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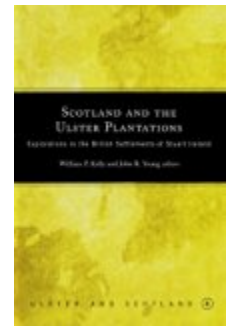


William P. Kelly, John R. Young, eds. *Scotland and the Ulster Plantations: Explorations in the British Settlement of Stuart Ireland*. Ulster and Scotland Series. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009. 165 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84682-076-2.

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Published on H-Albion (May, 2011)

Commissioned by Brendan Kane



This is the eighth volume in Four Courts Press' Ulster and Scotland series that is published in association with the Institute of Ulster Scots Studies in the University of Ulster. As such, on the one hand, it ought to be seen as the latest installment in an ongoing collaborative endeavor between Irish and Scottish scholars, rather than a freestanding collection of essays in itself. On the other hand, the fact that all but one of the essays are arranged in alphabetical order according to each author's surname may give an exaggerated impression of their disparate character. It is a book for specialists, with a mix of stimulating though challenging chapters ranging from Raymond Gillespie's survey, "Scotland and Ireland: A Presbyterian Perspective, 1603-1700," to very detailed studies of developments over a couple of years. Nonetheless, they are united by their primary focus on the Scots who settled in Ulster, within a fairly restricted timeframe. They present the fruits of a considerable volume of original research, much of it extending the bounds of Irish history beyond the prevailing paradigm for the early modern period. Several are characterized by degrees of precision and sophistication of an extremely high order.

The editors remind the reader that the Ulster plantation was "an English not a Scottish enterprise," and that Ulster was never an extension of Scotland (p. 11). The transformation of the Scots who went to Ulster into a distinctive community in their own right is a recurring theme in this volume. Yet the chronology of that transformation from "Scots in Ulster" into "Ulster Scots" remains unclear, and David Menary's consistent use of the term "Ulster Scots" for the Commonwealth period strikes one as premature. Gillespie states that perhaps sixteen thousand Scots crossed to Ulster between 1603 and 1630,

that most of their settlements were destroyed in the 1641 rebellion, and that between sixty thousand and one hundred thousand Scots immigrated into Ulster in the second half of the seventeenth century. When and how a Scottish immigrant evolved into an "Ulster Scot" must be defined.

Two essays examine the decades immediately prior to the Ulster plantation, while the rest are bounded by the seventeenth century. Alison Cathcart, in "Scots and Ulster: The Late Medieval Context," does not quite succeed in her ambition to "explain why the Scots reacted so enthusiastically to the project for plantation in Ulster when first raised in 1606" (p. 63). She posits a continuity of links between Scotland and Ireland from the early thirteenth century that is not sustained by any substantive evidence. She cites a few scattered references to interaction trawled from centuries of records prior to the sixteenth century, but they actually suggest that the links across the North Channel were less intense than is usually assumed. It strikes me as probable that the similarity of the economies of Ulster and the highlands and islands of Scotland provided limited scope for regular trade between the two areas. Limited trade would suggest limited interaction. Recent research on the diocese of Argyll and on dioceses in Ulster shows that there was extremely little ecclesiastical interaction between western Scotland and northern Ireland on the eve of the Reformation.

Cathcart's strengths lie in her consideration of the relationship of the Clan Donald with the Scottish Crown, and her discussion of the late medieval Scottish monarch's disinterest in Ireland. She shows that the Clan Donald had a close relationship with the Scottish Crown

throughout the later Middle Ages, which was disrupted only in the sixteenth century by the reigns of royal minors who failed to maintain order in western Scotland and thereby facilitated the growing rivalry between the MacDonalds and the Campbells. Cathcart also points out that the medieval Stewart monarchs showed “remarkably little interest in the involvement of (some of) their subjects in Ireland,” and even James V’s interest in the 1530s was short-lived (p. 67). Hence James VI’s interest in Ireland was extraordinarily novel by Stewart standards. That interest had several roots, but Cathcart’s chapter indicates that one of them was the king’s notions of civility and barbarism, which he acquired through the study of classical texts. In that regard, James VI & I’s scheme for the plantation of Ulster was, in part, an extension to Ireland of more modest schemes he had already sponsored to reform and civilize the Gaelic-speaking islanders of western Scotland.

Ciarán Brady’s chapter, “East Ulster, the MacDonalds and the Provincial Strategy of Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone,” complements Cathcart’s study with its detailed examination of the Clan Donald in Antrim in the later sixteenth century. It is a major contribution to our understanding of “a comparatively neglected” subject in a “hopelessly bewildering period” (pp. 41-42). Brady dispels both that neglect and bewilderment. He highlights the “secondary nature” of the ruling Clan Donalds’ interest in Antrim, and points to the fact that their Irish holding was delegated to junior branches of the family (pp. 46-47). He shows that the area attracted little sustained attention from the English administration in Dublin, and that it was also peripheral in relation to the complex politics of western Scotland in the later sixteenth century. He reveals how Hugh O’Neill exploited the isolation of the MacDonalds in north Antrim to his own advantage. Brady observes that O’Neill’s deeper motivations in the final decades of the sixteenth century “will, in all probability, forever remain indeterminate” (p. 55). He leaves open the question of whether O’Neill simply wanted a provincial hegemony or was genuinely inspired by a “faith and fatherland” ideology. Nonetheless, he demonstrates that O’Neill asserted his authority effectively east of the Bann, and added the MacDonalds in Antrim to the Catholic Confederacy against Elizabeth Tudor. O’Neill’s possession of Dunluce Castle is cited as a telling reflection of O’Neill’s predominant position in north Antrim during the Nine Years’ War. The chapter makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of developments in eastern Ulster at a critical point in Irish history.

Robert Armstrong’s chapter on politics and religion among the Scots in Ulster in the 1640s is very rich in detail and argument. Armstrong emphasizes how pre-existing social bonds of locality, kindred, and lordship in Scotland aided and directed migration to Ulster, proved to be sturdy exports, and were enhanced in the wake of the 1641 rising. They helped to provide a sympathetic population for Presbyterianism to spread beyond General Robert Monro’s army. They ensured that the arrival of the solemn league and covenant in Ulster in 1644 became “an event of the deepest significance for the Protestant community” (p. 21). Armstrong explains that the enthusiastic reception of the covenant reflected a popular perception of it as a means of survival against the Irish, though that enthusiasm was not shared by the English or Scottish leadership in Ulster. He states that “most of them [the colonial elites] ultimately succumbed to a reluctant acquiescence to retain their influence, but a potential alternative leadership was now emerging around the presbytery” (p. 23). Armstrong shows how the growing Presbyterian community in Ulster looked to the general assembly of the Church of Scotland for ministers, and how the general assembly responded with a qualified enthusiasm. The Presbyterian church in Ulster was regarded as a “little sister” to the Scottish church, but very much a separate church from the latter.

Armstrong shows how the Presbyterians in Ulster agreed with their denominational fellows in Scotland in rejecting the regicide and the establishment of the English Republic, but adapted their stance to acknowledge English jurisdiction in Ireland while at the same time opposing James Butler Earl of Ormond’s attempt to form a grand royalist alliance that included Catholics. Small wonder that Ormond lamented that he understood matters in Ulster “not perfectly” (p. 39). In any event, the victory of the English republicans in the wars of the three kingdoms simplified matters considerably. The Scottish elites in Ulster were obliged to submit to English power in Ireland. Yet Armstrong argues that the events of the 1640s, which included the advent of the presbytery and the covenant, and not just the experience of rebellion, “hardened the Scottish identity of a sizeable proportion of the population of Ulster, and for many of them it had indeed given that identity a Presbyterian coating” (p. 40). By any reckoning, this is a major contribution to the understanding of Scottish Protestants in seventeenth-century Ireland.

Gillespie’s chapter is written in his invariably engaging irenic manner. He challenges the simplistic “ethnic” approach to studies of Scottish influence in Ulster,

wherein cultural change is traced in smooth incremental steps in line with the growing number of Scots in Ulster. He points to the fact of there being “spurts” of Scottish immigration, with “long periods of acculturation between them during which earlier waves of migrants adapted to the local Ulster situation” (p. 86). He examines Presbyterianism as the primary “cultural marker” in Ulster of links with Scotland, but finds that “the evidence before the 1690s is not quite as clear cut as first appears” (pp. 88, 92). Gillespie reminds us of many complexities that mean that one cannot simply equate Scottishness and Presbyterianism in Ulster in the seventeenth century. For example, not all the Scots who settled in Ulster were Protestant, and not all Presbyterians in Ulster were Scottish.

Gillespie emphasizes the central significance of the solemn league and covenant for the existence of Scottish and Irish Presbyterianism. Yet he argues that the situations in Scotland and Ulster were so different that Presbyterianism developed very differently within them. He makes the point that in Scotland the kirk session was in many respects a branch of the central government, while in Ulster the Presbyterian church embedded itself in a society in which the structures of secular administration had collapsed. Presbyterian discipline in Ulster relied on community pressures rather than any official sanctions of an established church. Another significant difference between the Presbyterian church in Ulster as compared with that in Scotland is that Ulster Presbyterianism retained an “imperial” or missionary strain that died in Scotland in the second half of the seventeenth century (p. 103). Hence, he argues that while “ethnicity certainly played some part in determining its rituals and practices ... Ulster Presbyterianism was not that of Scotland writ small” (p. 105). Overall, Gillespie presents a fascinating and persuasive thesis, though it is sure to prompt further debate.

Pádraig Lenihan offers an original consideration of General Monro’s Scottish army in Ulster. He argues that its potential for an expansive policy was limited not just by the fact that it was inadequately and irregularly supplied from Scotland, but also by Monro’s “fire and sword” policy which was designed to depopulate central Ulster of Irish people but left the Scottish army without a local economic base for more ambitious actions. Lenihan reckons that “the confederate Catholics’ obsession with the covenanters in Ireland was a serious mistake,” and

argues that they should have attended instead on the far more serious threat posed by the English settlers in the south and east of Ireland (p. 121). Whether that difference in focus would have materially affected the ultimate fortunes of the Confederates after the Parliamentarians had won the civil war in England is debatable.

Menary’s chapter on the failed Commonwealth scheme to transplant Scottish landowners in counties Antrim and Down to counties Tipperary, Kilkenny, and Waterford shows how the Cromwellian regime intended to diffuse a perceived threat to itself from Scottish royalists in Ireland by banishing Scottish landowners to the far south. It is interesting as an aside to the Cromwellian transplantations of Irish Catholic landowners that actually occurred. More significantly, it shows how the Scottish settlers in Ulster continued to be seen as problematic from an official English viewpoint after the civil war, though not so much as to command sustained attention, let alone action, by the English authorities.

Michael Perceval-Maxwell, as one would expect, writes with impressive authority when addressing the attitudes of the first Duke of Ormond toward Protestant dissent, and specifically with Scottish Presbyterianism, in Ulster during the Restoration. He does not exaggerate the significance of his subject and wryly comments that “months passed” at a time without a mention of Ulster in Ormond’s administrative correspondence (p. 122). He teases the evidence in order to define the thinking behind the duke’s treatment of the Presbyterians in Ulster, which was noticeably more tolerant than that meted out to Presbyterians in Scotland. He concludes that Ormond recognized that the dissenters in Ulster, by contrast with the Presbyterians in Scotland, posed no threat to the reestablishment of episcopacy. Presbyterians in Ulster were conscious of their dependence on England’s military strength for their survival. In Ireland, too, the major political issue was land, rather than religion as in Scotland, and on that subject the Scottish landowners in Ireland had a vested interest in the status quo. Consequently, the Duke of Ormond could indulge his personal preference to be relatively lenient in addressing the problem of religious dissent in Restoration Ireland.

The essays in this volume are substantial and significant. They make important contributions to our understanding of early modern Ireland and Scotland. A priority for the future must be to make the fruits of this ongoing program of research more accessible to a wide audience.

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Citation: Henry A. Jefferies. Review of Kelly, William P.; Young, John R., eds., *Scotland and the Ulster Plantations: Explorations in the British Settlement of Stuart Ireland*. H-Albion, H-Net Reviews. May, 2011.

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