

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.

Yet, while this might cause (justifiable) consternation among historical geographers, it does not diminish their value to the historian. Where maps are absent, other sources fill the gap.

As the book's title suggests, one of the main findings is that medieval town formation, whatever its territorial context, was overwhelmingly the result of lordly initiative. Aristocrats, kings, bishops, and abbots all founded towns within the context of their own expression of lordship – their domination and exploitation of a particular locality. Yet this commonality makes local differences all the more striking, thus highlighting the highly contingent nature of town planning. So, twelfth-century northern Italian cities developed a sense of civic responsibility which mitigated (if it did not exclude) seigniorial interference, while to the north (yet still in the Empire) German towns tended to be more deferential to their founding lord, who could refer to the inhabitants as 'our men and merchants'. As one might expect, along the periphery town formation was often a self-conscious act of colonisation. As in the 'core' territories, geography played its part. For instance, easily-surmountable land borders seemingly allowed for organised migration on a much larger scale than more difficult passages over seas or mountains. As a result, German colonisation of west Slavic territories, which utilised professional *locators* (who enticed settlers to the new foundations), was much more intensive than the concomitant English colonisation of Ireland. The result was a grand network of new towns in central Europe, and a legacy of under-inhabited 'rural boroughs' in Ireland. However, it is clear that the central functions of administration, trade, and defence conditioned almost every peripheral foundation.

In an age of Festschriften and conference proceedings, it is refreshing to read a multi-authored volume with such academic coherence. Readers may be tempted to read one or two chapters in isolation, but this would be a great shame. Each study complements the others, so that the whole is genuinely greater than the sum of its parts. It is quite a boon to have so many interrelated studies available in English. It must also be said that the timing of the volume is quite apposite, showing the benefits of European collaboration and an open, transnational approach to history.

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THE GERALDINES AND MEDIEVAL IRELAND: THE MAKING OF A MYTH. Edited by Peter Crooks and Seán Duffy. Pp 445. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2016. €50.

The essays collected together in *The Geraldines and medieval Ireland* originated in papers given at the inaugural Trinity Medieval Ireland Symposium in 2013. The quality of the fifteen individual articles involved would alone equate to a strong volume, treating of the Geraldines from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries. But the editorship of Peter Crooks and Seán Duffy has elevated the book further by producing a highly cohesive volume exploring the 'myth' of the Geraldines. Indeed the volume's exploration of the misconceptions which have developed surrounding the Geraldines begins even before the invasion of Ireland, with Seán Duffy dissecting the many myths that have all too readily been accepted concerning the origins of the family. Many of these misconceptions, Huw Pryce then informs us, were actively fostered by one of the more famous family members to visit Ireland, Gerald of Wales.

The volume proceeds apace like this through the medieval period with many articles reassessing key moments in the Geraldine experience. For instance, Peter Crooks is anxious in his article on the fate of the Desmond Geraldines under the Lancastrian and Yorkist kings to demonstrate that the house of Desmond was buoyant in the fifteenth century. Indeed he speculates that had it not been for the execution of the seventh earl of Desmond and the subsequent retreat of the family from the Dublin administration that