

the Troubles out of some such assessments, for example, through their simply being too low. But much of what this compelling book describes in the many histories of civil wars – conflict between very familiar enemies, between fellow citizens, between people battling against their neighbours and intimates within a single political community; wars in which contending parties have disputed the established legitimacy of one actor within those boundaries, in conflicts which are cyclical, recurrent and sequential – much of this identifies crucial aspects of the deep nature of the Northern Irish Troubles. Many of those involved in that conflict resisted and still resist the designation of that blood-stained period of Ulster's history as a civil war. Armitage's book, among its many other merits, hints that much illumination might be secured by framing it in just those terms.

Also of great value is Bill Kissane's new book, *Nations torn asunder: the challenge of civil war*. Professor Kissane has already written valuably on the Irish civil war itself, and this wider-angled study aims to evaluate and summarise the scholarly literature of recent decades on civil war as such. As with Kissane's other work, there is a welcome blend of the social-scientific with the historical, and the book is all the richer for that. The recurrent, sequential quality of civil wars is again noted (p. 12), as is the tendency for people persistently to view them negatively (p. 25) (far more so, say, than with the term 'revolution'). And there is much sharp-eyed assessment: Kissane is, for example, lucid on the failings of much of the 'new wars' literature. And his ambitious Epilogue to the book unveils wider patterns of approach (the profound division, for example, between explaining why conflicts emerge and understanding what happens to people when they then occur (p. 218)).

Kissane also points towards the need for focusing (more than many scholars do) on the state as such, when we think about civil wars. This seems to me a vital point. Professor Kissane raises it again in the Introduction to his edited collection, *After civil war: division, reconstruction and reconciliation in contemporary Europe*, where he points to the significance of political legitimacy after civil war, as one of the key issues for subsequent states.

Nations torn asunder reflects an author who is admirably aware of the need for historically-oriented answers to questions relating to civil war. Kissane rightly notes that, 'Historians are more likely to stress the specificity of individual conflicts' (p. 27); but I think one of the many merits of his academic synthesis of scholarly work on civil wars is to remind even the most particularistic of scholars to think comparatively where that makes intellectual sense. This will not produce tidy patterns, and Kissane acknowledges the likely persistence of unpredictability in civil warfare (p. 90). But particularity and uniqueness are the foundations for cross-case comparison, rather than its enemies.

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VIKINGS IN IRELAND AND BEYOND: BEFORE AND AFTER THE BATTLE OF CLONTARF.

Edited by Howard B. Clarke and Ruth Johnson. Pp xxxiv, 526, illus. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2015. €36 hardback.

This is the fourth volume in the *Pathways to our past* series, and is billed as 'a partnership project between Dublin City Council and the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland' (p. xxv), which grew out of a meeting of the U.K.'s Midlands Viking Symposium, held in Dublin in 2011. It contains articles by twenty-seven scholars, on a wide variety of topics, and collectively they have much to offer Viking and Irish studies. *The Vikings in Ireland and beyond* is bookended with two significant review articles, by the editors and Donnchadh Ó Corráin, respectively. In the first, the editors offer a useful historiography of Viking-Age Ireland from the 1830s to the present and then

proceed to question ‘when the Viking Age as a whole may be said to have occurred’ (p.17). They note the influence of national perspectives on this issue, particularly on assigning a terminus to the Viking Age. For example, Danish historians see it end c.1050, with the demise of Danish influence in England, while Irish scholars have pushed it farther forward to c.1100, owing to the expeditions of the Norwegian king Magnus Barelegs to Ireland and the isles, which culminated in his death in Ulster in 1103. However, as Clarke and Johnson point out, historians’ event-based approach to setting the chronological limits of the Viking Age is at odds with archaeologists’ preference for trend-based periodisation; trends such as changes in material culture or the evolution of urban settlements do not sit easily within an event-based chronological framework. For their part, the editors propose dividing the Viking Age into ‘early’ (c.790–c.950) and ‘late’ (c.950–c.1100), whereby ‘early’ is ‘the classic period of Viking activity as it is normally conceived’ (a somewhat nebulous formulation) and ‘late’ was ‘characterized by various forms of acculturation abroad and by progressive developments in the homelands evinced by state formation, town growth, mintage, and conversion to Christianity’ (p. 21). This places the Battle of Clontarf (1014) comfortably within the later Viking Age, and does not make it the chronological dividing line that the book’s subtitle might suggest. (Indeed the battle does not get much attention overall, with the exception of articles by Máire Ni Mhaonaigh and Howard Clarke). The final essay, by Donnchadh Ó Corráin, bears his characteristic vim, vigour and erudition, challenging traditional interpretations of Viking impact on Irish learning and the reasons why they never conquered large portions of Ireland.

The focus of Viking studies in Ireland generally lies upon Dublin, which is understandable given the richness of archaeological finds from urban excavations carried out within the city. However, as Gareth Williams notes, Dublin may be considered ‘atypical of wider Viking settlement in Ireland’ (p. 101), and this volume’s wide geographic purview goes somewhat toward redressing the balance. Individual fields of study such as art history and settlement are well served, but it is the trio of articles by John Sheehan, Gareth Williams and Andrew Woods (in economic history and archaeology) that probably constitute the most important contribution of this volume to Viking studies. Sheehan places the silver assemblage excavated at Woodstown (Co. Waterford) within a wider Irish and Scandinavian economic context. In doing so, he highlights the paradox that although Norway is generally believed to be the Viking homeland that had the greatest degree of contact with Ireland, it is Danish-controlled southern Scandinavia that is vital for understanding Woodstown’s silver. Williams looks at means of exchange and the ninth-century pre-urban Viking camps of Britain and Ireland and argues that they were established at a time of major economic change in Scandinavia. The Vikings, he concludes, did not come from a well-developed silver-using economy, but rather one that was evolving rapidly while they were venturing to these islands. Woods convincingly argues that three coin hoards found in Dublin, dating from the decade immediately prior to Sitric’s establishment of Dublin’s coinage (c.995), offer evidence for the monetisation of Dublin’s economy prior to Sitric’s innovation. Consequently Sitric’s decision – although significant – was not as revolutionary as it may first seem, and for Dubliners in the years following 995 ‘it was very much business as usual’ (p. 370). Collectively, these three essays represent a significant advancement in our interpretation of the economic history of Viking-Age Ireland.

As with almost every large volume of essays, not every contribution will be of a uniformly high standard. Gillian Fellows-Jensen’s exploration of Viking influence on personal names and place-names in Ireland is problematic in many instances, not least because of a number of factual inaccuracies. For example, the *Annals of Inisfallen* do not record an attack on Rechru in 795 (neither is the Rechru mentioned in other annals in 795 generally believed to be Lambay island) (p. 270), Glún Iairn son of Diarmait slain in 1070 was not ‘also king of the Gaill’ (rather his brother Murchad may have ruled Dublin) (p. 271), and the *Fragmentary Annals* is an eleventh-century (and not a seventeenth-century) text (p. 273). Questionable too is the implied proliferation of the

personal name Iargna (Jarnkné) in the ninth century (annalistic entries for three of the four years referenced most likely refer to the same Iargna, and a fourth does not refer to anyone by that name (p. 270)). Something similar may be said of its Gaelic equivalent, Glún Iarn, in the tenth century (the ‘Glúniáim son of Olaf Cuarán’ and ‘Glún Iarn, who was the son of Amlaib’ are actually the same person (p. 271)). Inexplicably the Irish genealogies were not used in this exploration of personal names. Meanwhile, Colmán Etchingham’s article on the Vikings at Annagassan is so heavily reliant for proof upon a number of the author’s own forthcoming works that a rounded judgement on it will have to be postponed until these appear.

Overall, Clarke and Johnson have produced an admirable volume that is worth reading and worth the price.

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LORDS AND TOWNS IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE: THE EUROPEAN HISTORIC TOWNS ATLAS PROJECT. Edited by Annegret Simms and Howard B. Clarke. Pp xxii, 552. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015. £85.

The European Historic Town Atlas Project was established in 1955 with the aim of facilitating the comparative history of towns and urban development within Europe. This was to be achieved, in part, through the co-ordinated production of town-plan atlases, to common scales, with accompanying historical commentaries and subsidiary maps articulating the growth of each town. By 2014, the project boasted over 500 individual publications from over eighteen countries. As one might expect from such an ambitious pan-European project, the approaches taken, and result produced, have varied from country to country. *Lords and towns in medieval Europe* is an attempt to gather some of the fruits of that labour into a single volume, analysing the influence of seigniorial power on the creation and development of towns in medieval Europe.

Remarkably for a volume containing twenty-two chapters from twenty-five contributors, the book works very well as a whole. This is due in large part to the editors’ excellent introduction, which fits the individual studies into a wider conceptual framework. This is immediately followed in Part I by two reflective chapters on the Historic Town Atlas Project, and comparative approaches to urban history. The reader is then treated to a number of case studies from throughout Europe, mostly authored by current or former editors of national historic town atlas projects. Adopting the core-periphery dichotomy as an organisational tool, Part I focuses on national perspectives from the European ‘core’ territories of the Empire (including Germany, Italy, Austria, and Bohemia), France and England. Part II presents a more eclectic mix from the ‘periphery’, which takes in studies of Poland, Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Scandinavia, and, of course Ireland. Readers of *I.H.S.* may be most interested in Howard Clarke’s survey of ‘Planning and regulation in the formation of new towns and new quarters in Ireland, 1170–1641’, which is sufficiently broad in its chronological sweep to examine two periods of colonial plantation in Ireland: medieval and early modern. Part IV is concerned with the symbolism of town plans, in particular the meaning that individuals would have attached to the designed spaces within. Interestingly, these chapters seem to confirm the primary importance of the mundane within medieval town plans: aesthetic considerations were articulated when and as practicality allowed. This idea is reinforced in Part V, which introduces archaeological, art-historical, and modern perspectives on medieval urban forms. All of this results in a volume that presents a nuanced, and relatively coherent, picture of medieval Europe’s urban network. More continuity might have been achieved had all of the authors followed the editors’ guidance and used the historic town atlases in their studies.