

H-Net Reviews

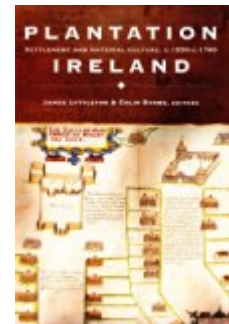
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

James Lyttleton, Colin Rynne, eds. *Plantation Ireland: Settlement and Material Culture, c.1550-c.1700*. Dublin: Four Courts, 2009. Maps. 323 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84682-186-8.

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Commissioned by Brendan Kane



Plantation Ireland is an important and well-produced collection that represents the present state of archaeological and historical research on the hundred-plus years between medieval Ireland and the Georgian Age. James Lyttleton and Colin Rynne have brought together thirteen papers given at a 2006 University College Cork conference of the same name, cosponsored by two groups that have newly come of age, the Group for the Study of Irish Historical Settlement and the Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group. It joins two other collections of studies on one of the most rapidly advancing research fields in Ireland and the United Kingdom, *The Manor in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland* (edited by Lyttleton and Tadhg O’Keeffe [2005]) and *Post-Medieval Archaeology of Ireland* (edited by Audrey Horning, Ruairi O’Baill, Colm Donnelly, and Paul Logue [2007]).

The conference and the editors face important questions of nomenclature and periodization, both addressed in the introduction. The editors and most of the contributors, it seems, prefer “Plantation Period” for the initial stage of the postmedieval period. Not so O’Keeffe, who doubts its usefulness in addressing the complex political-social-cultural relations among the three sixteenth- and seventeenth-century social identities: Gaelic, Old English (Catholic), and New English (Protestant). To this reviewer, the differences between ruling governments and dynasties, Tudor versus Stuart, are more important than their similarities, and reflect a major realignment of politics and culture taking place throughout Europe. This watershed was one that contemporary writers, like Ben Jonson, recognized and regretted. Nevertheless, the practice in Ireland of planting immigrants in often new communities did occur throughout one century, 1550-1650, with further confiscations and settlements taking place

sporadically until the end of the seventeenth century. That practice and the changes it produced—or failed to—are undeniably important to understanding the dynamics of the period, however we define it.

The essays are arranged chronologically within thematic groupings. First, Rolf Loeber examines arguments for the colonization of Ireland, in particular, Ulster. He publishes here an early seventeenth-century tract, *Certeayne Notes ... [on] the Planting of Colonies*, which combines biblical and classical references so strongly that it can be plausibly attributed to Sir John Davies. Five papers on material culture follow. Considering the “problem with plantations,” Raymond Gillespie questions the linear cause-and-effect relationship between plantation and the end of medieval Irish culture. Rather, plantations were one element in the “shifting boundaries” of postmedieval changes in material culture. Most plantations fell far short of undertakers’ hopes of recreating English life and making a profit. Looking for typical plantations and unable to find them—or enough about them—Gillespie draws heavily from his previous economic studies. This provocative essay reveals how many questions are as yet unanswered by an archaeology in its infancy.

Sharon Weadock’s following paper responds to Gillespie’s queries by offering a survey of fortified houses, which she sees as the most revolutionary result of the late sixteenth- to early seventeenth-century building boom involving many tower houses. Weadock uses diagnostic features to distinguish fortified houses from tower houses; she bases her national register on standing remains, antiquaries’ drawings, the Down Survey maps, and the Archaeological Survey of Ireland. The resulting distribution map shows a significant increase of possible

fortified houses over proven ones, especially in western Ulster and along the Shannon and Barrow valleys. Also noteworthy is the near absence of fortified houses in west Munster beyond a line from Kinsale to Adare. Weadock then compares this pattern to the distribution of castles, and concludes by proposing that plantations replaced the medieval Pale as the primary venue for the introduction of cultural change to Ireland. Her valuable research stimulates new questions. A site with both tower house and (often attached) fortified house is the most common type of fortified house, but is it a new standard or simply an “upgrade” with a multifunctional (and chimneyed) house replacing an outdated medieval hall? Yet the opposite did occur, as new tower houses appeared in the seventeenth century. Archaeology ought to tell us if members of the post-Tudor generation chose to maintain a tradition when their owners retained or rebuilt existing halls. Archaeology could also tell us which defended houses were built without a previous tower house. A further issue arises concerning *unfortified* houses—they may be hard to find. Certain defensive features survive at Ormond, Rathfarnham, and Kanturk castles; others may have lost theirs. But if it turns out that there are no proven unfortified rural manor houses in the sixteenth century, what does that make the category of “fortified” houses?

O’Keefe and Sinead Quirke reduce this national scale of material culture investigation to a single structure, Ightermurragh Castle, constructed c. 1641 in County Cork. This large, masonry four-story building of cross plan was constructed by the new landowning elite associated with the rise of Richard Boyle and “fully fledged capitalism” (p. 100). Critical of the accepted evolutionary explanation first offered by Harold Leask for the “castellated house,” the authors stress the novelty of its features and attribute its development to class coding and function (lifestyle) (p. 98). Despite its modern external elements, however, they conclude that the interior design of Ightermurragh Castle was that of an English medieval house. How does this, then, address the authors’ search for modernity? The setting of the building in its immediate landscape represents “cartographic architecture,” which they consider part of the “Great Rebuilding” that in England was interior remodeling and in Ireland was external. Similar house types appeared in North America and the Caribbean, and therefore Ireland’s new architecture made it part of the modern Atlantic world. The authors enter the deeper waters of architectural history. Symmetry, regularity, and a projecting entrance in the façade, with an identifying plaque or armorial decoration, identify the new architecture, to which the theories

of Matthew Johnson and Bernard Klein are applied, but reference to Nicholas Cooper’s 1999 magisterial *Houses of the Gentry* is strangely absent.

Horning follows with a balanced historical/archaeological study of the Ulster alehouse. This unusual topic is shown to reveal an important social nexus in the Ulster plantations. In addition to the documents, Horning uses Thomas Raven’s 1622 maps to identify inns and brewhouses and provides a contemporary example from the Jamestown excavations. After reviewing the topic of alcohol in “Plantation Ireland,” she notes that identifying an alehouse would be difficult by archaeological means. Colin Breen next presents a short essay on Munster, drawing on twentieth-century third world experiences. Famine and its accompanying population displacements were common in late Elizabethan Munster, and these exceptional conditions are relevant to any study of the period. Annaleigh Margery’s paper returns to the North, examining the cartographical record for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ulster, which she analyzes according to source and purpose. The mapping of Ulster, she asserts, has been so extensive that one can use it to trace the development of cartography and survey by the British. All readers here must thank the editors and publishers for including eight color prints of Ulster maps. These Tudor maps use important color coding that black-and-white reproductions simply fail to convey.

Several following papers treat aspects of religion. Harold Mytum looks at outdoor mortuary monuments in Ulster, noting that among decorative practices, like the symbols of the Counter-Reformation, those of Scottish origin accompanied plantations, but that some of the planter families were Catholic themselves. He also studies graveyards by spatial analysis, concluding that large cemeteries show stronger religious zoning, but smaller cemeteries have a variety of spatial patterns. As for memorial stones, planters typically had grave slabs (ledgers) and Catholics had headstones. This reviewer’s casual examination of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century outdoor memorials in the Anglican St. Thomas’s churchyard on Nevis suggests that a similar difference existed between the “plantocracy” and their estate managers, smallholders, and local merchants.

Lyttleton moves from the churchyard to the church itself, seeking evidence of the Counter-Reformation among the Gaelic aristocracy. Outside Dublin, nothing has survived of church records, so Lyttleton looks to religious structures for relevant symbols. For two brief periods, the 1640s and the 1680s, Catholics held power, and

building programs during those times at Clonmacnoise and County Offaly do indeed show a return to simple romanesque and primitive Gothic architecture, as well as Counter-Reformation symbols on dedication stones in association with heraldry of local Catholic families. Even as English styles did influence Catholic memorials, the Gaelic landed families continued to worship in their homes. There, a “Passion or Crucifixion Stone” displays emblems of the Passion, Scared Heart, and rosary, which were forbidden in religious sites but permitted in grave memorials.

Clodagh Tait extends the religious theme with an unexpected essay on the treatment of the Catholic martyrs in modern Ireland. Tait traces the veneration of these 258 victims of Protestant intolerance and the canonization of one—Oliver Plunkett—as well as the movement and treatment of their relics. These martyrs had received minimal interest until they were promoted by twentieth-century nationalists, which also led to many streets renamed for Plunkett. Tait cautions that the veneration of Irish martyrs is rapidly waning; with the passing of generations Ireland has become a more secular nation.

From matters of faith, the papers turn to the planters themselves. Tom Herron argues that Edmund Spenser’s epic and pastoral poems, as much as his polemic prose, can tell us much about the thinking of an Elizabethan planter and colonial administrator. Herron first sets this approach in the context of contemporary literary criticism, then addresses multiple Spenserian analogies: from wedding wine to Roman ritual to barrel staves. The landscape of poetry “reflects the rural Irish political theatre,” and seizing phrases and artifacts, Herron recreates Spenser’s world, a world outside literature but reflected in it (p. 247).

Rynne examines the postmedieval iron industry and finds that it differed substantially from the agricultural plantations. Many ironworkers were temporary immigrants from England and Germany, and ironmasters exercised limited social control over the workforce. The habitations were also new, because locations of ore meant that ironworks were usually distant from existing settlements. Rynne suggests, as an exception, that Sir

Thomas Norreys’s 1593 ironworks near Mogeely housed workers around Mogeely Castle in the cottages depicted on Raleigh’s famous estate map. It is more likely that these ironworks and settlement lay in the forests further south, nearer the modern Mogeely village. We also learn that skilled “men of mystery” earned half the pay of those in England, offering much profit to early capitalists, like Richard Boyle, William Petty, and Thomas Wentworth (p. 254). Yet their unregulated exploitation of Irish forests eventually ruined the industry, and Ireland was importing English timber by 1711. In any case, Rynne does not consider Irish ironworking “colonial.” Rather, it was one of several contemporary regions of European industry developed by imported technology and technicians.

The final essay, by Toby Barnard, seeks to explain why the pace of plantation slowed after the 1650s. Although opportunity for new lands had decreased, the greater problem, he sees, was that Ireland remained underpopulated through the seventeenth century. English planners may have pushed for immigration, urbanism, and industrial development, but the returns on Irish investments were disappointing. One wonders to what extent opportunities in the New World stripped Ireland of both immigrants and investors, like the Calverts. Barnard finds after 1650 a shift toward consolidated landholdings and higher income over further economic development. This “disengagement” by the Percevals, Boyles, and Southwells was accompanied by their demand for specialist craftsmen, their use of castles and military leadership as status symbols, and their genealogical efforts to associate themselves with the medieval nobility. Their competition with Catholic landowners led to an unstable ruling class, which Barnard and others here do not call “The Ascendancy,” a sign that this long-established term may have fallen into disuse.

Well edited and designed, *Plantation Ireland* proves to be a valuable addition to scholarship, offering much of interest to a broad audience on such varied topics as architecture, archaeology, local history, literature, genealogy, economics, and religion. Readers are exposed to viewpoints, research techniques, and arguments that are new and often challenging, as they discover the complexities of this Irish Age of Transition.

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