text exhibits the <-us> feature. The next primary choice of the Wigtown notary in LALME's Linguistic Profile for Wigtownshire is the English-looking <-es>, also an expansion of a different type of a flourish. This expansion, of course, follows the atlas's procedure that all abbreviations of a certain type are expanded in the same way regardless of the text's provenance. On the territory of Scotland, however, the usual spelling for the {S} morpheme was <-is/-ys> and this feature is treated as a diagnostic variant for 'Scottishness' of a given text. Some may suggest that it would be better to expand the abbreviation to a Scots variant in <-is> (or <-ys>), especially when one takes into consideration the non-abbreviated instances of particular nouns. However, it would still be 'reading between the lines'. In my opinion, we should respect the decisions of a scribe and not expand abbreviations at all. Therefore, in order to avoid overinterpretation, in this paper it has been decided to mark the abbreviated forms with a neutral symbol <S> standing for the {S} morpheme. This will also help to trace the tendency to use an abbreviation instead of a full form.

As for the typically Scots endings <-is> and <-ys>, they are listed as secondary choices of the scribe in the Wigtownshire LP. However, the picture in the manuscript also differs markedly from the analysis in the atlas.

Due to the problematic issues presented above, it seemed essential to carry out an independent analysis of the regular nominal plural marker in the whole extant text. As mentioned in the corpus description, there is a gap in the records from Folio 99b to 174b, which motivated the division of the material into two parts. The first part constitutes a sample of about 51,300 words, while the second part is smaller due to occasional gaps in the text and amounts to 28,400 words.

In the first part of the material, approximately 1,630 nouns in the

regular nominative plural have been found. 411 plurals were rendered by means of an abbreviated ending, which constitutes about one quarter of all plural endings (see Table 1 for percentages). The study proves that LALME's analysis of plurals in Wgt Ct Bk is wrong even when one turns a blind eye to the unfortunate <-us> sequence. To illustrate this, Table 1 has been divided into two parts. The leftmost part of the table presents the data together with the misinterpreted <-us> ending, and we can see that both the abbreviated and non-abbreviated <-us> constitutes only about 23% of the whole score. So even if this really was a plural suffix, placing it at the top of scribal choices in the MS would clearly be a mistake, too. The most common plural suffix is the typically Scots <-is> (35.7%) and when this score is added to the one of its allographic variant <-ys> the figure rises to 55%.

The next logical step in the analysis was to disregard the adjectival formative <-us> and carry out a proper analysis of nominal endings. In fact, Wigtownshire does not seem to be such a curious area – its earliest extant text shows an almost uniform use of typically Scots plural forms in 71% of cases. Clearly the Scots variants in <-is> or <-ys> prevail and should be treated as the primary choice of the notary. The <-ys> ending is less frequent as it is an allographic form. This device was used to avoid obscurity of spelling (<i> could look ambiguous especially among other vertical strokes) and does not imply a different phonetic value. The rest are abbreviations (not expanded here), and a small number of items taking only a single <-s> as they finish in mute <-e> already. So even though their final sequence looks like the English <-es>, it is in fact only the consonant that carries a morphological (and phonetic) value and the vowel is an empty grapheme.

It seems that two separate analyses carried out on the same material render markedly different results. The thing that worries most is the fact that even if the <-us> ending was, indeed, a nominal inflection and not an adjectival derivation, the picture presented in LALME would still be wrong as it does not give a proper recognition to the frequency of typically Scots features in the MS.

English influence is not evident at all as the <-es> marker is extremely rare if not absent. As noticed already, the lexemes such as *termes* 'terms', *sowmes* 'sums, amounts', *partes* 'parts' or *cwstowmes* 'customs', which appear to have the English regular plural marker, at-

sb pl ending	number (<-us> included)	percentage (<-us> included)	number of instances	percentage
-es	1	0.05%	1	0.10%
-is	754	35.7%	754	46.3%
-ys	407	19.3%	407	25.0%
-S*	411	19.5%	411	25.3%
word-final <e>-s	54	2.60%	54	3.30%
-us	266	12.6%	disregarded	–
-us	220	10.4%	disregarded	–
Total:	2113	100%	1627	100%
-is + -ys (Scots variants)	1161	55%	1161	71.3%

Table 1. Regular nominal plural marker {S} in Folios 1-99a of Wgt Ct Bk (Bugaj 2004: 91); the asterisk marks the abbreviated nominal plural ending, not expanded even if a particular item exhibits a consistent marker throughout the text.

tach only the <s> graph to their basic singular form ending in the mute <e> (see the next section and Table 3 for the inflections of all plural forms of items ending in mute <e> in the whole corpus).

3.2. Regular plurals (Wgt Ct Bk, part II)

As for the second part of the corpus, folios 175a-293a, this time the misinterpreted <-us> ending is not included in the study because the folios in question were not analysed in LALME and there is no need for comparison. The nominal plural endings used in the second part of the corpus (and, consequently, in a slightly later period) are listed in Table 2.

sb pl ending	number of instances	percentage
-es	not found	–
-is	401	48%
-ys	90	10.8%
-S*	331	39.6%
word-final <e>-s	14	1.7%
Total:	836	100%
-is + -ys (Scots variants)	491	58.8%

Table 2. Regular nominal plural marker {S} in Folios 175b-293a of Wgt Ct Bk (Bugaj 2004: 92)

Of about 840 regular plural nouns, almost 60% exhibit a typically Scots marker, which is slightly lower than in the first part. Interestingly, in this part of the Wgt Ct Bk it is the frequency of an abbreviated form that has risen sharply to the value of about 40%. This practice may suggest a growing fashion or the need to save time when writing. The possibility that the scribe chose an abbreviated form as he was not sure how (with what vowel, <i>, <y> or <e>) to render the ending, does not seem to be valid here. The data proves that whenever the notary did *not* want to use an abbreviation, he chose a Scots form. As to the probable expansion of the abbreviated forms, the majority of nouns would have Scots plural markers when they appear in their full version elsewhere in the text. However, one can never be sure what ending would have been used if the scribe had decided to put it there in full form. Turning to the sequence <-es> found at the end of plural forms, it is again not an English inflectional ending but the mute <-e> in the final position, plus a plural ending <-s>. Only less than 2% of nouns would have the final sequence <-es>, which contradicts the conclusions about a strong English influence in the area that one may have drawn from the Linguistic Profile of Wigtownshire in the LALME.

	Total	-s	-is	-ys	-es	-ez	-S
balze pl	269	2	-eis 261	-eys 6	–	–	–
terme pl	46	30	6	9	–	1	–
absente pl	31	25	–	–	–	–	6
barne pl	7	4	2	1	–	–	–
sowme pl	2	2	–	-	–	–	–
t(h)yme pl	6	3	1	1	–	1	–
custowme pl	4	1	–	3	–	–	–
parte pl	47	2	-eis 31	-eys 9	–	–	1
			-is 3	-ys 1			
amerciament pl	24	–	19	–	1	–	4

Table 3. Plural forms of lexemes ending in mute <e> (all folios) (Bugaj 2004: 93)

Most of the items taking the <-s> as a plural ending appear in parallel with the Scots plural marker <-is/-ys>. Sometimes the final vocalic grapheme could actually stand for a long accented vowel, as is probably the case with *absentes* 'people absent, absentees'. This speculation is confirmed by the following structure, found quite frequently in the records:

> ye sutis callit ye court affermit & **absentis** [or, in later folios, **absens**] demyt in amerciamentis **absentes** [2a]
> 'the presented lawsuits affirmed by the court and the absence of the absentees subjected to a fine'

In the word 'absence' the sequence <-is> does not have the value of a morphological marker because it is not 'attached' to a noun, while in the plurals (*sutis*, *amerciamentis*) <-is> serves as a regular plural marker. The lack of <-is> in *absentes* could have been caused by the word stress falling on the last vowel. Hence the <e> is not a part of a plural inflection but rather a root vowel, and plurality is marked only by means of the consonant <-s>.

4. *Concluding remarks and the correction of the Wigtownshire LP*

The present study proves that nominal plural endings were clearly misinterpreted in LALME, the atlas which is so far practically the only source of reference for a student of Middle Scots dialects. This paper has shown that in the collection of burgh records from Wigtown the prevalence of the <-us> sequence has little to do with plural markers, and that plurality of nouns is marked in the typically Scots manner. As the regular nominal plural suffix is a Scots diagnostic feature, the 'Scottishness' of the Wgt Ct Bk should not be questioned in this respect.

As regards expanding abbreviations in Scottish texts, in the case of the Wgt Ct Bk the tendency to use an abbreviated ending increases towards the end of the extant text but such a procedure does not provide straightforward information about the underlying phonetic realisation. As for English influence, the <-es> sequence, which indeed appears in plural nouns and may be indicative of some English interference at first sight, is in fact just a consonantal suffix <-s> added to a mute grapheme <e>. This, in turn, may be indicative of the single <-s> being slowly introduced as a plural marker in nouns. At this stage, however, the process had hardly any impact on the general tendency in marking plurality.

To summarise the findings of an independent analysis offered in the present paper, the following correction of LALME's Wigtownshire LP can be postulated:[6]

Wgt Ct Bk (1512-1534), sb pl:
   part I   -is (-ys, -S)
   part II   -is, -S ((-ys))

It is trusted that the corrected version will be adopted for future reference in dialectal studies on the South-Western variety of Middle Scots.

To conclude, the existence of Scots written material (letters, administrative records) from sixteenth-century Galloway makes it justifiable to include this area in the Middle Scots dialect continuum (without ruling

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[6] The bracketing follows LALME's procedure: no brackets for the primary variant, single brackets for a secondary one and double brackets for rare forms.

out the possibility of diglossia at the same time). Much more research is needed, though, to evaluate the position of that local variety on the map of Middle Scots dialects in a more systematic way. Other morphological features of the South-Western dialect have been analysed in Bugaj (2004) and the next logical step would be to carry out a similar study for the neighbouring areas. It could consequently facilitate the production of a dialectal map of sixteenth-century Scotland not only following reconstructed phonological isoglosses but also on the basis of genuine textual material.

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