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MEDIEVAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

LANDSCAPES OF THE LEARNED

Placing Gaelic Literati in Irish Lordships 1300–1600

ELIZABETH FITZPATRICK



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LEARNED*

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Gaelic literati were an elite and influential group in Irish lordships and overlordships *c.* 1300–1600. Using theories of extra-social space and landscape as cultural practice and an instrument of power, this study develops a framework for interpreting the settings and built heritage of the estates of literati in lordship borderscapes. It shows that a more textured definition of what the learned class represented in Irish society can be achieved through an archaeology of the buildings and monuments they used and an appreciation of where their estates were situated in the political map.

More widely, this book contributes a landscape perspective to the study of autochthonous intellectual culture and the exercise of power by ruling families in late medieval and early modern northern European societies.

MEDIEVAL HISTORY
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For my family, and in memory of my beloved parents,
and those we have lost.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“The places are what remain, are what you can possess, are what is immortal. They become the tangible landscape of memory, the places that made you, and in some way, you too become them.”

(Rebecca Solnit 2005 *A field guide to getting lost*. New York. Random House).

Perceptions of historical landscape, place, and built heritage (common to all societies) have been generally under-utilized as a major source of understanding complexity in late medieval and early modern Irish society. In this book an approach to finding and placing Gaelic literati in the Irish lordships that they served has been developed through archaeological and topographic analyses of the landscapes and built heritages of their estates, imbricated where appropriate with historical and literary sources, lore, and place names.

Demonstrating how the estate landscapes of literati were integral to their intellectual and political cultures, and not simply a backdrop to their lives, is a core concern of the work. My hope in setting out this approach is that it will be useful to other scholars exploring material expressions of intellectual culture in autochthonous societies, understanding the role of the past in political cultures, and broadening views of historical settlement.

The research for this book had a long period of maturation because most of it was field-based and detailed work, which had to be continuously revised within the framework of understanding set out for it. The genesis of the project lies in the themes for future research proposed in *Gaelic Ireland 1200–1600: land, lordship and settlement*, ed. P. J. Duffy, D. Edwards, and E. FitzPatrick (2001; pb. ed. 2004), one of which was to identify, survey, and excavate a school of the learned class. I took up that challenge with my former students at NUI Galway (now the University of Galway) in the summer of 2005 with a walkover survey of the historical landholding of a family of brehon lawyers in Cahermacnaghten, Co. Clare, followed by three seasons of excavation in 2007, 2008, and 2010. In a series of subsequent field surveys in ten counties (2010–17), it became clear that investigating residences and schools of learned kindreds as self-contained monuments would provide some answers, but that a more comprehensive understanding would be generated by connecting them with the topography, archaeology, and associated place names and lore of the spatial domains in which the learned lived and performed their roles. The principal tool in animating the landscape context of their estates was mapping it in ArcGIS, which was expedited with great skill by the archaeological cartographer Noel McCarthy (University of Galway).

Foremost among those to be thanked are my former students, especially Eve Campbell, Richard Clutterbuck, Siobhán McDermot, Richard Long, and Paul Naessens, and all

those students of Archaeology at NUI Galway who worked with me between 2007 and 2017 to record the sites that constitute the backbone of the book. Thanks to Noel McCarthy and Sara Nylund for maps; to Joe Fenwick (University of Galway) for geophysical surveys; Cormac Bruton and Liam Hickey for topographical surveys; Karl Karlinski (DPS) and Paul Naessens (Western Aerial Survey and Photography Services) for photogrammetry; Angela Gallagher for archaeological drawings; Nicholas Grundy and Cillian Irish for aerial photos; to Dan Tietzch-Tyler for his reconstruction drawings; and to Anthony Corns and Robert Shaw, the Discovery Programme, for LiDAR imaging at Cahermacnaghten.

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There are people in cultural institutions to thank for their supportive services: Glenn Dunne, James Harte, Berni Metcalfe, and Chris Swift of the National Library of Ireland; Brenda O'Neill and Daniel O'Connell of Ordnance Survey Ireland; Jackie Dermody, Clare County Library; The Office of Public Works; Michael Stanley, Transport Infrastructure Ireland; Nessa O'Connor and Paul Mullarkey, National Museum of Ireland; Stephen Weir, the Picture Library, National Museums Northern Ireland; Joe Waterfield, Historic Environment Scotland Archives; and the British Library.

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Finally, I am forever grateful to my extended family and good friends, for moral and practical support in this journey to place Gaelic literati in the landscapes of Irish lordships.

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CONVENTIONS

CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The following periodization is used in this work:

Early medieval, *c.*400–1000

High medieval, *c.*1000–1300

Late medieval, *c.*1300–1550

Early modern, *c.*1550–1800

Modern, *c.*1800–

GEOGRAPHICAL TEMPLATE

The template for the map of the lordships of Ireland (Figs 1.1, 1.2) is based on K. W. Nicholls’s “Lordships, *c.*1534” published in T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin, and F. J. Byrne (eds) 1976 *A new history of Ireland, iii: early modern Ireland 1534–1691*, 2–3. Oxford University Press; and on “Lordships of Ireland in the sixteenth century”, published in E. Campbell, E. FitzPatrick, and A. Horning (eds) *Becoming and belonging in Ireland AD c.1200–1600: essays in identity and cultural practice*, xviii–xix. Cork University Press.

IRISH SPELLING

The Irish language names of Gaelic kindreds, lordships, and other territorial units are used in this book because the meanings they convey would otherwise be lost to the reader by using their Anglicized forms. These names are cited in early modern Irish throughout, and not italicized. Where pre-1200 historic persons, place names, terms, and texts are occasionally addressed, their Old Irish spelling forms are used. Terms for the professions and offices of Gaelic society, their cultural practices, settlement forms, and buildings are also given in Irish, where appropriate and relevant. They are italicized and provided in translation throughout. The names of learned kindred estates are cited in their Anglicized forms, in the first instance, to make their townland locations readily accessible to the reader in the modern landscape.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AClon Murphy, D. (ed.) 1896 *The annals of Clonmacnoise: being the annals of Ireland from the earliest period to AD 1408. Translated into English AD 1627 by Conell Mageoghegan*. Dublin. Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.
- AClyn Williams, B. (ed. and tr.) 2007 *The annals of Ireland by Friar John Clyn*. Dublin. Four Courts Press.
- AConn Freeman, A. M. (ed. and tr.) 1944 *Annála Connacht: the annals of Connacht (A.D. 1244–1544)*. Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
- ALC Hennessy, W. M. (ed. and tr.) 1871 *The annals of Loch Cé: a chronicle of Irish affairs from AD 1014 to AD 1590*, 2 vols. London. Longman.
- AMacF O'Donovan, J. (ed.) 1846 The annals of Ireland, from the year 1443 to 1468, translated from the Irish by Dudley Firbisse or, as he is more usually called, Duaid Mac Firbis, for Sir James Ware, in the year 1666. *The Miscellany of the Irish Archaeological Society*, i, 198–302. Dublin. Irish Archaeological Society.
- ATF O'Donovan, J. (ed. and tr.) 1860 *Annals of Ireland: three fragments, copied from ancient sources by Dubhaltach MacFirbisigh*. Dublin. Irish Archaeological and Celtic Society.
- HES *Historic Environment Scotland*
- JRSAI *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*
- M O'Donovan, J. (ed. and tr.) 1856 *Annála ríoghachta Éireann: annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616*, 7 vols. Dublin. Hodges and Smith.
- MI Middle Irish
- MIA Ó hInnse, S. (ed. and tr.) 1947 *Miscellaneous Irish annals, AD 1114–1437*. Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
- NFC National Folklore Collection
- NLI National Library of Ireland
- OD Ordnance Datum
- OI Old Irish
- PRONI Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
- PRIA *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*
- RIA *Royal Irish Academy*
- T Stokes, W. (ed.) 1895–7 (reprint 1993) *The Annals of Tigernach*, 2 vols. Felinfach. Llanerch.
- U Hennessy, W. M. and McCarthy, B. (ed. and tr.) 1887–1901 *Annála Uladh: the annals of Ulster, otherwise Annála Senait: the annals of Senat: a chronicle of Irish affairs from AD 431 to AD 1540*, 4 vols. Dublin. HMSO.

Introduction

Place, Roles, and Lifeways

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gaelic professional learned kindreds were an influential class in the social hierarchy of Irish lordships between *c.*1300 and 1600. The arts, which they practiced in a hereditary capacity, included law (*féneachas*),¹ medicine, music, poetry (*filidheacht*), and traditional history (*seanchas*),² as well as high-level crafts (*ceird*), especially those of the goldsmith and sculptor.³ Some members of the learned class were attributed expertise in particular branches of the arts, such as topography, while others are known to have crossed over into fields of knowledge allied to their specific professions.⁴

In this study, the focus is primarily on historians, lawyers, physicians, and poets—literati who were involved in book-learning and composing poetry, for their professions and for patrons. They were an elite group within a broader tier of service providers to Gaelic chiefs and Old English lords.⁵ However, in early Irish law, while physicians and lawyers were regarded as dependent professionals (*dóernemed*), poets were accorded the status of privileged professionals (*nemed*). They had considerable influence and were, for instance, permitted to use their powers of satire to impose law

¹ *Féneachas* was “Irish jurisprudence.” It is more commonly referred to as “brehon law” (from the Irish *breitheambh*, meaning “judge”), because it was essentially “judge-made” law. See N. McLeod 2005 Brehon law. In S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland: an encyclopedia*, 42–5. New York and London. Routledge.

² *Seanchas* was traditional historical lore, including genealogy. See K. Simms 2005 Bardic schools, learned families. In Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland*, 36.

³ Publications on *ceird* include: E. C. Rae 1971 Irish sepulchral monuments of the later Middle Ages: part II, the O’Tunney atelier. *JRSAI* 101 (1), 1–39; J. Hunt 1950 Rory O’Tunney and the Ossory tomb sculptures. *JRSAI* 80 (1), 22–8.

⁴ Gréaghóir Ó Maoilchonaire was described in his obituary for 1400 as “skilled in the science of topography” (*saoí foirbhthe*). See C. O’Conor 1818 *Bibliotheca MS. Stowensis. A descriptive catalogue of the manuscripts in the Stowe Library* . . . , i, 226. Buckingham. J. Seeley.

⁵ E. FitzPatrick 2018 Gaelic service families and the landscape of *lucht tighbe*. In E. Campbell, E. FitzPatrick, and A. Horning (eds), *Becoming and belonging in Ireland, AD c.1200–1600: essays in identity and cultural practice*, 169–72. Cork University Press.

“across boundaries.”⁶ Their special standing in Gaelic society endured into the early modern period.

The leading representatives of learned kindreds carried the title *ollamb* (professor, pl. *ollambain*). It was common for an *ollamb* to hold a church office, either as a *comharba* (pl. *comharbai*) or as an *airchinneach* (pl. *airchinnigh*). A *comharba* was the head of a church, an administrative position often held in a lay capacity. He was regarded as the successor to the authority and revenues of the founder of an early monastery.⁷ An *airchinneach* was a hereditary church tenant, usually an unordained layman but sometimes with quasi-clerical status.⁸ He was responsible for the upkeep of church fabric, stewarding church land, and dispensing hospitality.

Alongside serving rulers in the arts, maintaining networks of learning, compiling manuscripts, and conducting schools, literati kept guest-houses and provided food from their farmed estates (3.3, 4.4).⁹ Poets, traditional historians, and lawyers were also actors in the political assemblies of Gaelic chiefs, participating in inauguration ceremonies, open-air parliaments, and peace-making events in various capacities (2.2).

1.0.1 *The brief of* Landscapes of the Learned

This book presents an approach to finding and placing Gaelic literati in the lordships of Ireland 1300–1600. The thematic structure is largely mediated by detailed case studies. The objectives are to investigate the landscape contexts and built heritages of learned kindred estates, with the aim of showing that a more textured definition of what the learned class represented can be achieved through interpretation of the buildings and monuments they used and where their lands were positioned in the lordships. The approach is framed by theories of extra-social space and historical landscape as cultural practice and an instrument of power.¹⁰ The methodology is predominantly field based, using archaeological investigation, topographic analyses, and mapping, but in referencing named people to places, connections are made to historical and literary texts and to place names. The principal argument is that the landscapes and built environments in which literati lived and worked were expressions of their intellectual and political cultures.

⁶ F. Kelly 1988 *A guide to early Irish law*, 43, 49, 318. Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

⁷ K. Simms 1987 *From kings to warlords: the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later Middle Ages*, 170, 173. Woodbridge. Boydell Press.

⁸ K. W. Nicholls 2003 *Gaelic and gaelicized Ireland in the Middle Ages*, 224. Dublin. Lilliput Press; Simms, *From kings to warlords* 170; L. McInerney 2014 *Clerical and learned lineages of medieval Co. Clare: a survey of the fifteenth-century papal registers*, 295. Dublin. Four Courts Press.

⁹ C. M. O’Sullivan 2003 *Hospitality in medieval Ireland 900–1500*, 158–63. Dublin. Four Courts Press.

¹⁰ Ö. Harmanşah (ed.) 2014 *Of rocks and water: towards an archaeology of place*, 3, 11. Joukowsky Institute publication: 5. Oxford and Philadelphia. Oxbow Books; W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.) 2002 *Landscape and power*, 1–3. The University of Chicago Press.

The most enduring influence on perception of late medieval Gaelic society, its culture, and institutions are the large bodies of work of the historians Nicholls and Simms, among which Nicholls's *Gaelic and gaelicized Ireland* and Simms's *From kings to warlords* are perhaps best known.¹¹ The publication of *Gaelic Ireland 1250–1650: land, lordship and settlement* (2001, 2004), edited by Duffy, Edwards, and FitzPatrick, introduced a new dynamic by aspiring to create a dialogue between archaeologists, historians, and historical geographers working in this field. Since then, among a considerable volume of papers and edited books, there have been three book publications on major archaeological topics relating to late medieval Gaelic Ireland, namely, inauguration sites of ruling families, approaches to burial in Ulster, and a settlement study of a lordship in Munster.¹² One of the key statements of the editors of *Gaelic Ireland 1250–1650* in 2001 was a proposed agenda for future research in the archaeology, history, and historical geography of Gaelic Ireland. One of the collaborative research programs mooted in that agenda was an investigation of interfaces between Gaelic and colonial society, an aspiration which was endorsed by the publication in 2018 of *Becoming and belonging in Ireland, AD c.1200–1600: essays in identity and cultural practice*, edited by Campbell, FitzPatrick, and Horning.

Research on the late medieval and early modern Gaelic learned class in Ireland is a long and distinguished area of scholarship in both Celtic literature and history. The focus in Celtic literature is the works and manuscript traditions of the learned, and biographies of learned men. The literature is vast in those fields. Among the key book publications are Walsh's *Irish men of learning* (1947), Bergin's *Irish bardic poetry* (1984), Kelly's *A guide to early Irish law* (1988), Ó Muraíle's *Great book of Irish genealogies* (2003), Breatnach's *A companion to the Corpus iuris Hibernici* (2005), and the several edited collections of poems on Gaelic ruling families such as Hoyne's *Bardic poems on the Meic Dhiarmada* (2018).¹³ The specialism of medical kindreds and their manuscripts has emerged as a leading area of enquiry pioneered by the work of Nic Dhonnchadha, Hayden and Sheehan.¹⁴

¹¹ Nicholls, *Gaelic and gaelicized Ireland*, and *passim*; Simms, *From kings to warlords*, and *passim*.

¹² E. FitzPatrick, 2004 *Royal inauguration in Gaelic Ireland c.1100–1600: a cultural landscape study*. Studies in Celtic history: 22. Woodbridge. Boydell Press; C. Breen 2005 *The Gaelic lordship of the O'Sullivan Beare: a landscape cultural history*. Dublin. Four Courts Press; C. J. McKenzie and E. M. Murphy 2018 *Life and death in medieval Gaelic Ireland: the skeletons from Ballyhanna, Co. Donegal*. Dublin. Four Courts Press.

¹³ P. Walsh, 1947 *Irish men of learning: studies*. Dublin. Three Candles; O. Bergin (ed. and tr.) 1970 *Irish bardic poetry*. Dublin. Institute for Advanced Studies; Kelly, *A guide to early Irish law*; N. Ó Muraíle (ed.) 2003 *Leabhar mór na ngenealach: the great book of Irish genealogies, compiled (1645–66) by Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh*, 5 vols. Dublin. De Búrca; L. Breathnach 2005 *A companion to the Corpus iuris Hibernici*. Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies; M. Hoyne (ed.) 2018 *Fuidheall Áir: bardic poems on the Meic Dhiarmada of Magh Luirg c.1377–c.1637*. Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

¹⁴ For material published in the last twenty years on Gaelic medical families see for example A. Nic Dhonnchadha 2006 The medical school of Aghmacart, Queen's County. *Ossory, Laois and Leinster* 2, 11–43; L. P. Ó Murchú (ed.) 2016 *Rosa Anglica: reassessments*. Irish Texts Society subsidiary series: 28. London. Irish Texts Society; D. Hayden 2019 Attribution and authority in an Irish medical manuscript. *Studia Hibernica* 45,

In history, Cunningham has contributed major works on the cultural and ideological worlds of early modern literati including *The annals of the Four Masters* (2009) and *The world of Geoffrey Keating* (2000). O’Sullivan’s groundbreaking *Hospitality* (2003) included a detailed overview of learned men as guest-house keepers.¹⁵ Learned activity is addressed in the more recent collection, *Gaelic Ireland c.600–c.1700* (2021), edited by McInerney and Simms.¹⁶ Both of those historians have also published regional studies of members of the learned class, with Simms’s *Gaelic Ulster in the Middle Ages* (2020) including material on learned kindreds in the province of Ulster, and McInerney focusing on Co. Clare in his study of church appointments among fifteenth-century *Clerical and learned lineages* (2014).¹⁷

There are three indispensable studies of Gaelic learned kindreds in Scotland, from the disciplines of history, Celtic literature, and archaeology. They are Bannerman’s *The Beatons*, which investigates the genealogies and landholdings of the many branches of that medical kindred (1998), McLeod’s *Divided Gaels* (2004), which explores Gaelic cultural identities in Scotland and Ireland through the lens of intellectual and literary culture, R. Barrowman’s excavations on *Dùn Èistean* (2015) and C. Barrowman’s survey of Habost in *The archaeology of Ness* (2015).¹⁸ Both *Dùn Èistean* and Habost are associated with brehon lawyers of the Ó Muirgheasáin (Morison) family at Ness on the Isle of Lewis (4.2.3).

Unlike the considerable knowledge base for the physical environment of professional scholarship and schools in England and the Low Countries,¹⁹ the focus in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales has, traditionally, been on the manuscripts rather than the landscapes and built heritage of literati.²⁰ In architectural history and archaeology,

19–51; A. Sheehan 2019 Locating the Gaelic medical families in Elizabethan Ireland. In J. Cunningham (ed.), *Early modern Ireland and the world of medicine: practitioners, collectors and contexts*, 20–38. Manchester University Press.

¹⁵ B. Cunningham 2009 *The annals of the Four Masters: Irish history, kingship and society in the early seventeenth century*. Dublin. Four Courts Press; B. Cunningham 2000 *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth-century Ireland*. Dublin. Four Courts Press; O’Sullivan, *Hospitality*; See also K. Simms 1978 Guesting and feasting in Gaelic Ireland. *JRSAI* 108, 67–100.

¹⁶ L. McInerney and K. Simms (eds) 2021 *Gaelic Ireland (c.600–c.1700): lordships, saints and learning: essays for the Irish chief’s and clans’ prize in history*, 39–40, 137–52, 153–73. Dublin. Wordwell.

¹⁷ K. Simms 2020 *Gaelic Ulster in the Middle Ages: history, culture and society*, 335–403. Trinity Medieval Ireland Series: 4. Dublin. Four Courts Press; McInerney 2014 *Clerical and learned lineages*.

¹⁸ J. Bannerman 1998 *The Beatons: a medical kindred in the classical Gaelic tradition*. Edinburgh. Birlinn; W. McLeod 2004 *Divided Gaels: Gaelic cultural identities in Scotland and Ireland c.1200–c.1650*. Oxford University Press; R. C. Barrowman 2015 *Dùn Èistean, Ness: the excavation of a clan stronghold*. Stornoway. Acair; C. S. Barrowman 2015 *The archaeology of Ness: results of the Ness Archaeological Landscape Survey*. Stornoway. Acair.

¹⁹ N. Orme 2006 *Medieval schools from Roman Britain to Renaissance England*. New Haven and London. Yale University Press; A. Willemsen 2008 *Back to the schoolyard: the daily practice of medieval and Renaissance education*. Studies in Urban History 1100–1800: 15. Turnhout. Brepols.

²⁰ Some reference to school space is included in N. Orme 2015 Education in medieval Wales. *Welsh History Review/Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru* 27 (4), 607–44; See the Bibliography for the author’s contribution to redressing this imbalance in Ireland. FitzPatrick 2021, 2018, 2015b, 2013b, 2011, 2009, 2008.

buildings of literati have tended to be a subset of broader enquiries but nonetheless valuable sources for the topic. Among these are Tierney's commentary on the tower-houses of professional lineages, which he undertook as part of a study of late medieval tower-houses and power in east Co. Clare,²¹ Moss's investigation of a parish church associated with a learned family of historians in Connacht, which she published as a wider investigation of Romanesque sculpture,²² and Campbell's exploration of the settlement archaeology of Noughaval, Co. Clare, which provides important context for the physical environment of the clerical branch of the Ó Duibhdábhoireann brehon lawyers in the lordship of Boireann.²³

Returning to *Gaelic Ireland 1250–1650* and the research agenda of 2001, among the topics proposed at that time was detailed archaeological survey and excavation of learned kindred schools and the development of a concept of studying Gaelic settlement within the appropriate historical matrices of lordship, estate, and smaller divisions of the landscape.²⁴ Both of those aspirations have been pursued in this book.

1.0.2 *A note on sources used in this work*

The Irish chronicles are cited throughout this study. Compiled by learned men, they are a major source of reference to literati and the sites with which they were associated. They have their idiosyncrasies, however. Simms has explained that the surviving manuscripts containing Irish annals largely date from between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the majority have a regional bias, and those compiled by the “Four Masters” in the seventeenth century are not contemporary with the events they describe, albeit that they drew on sources that are now lost.²⁵ To negotiate those difficulties, parallel entries have been provided from different sets of annals where available.

Land surveys of the seventeenth century are useful in associating landholdings with learned kindreds. They include the Strafford Survey of Connacht in the 1630s, the Civil Survey, which described all lands forfeited to the Commonwealth from the time of the Rebellion of 1641, the Down Survey (1656–8), which was the first detailed

²¹ A. Tierney 2013 Tower houses and power: social and familial hierarchies in east County Clare c.1350–c.1600. *North Munster Antiquarian Journal* 53, 220–4; A. Tierney 2005 Pedigrees in stone? Castles, colonialism and Gaelic-Irish identity from the Middle Ages to the Celtic revival. PhD diss. University College Dublin.

²² R. Moss 2010 Romanesque sculpture in north Roscommon. In T. Finan (ed.), *Medieval Lough Cé: history, archaeology and landscape*, 141–4. Dublin. Four Courts Press.

²³ E. Campbell 2013 Exploring the medieval and early modern settlement of Noughaval in the Burren. *The Other Clare* 37, 12–17.

²⁴ P. J. Duffy, D. Edwards and E. FitzPatrick 2001 Introduction. In Duffy, Edwards and FitzPatrick (eds) *Gaelic Ireland c.1250–c.1650: land, lordship and settlement*, 72. Dublin. Four Courts Press.

²⁵ K. Simms 2009 *Medieval Gaelic sources*, 1–38. Maynooth research guides for Irish local history: 14. Dublin. Four Courts Press.

land survey conducted on a national scale by Sir William Petty, and the Books of Survey and Distribution that contain details of the transfer of land, largely but not exclusively from Catholic to Protestant, in the second half of the century.²⁶

Place names are an essential source of reference to the learned. Ireland is endowed with two major databases of place names that have supported this study. These are the Placenames Database of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project. All editions of the Ordnance Survey six-inch and twenty-five-inch maps for Ireland, the National Monuments Service Sites and Monuments database and supporting archive, the Geological Survey of Ireland spatial resources database, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland historical maps viewer, and the Northern Ireland Department of Communities historic environment map viewer, were key aids to pinning down settlements of literati in the landscape.

There are historical studies that link learned kindreds with lands, which are useful sources for the archaeologist. They include O’Rahilly’s account of poets, historians, and lawyers cited in English documents (1538–1615), in which he showed the potential of the Irish *fiant*s to aid identification of the provenance of individual learned men cited in pardons issued by the Irish Chancery (a *fiant* was a warrant by the king’s deputy or council to the Irish Chancery to publish orders that conveyed a pardon, a right, an office, or a title to property).²⁷ Others include Doan’s study of the many branches of the Ó Dálaigh poets and their associated landholdings, Hughes’s investigation of the lands of Ulster poets, and the aforementioned work of McInerney, which is extensively based on interpretations of late medieval and early modern primary historical documents.²⁸

Finally, there are accounts by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century antiquaries of individual learned kindred settlements, such as Fennel’s description of Inishmore Island on Lough Gill, Co. Sligo,²⁹ Lockwood’s study of Kilbarron, Co. Donegal,³⁰ and the respective papers about Cahermacnaughten in the Burren, Co. Clare, by Macnamara and Westropp.³¹ In the letters and memoranda that they wrote to head office from the

²⁶ W. J. Smyth 2006 *Map-making, landscapes and memory: a geography of colonial and early modern Ireland, c.1530–1750*, 166–221. Cork University Press.

²⁷ T. F. O’Rahilly 1922 Irish poets, historians, and judges in English documents, 1538–1615. *PRIA* 36C, 86–120; see K. W. Nicholls (ed.) 1994 *The Irish fiants of the Tudor sovereigns: during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Philip and Mary, and Elizabeth I*, 4 vols. Dublin. Edmund Burke.

²⁸ J. E. Doan 1985 The Ó Dálaigh family of bardic poets, 1139–1691. *Éire-Ireland* 20 (2), 19–31; A. J. Hughes 1994–5 Land acquisitions by Gaelic bardic poets: insights from place-names and other sources. *Ainm: Bulletin of the Ulster Place-Name Society* 6, 74–102; McInerney, *Clerical and learned lineages*, and *passim*.

²⁹ W. J. Fennel 1904 Church Island or Inishmore, Lough Gill. *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 10 (4), 166–9.

³⁰ F. W. Lockwood 1903 Kilbarron Castle and Church, Co. Donegal. *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 9 (3), 111–16.

³¹ G. U. Macnamara 1912–13 The O’Davorens of Cahermacnaughten, Burren, Co. Clare. *North Munster Archaeological Society Journal* 2, 63–212; T. J. Westropp 1897 Prehistoric stone forts of northern Clare (continued). *JRSAI* 7 (2), 116–27; T. J. Westropp 1906–7 Ancient remains near Lisdoonvarna. *Journal of the Limerick Field Club* 3, 52–159.

field, O'Donovan and the other antiquaries and surveyors who conducted the first Ordnance Survey of Ireland in the nineteenth century occasionally included details of sites associated with literati. Notable among those was Beirne's survey in 1845 of the remains of the "old college" building at Dromnea, associated with the estate of the Ó Dálaigh poets on the Sheepshead Peninsula, Co. Cork (6.3.1).³²

1.1 DEFINING THE LEARNED

Learned kindreds developed and expanded as a major class in Gaelic society from the late twelfth century onward. The kin-based hereditary aspects of their professions, which they shared with autochthonous literati in medieval Scotland and Wales, made them unique functionaries in later medieval and early modern northern Europe.³³ Some of them were instantly recognizable by the fact that their surnames derived from their professions, such as Eogan Ruad Mac an Bhaird (d. 1510), "son of the poet," who was an *ollamh* in poetry to the Ó Domhnaill chief of Tír Conaill.³⁴

But how did this class emerge? Both Flower and Mac Cana contended that late medieval hereditary literary kindreds arose from ecclesiastical families who had maintained possession of monastic land as *comharbai* and especially as *airchinnigh* when monastic schools broke up following the reform of the Irish Church in the twelfth century.³⁵ Some learned lineages certainly had churchmen as ancestors. A branch of the Mac an Bhaird poetic kindred, who had their origins as ecclesiastics in the midland monastery of Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, are found in the southern borderland of the lordship of Tír Conaill (Co. Donegal) in the northwest of Ireland by the later medieval period (2.1.1).³⁶ The Ó Dálaigh poets of Muintir Bháire, who had been associated with the midland monastery of Clonard in the kingdom of Teathbha (Co. Meath), were well established on the Sheepshead Peninsula of west Cork by c.1300 (2.2, 3.1).³⁷ For the reader unfamiliar with the ramifications of Gaelic families in Ireland, the multiplicity of learned kindred branches and their associated landholdings, situated in separate lordships, may seem puzzling. The proliferation into many branches of major learned kindreds, such as the Mac Aodhagáin and Mac Fhlannchadha lawyers and the Ó Dálaigh poets, was the result of successful migrations in search of patrons and estates.

³² Ordnance Survey memoranda for Co. Cork, ii, 455–6. Dublin. Ordnance Survey Ireland.

³³ McLeod, *Divided Gaels*, 55–107; H. Pryce 2000 Lawbooks and literacy in medieval Wales. *Speculum* 75 (1), 44–5; D. S. Thomson 1968 Gaelic learned orders and literati in medieval Scotland. *Scottish Studies* 12, 60.

³⁴ AConn 1510.2, 615.

³⁵ P. Mac Cana 1974 The rise of the later schools of *filidheacht*. *Ériu* 25, 127–30; R. Flower 1947 *The Irish tradition*, 84. Oxford. Clarendon Press.

³⁶ Simms, *Gaelic Ulster in the Middle Ages*, 380.

³⁷ A. O'Sullivan 1971–2 Tadhg O'Daly and Sir George Carew. *Éigse* 14, 30.

Regional studies have revealed alternative circumstances for the emergence of learned people as a substantial class from the thirteenth century onward. Ó Scea has shown, in relation to south Ulster, that many of the *airchinnigh* who were learned were late arrivals to that clerical office and that their kindreds had no demonstrable long-standing links with pre-twelfth-century *airchinnigh*. For example, the Ó Breasláin lawyers and the Ó Cianáin chroniclers and historians, who were among the most important learned kindreds of the late medieval lordship of Fir Mhanach, did not become *airchinnigh* of the church lands of Derryvullan until after 1200, having migrated to Fir Mhanach from Donegal and Monaghan.³⁸ The respective roles of the *airchinneach* and of the *comharba* were redefined with the creation of a diocesan parish system throughout Ireland between the late twelfth and early fourteenth century, whereby they came within the jurisdiction of bishops and were therefore subject to episcopal dues and visitations.³⁹

By the sixteenth century, there were approximately sixty Gaelic lordships in Ireland and an additional thirty Old English lordships that had adopted Gaelic cultural practices to varying degrees (Fig. 1.1).⁴⁰ With each ruling family patronizing at least one historian, lawyer, musician, physician, and poet (and many more in the larger lordships and overlordships), and taking into consideration that some served more than one chief or lord, the branches of learned kindreds directly serving rulers by that time were in their hundreds. Their prominence in Gaelic society was considered unusual. Commenting in 1606 on the character of the Gaelic people of the south Ulster lordship of Fir Mhanach, Sir John Davies (*c.*1569–1626), attorney general of Ireland, remarked that “the natives of this country are reputed the worst swordsmen of the north, being rather inclined to be scholars or husbandmen than to be kern or men of action.”⁴¹ His remark is supported by the historical presence of what has been described as “an unusually large number of poets and learned kindreds of all kinds settled within its borders.”⁴²

There were two periods when literati were particularly affected by political change. The first occurred in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the transition from kingship to lordship in Ireland led to the formation and consolidation of Gaelic lordships.⁴³ The second was the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, when the lordships came under sustained pressure from the Tudor government.⁴⁴ The first

³⁸ C. Ó Scea 2012 Erenachs, erenachships and church landholding in Gaelic Fermanagh, 1270–1609. *PRIA* 112C, 295–8.

³⁹ Ó Scea, Erenachs, erenachships, 273–4.

⁴⁰ S. G. Ellis and J. Murray (eds) 2017 *Calendar of state papers, Ireland, Tudor period 1509–1547*, 2–3. Dublin. Irish Manuscripts Commission.

⁴¹ H. Morley (ed.) 1890 *Ireland under Elizabeth and James the First*, 370. London. Routledge.

⁴² K. Simms 1977 The medieval kingdom of Lough Erne. *Clogher Record* 9 (2), 135.

⁴³ Simms, *From kings to warlords*.

⁴⁴ G. Kew (ed.) 1998 *The Irish sections of Fynes Moryson’s unpublished itinerary*, 59. Dublin. Irish Manuscripts Commission; A. Keaveney and J. A. Madden (eds) 1992 *Sir William Herbert: croftus sive de Hibernia liber*, 107, 109. Dublin. Irish Manuscripts Commission.

change favored the learned, but the second was a period of profound transformation that very gradually but eventually erased their traditional roles in Irish society. New perspectives from the material record show how literati negotiated political and social change during the early modern period (4.5, 5.2.1, 6.4). Despite Tudor propaganda and prohibitions placed on their activities, the Gaelic schools were highly active and productive during the second half of the sixteenth century.⁴⁵

Learned members of Gaelic society were attributed various scholarly titles in the chronicles, including *lechtóir* (lecturer),⁴⁶ *maighistir* (master),⁴⁷ *oide* (head of a school),⁴⁸ *saoí* (sage or learned one),⁴⁹ and *ollamb* which was the most preeminent, indicating a master of a learned or skilled profession. It was an academic title, but it also signified one who was appointed by a chief to the office of personal historian, lawyer, physician, or poet.⁵⁰ Breatnach's study of the personal or court poets of chiefs has revealed that the office was distinguished from the academic *ollamb filiódh* (master-poet) by the title *ollamb flattha* (chief's poet), the difference being that the former title was conferred by an *oide*, while the latter could only be bestowed by a chief.⁵¹

The role of *ollamb* in a learned art in late medieval Ireland appears to have been gendered. The term *banollamb* (woman professor) was documented posthumously (1666) in connection with Sadhbh Uí Mhaoilchonaire (d. 1447), in a chronicle reference to her death six years after that of her husband Maoilín (d. 1441), *ollamb* in *seanchas* to the chief of Síol Muiredaigh (Co. Roscommon).⁵² It has been suggested that “a more proactive involvement in scholarship cannot be dismissed” for Sadhbh.⁵³ Her implied role, however, was in respect of dispensing hospitality, which suggests that guesting may have been the key function of the wife of an *ollamb* in late medieval Ireland. That a wife was ascribed her area of authority relative to her husband's role as *ollamb* is also implied in a chronicle description of Finnguala, wife of the historian Fearghal Ó Duibhgeannáin (d. 1344), as “the woman who was the best that was in Ireland in her own domain as the wife of a learned man.”⁵⁴ Support roles to learned men are attributed to women in the sixteenth century. Sheehan has observed that the physician Risteard Ó Conchubhair of Aghmacart (6.2), who attended Mac Giolla Phadráig, chief of Osraighe, in the second half of the sixteenth century, was by his own testimony supported in his work by female relatives.⁵⁵ If precluded by their gender from becoming an *ollamb* in a learned art, Gaelic women c.1300–1600 may well have been involved in writing and making illuminated initials or head letters,

⁴⁵ C. Lennon 2007 Pedagogy as reform: the influence of Peter White on Irish education in the Renaissance. In T. Herron and M. Potterton (eds), *Ireland in the Renaissance, c.1540–1660*, 43–51. Dublin. Four Courts Press.

⁴⁶ U 1384.12. ⁴⁷ M 1384.1, iv, 692, 693. ⁴⁸ M 1575.6, v, 1682, 1683.

⁴⁹ M 1482.2, iv, 1118, 1119. ⁵⁰ P. A. Breatnach 1983 The chief's poet. *PRIA* 83C, 37.

⁵¹ Breatnach, Chief's poet, 37–8, 67. ⁵² AMacF, i, 218; AConn 1441.2, 484, 485.

⁵³ M. Ní Dhonnchadha 2002 Courts and coteries I, c.900–1600. In A. Bourke *et al.* (eds), *The Field Day anthology of Irish writing, iv: Irish women's writing and traditions*, 300, 301, 337. New York University Press.

⁵⁴ U 1344.7, ii, 486, 487. ⁵⁵ Sheehan, Locating the Gaelic medical families, 29.





FIG. 1.1. Map of the approximated lordships of Ireland, c.1500 (map E. Campbell and S. Nylund, after K. W. Nicholls 1976 *Lordships, c.1534*). In T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin, and F. J. Byrne (eds), *A new history of Ireland, iii: early modern Ireland 1534–1691*. Oxford University Press (by permission of Oxford University Press).

as well as preparing parchment, inks, and pigments, and binding manuscripts, all of which was skilled work. In recognition that participation of Gaelic women in the arts is the invisible ink in an under-investigated area of research, the terms “literati” and “learned kindred” are used in this book except where the gender of a learned person is identified.

It was usual for an *ollamb* to serve a single lordship, but some of the more powerful learned kindreds, such as the many branches of the Mac Aodhagáin brehon lawyers, had multiple patrons.⁵⁶ In circumstances where a lordship achieved the status of an overlordship through the submission of a weaker territory, an *ollamb* normally served both the dominant and subordinate lordships (2.2).

Generally, *ollambain* did not confine themselves to their primary hereditary professions but crossed over into other allied areas of the traditional arts. Simms has observed that the poetic art was studied in law schools and that there were poetic judges of brehon law among the learned.⁵⁷ Pryce has noted some limited evidence for hybrid learned practices among Welsh-speaking *ynaid*, legal experts in thirteenth-century Gwynedd, who had expertise in both law and religious poetry.⁵⁸ Polymathy was a feature of some of the fifteenth-century Welsh professional poets, such as Gutun Owain (fl. 1450–98) who had a notable ability as a genealogist while also knowledgeable in medicine and the related field of astrology.⁵⁹ Reflecting the cross-disciplinary interests of the Gaelic *ollamb*, manuscripts of their schools tended to contain a broad range of material, not just profession-specific texts. During the sixteenth century, the Ó Duibhdábhoireann law school at Cahermacnaghten (6.1.1) in the Burren uplands (Co. Clare) had the religious text known as the *Amrae Coluimb Chille* (“Miracles or wonders of Columcille”) among its manuscript collections.⁶⁰

It was not unknown for an *ollamb* to have acquired skills and training for one profession in a school largely dedicated to another. Gréaghóir, of the Ó Maoilchonaire kindred of traditional historians, who was destined to become an *ollamb* in *seanchas*, died in 1432 while being instructed in the law school of the Mac Aodhagáin *ollamb*,⁶¹ at *Cluain Lethan* in the lordship of Urumhain (Co. Tipperary). The school was distinguished as “the capital of brehon law in Ireland” (6.1.3).⁶² It was one of two

⁵⁶ See K. Simms 1990 The brehons of later medieval Ireland. In D. Hogan and W. N. Osborough (eds), *Brehons, serjeants and attorneys: studies in the history of the Irish legal profession*, 51. Dublin. Irish Academic Press; Kelly, *A guide to early Irish law*, 253–4.

⁵⁷ K. Simms 2007 The poetic brehon lawyers of early sixteenth-century Ireland. *Ériu* 57, 21–2.

⁵⁸ Pryce, *Lawbooks and literacy*, 44–5.

⁵⁹ A. O. H. Jarman and G. R. Hughes (eds.) 1991 *A guide to Welsh literature ii: 1282–c.1550*, revised by D. Johnston (2nd ed., 1998), 240–55. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

⁶⁰ J. Bisagni (ed.) 2019 *Amrae Coluimb Chille: a critical edition*. Early Irish texts series: 1, 11–12. Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

⁶¹ U 1432, iii, 122, 125.

⁶² RIA MS 23 P 16, 1408–11, *Leabhar breac: the Speckled book*, 206. Dublin. Royal Irish Academy. J. Ó Longáin and J. J. Gilbert (eds) 1876, *Leabhar Breac, the Speckled Book* . . . ii, 38. Dublin. Royal Irish Academy.

locations where the *Leabhar breac* (“Speckled book”), which contained literature as well as religious and biblical material, was compiled between 1408 and 1411.⁶³ That text is likely to have formed part of Gréaghóir Ó Maoilchonaire’s multidisciplinary instruction.

Hybridity in learned arts was also expressed in the names of some learned kindreds. Two distinguished branches of the Mac an Ghabhann kindred were respective traditional historians to the Ó Cinnéide, chief of Urumhain and to the Ó Lochlainn, chief of Boireann.⁶⁴ The name translates as “son of the smith,” which suggests that its bearers had origins as high-level *ceird*. The Mac an Ghabhann historians of Urumhain are remembered in the townland name Ballygown, at Silvermines in Co. Tipperary.⁶⁵ The most famous of that learned lineage was Mac Raith Mac an Ghabhann na Sgéal, who wrote genealogies of Irish saints and kings in the mid-fourteenth century.⁶⁶ It is of interest that the condition of being many sided among learned kindreds is shared with the Gaelic legendary warrior-hunter and border hero Fionn mac Cumhaill, who exercised the *mentalité* of literati in late-medieval Ireland. Fionn (Finn) was the central figure of the literary genre known as *fianaigeacht* (Finn cycle of tales). Stories of the hero and his *fian* or wild band were documented from perhaps as early as the eighth century, but may have been based on a preceding oral tradition.⁶⁷ They became the foremost literary form by the late medieval period—in ballads, lays, and prose—and continued in popularity into the seventeenth century and later, in Ireland and Scotland.⁶⁸ Fionn has been interpreted by Nagy as “a markedly rich and many-sided character with diverse functions,” who, as an outsider, possessed the power and wisdom of a poet, while simultaneously having access to legal knowledge and the crafts of the leech and the smith.⁶⁹ In this study, Fionn is defined as epitomizing a particular borderland space in Gaelic polities, which was largely peculiar to poets (2.3).

The schools of *ollambain* were dedicated to preserving and transmitting the Gaelic arts, but they were also adaptive to changing political circumstances as seen in the

⁶³ T. Ó Concheanainn 1973 The scribe of the “Leabhar breac.” *Ériu* 24, 64–7.

⁶⁴ M 1425.12, iv, 866, 867.

⁶⁵ J. S. Brewer, and W. Bullen (eds) 1867 *Calendar of the Carew manuscripts, 1515–1574*, i, 165. London. Longmans, Green and Co. An entry for 1540 renders Ballygown “Bealathagoyn” from the Irish *Béal Átha Gabhann* (“mouth of the ford of the smith”).

⁶⁶ MS Rawl. B. 486, part iv: miscellany, including historical narratives, genealogies of saints and others, lists of kings, etc. Oxford. Bodleian Library; F. J. Byrne 1979 *A thousand years of Irish script: an exhibition of Irish manuscripts in Oxford libraries*, 21. Oxford. Bodleian Library.

⁶⁷ K. Murray 2012 Interpreting the evidence: problems with dating the early *fianaigeacht* corpus. In S. J. Arbuthnot and G. Parsons (eds), *The Gaelic Finn tradition*, i, 31–49. Dublin. Four Courts Press; J. F. Nagy 1985 *The wisdom of the outlaw: the boyhood deeds of Finn in Gaelic narrative tradition*, 1–3. Berkeley. University of California Press.

⁶⁸ K. Murray 2005 Fenian cycle. In Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland*, 166–7. Among the most important collections of these are the seventeenth-century Irish *Duanaire Finn* and those in the Scottish *Book of the dean of Lismore* dated to the sixteenth century.

⁶⁹ Nagy, *Wisdom of the outlaw*, 17, 33.

sixteenth century (6.4). They served the interests of Gaelic chiefs and Old English lords, supporting them with genealogies and histories, legal and medical expertise, religious texts, poetry, and more. Latin and grammar were taught, in addition to specific arts.⁷⁰ The testimony of a fifteenth-century poet suggests that Gaelic schools of that period were seasonal, convening in early winter and breaking up at the end of spring, a cycle that would have facilitated the land-based activities of learned kindred estates (3.3).⁷¹ Glimpses of schools at work in the sixteenth century suggest that a dozen or more might convene to compile a manuscript under the direction of an *ollamb* (6.1, 6.4).⁷²

It was usual for an *ollamb* and attendant scribes to travel to copy texts kept at other schools. In that way, a book could be created for the use and prestige of the school. This peripatetic practice had a crucial role in generating networks of scholarly communities. It characterized much of the schools' work. There is especially good evidence in formal colophons and casual *marginalia* written on manuscript pages in the sixteenth century for such communities of practice. Scribes visiting or participating in other schools wrote revealing comments in the margins of manuscripts, sometimes referring to contemporary political events, to the company they were keeping, the date, and their place and conditions of writing. This common practice was in some sense epistolary, since personal inscriptions would be viewed and sometimes responded to by others working on the same manuscript. The operation of such a network is evident in *marginalia* penned by named learned men during the compilation of the book of the brehon lawyer Domhnall Ó Duibhdábhoireann (6.1.2).

Some learned networks extended to western Scotland—perhaps not surprisingly, because, as McLeod has observed, the principal poetic and medical kindreds, as well as sculptors and goldsmiths, of late medieval and early modern Gaelic Scotland, originated in Ireland.⁷³ One of the more remarkable exchanges in the late sixteenth century was between the hereditary physicians of Lorn and Islay in western Scotland and those of the province of Connacht and the lordship of Osraighe in Ireland (6.2).⁷⁴ Such networks must have led to exchange of ideas—not just about manuscripts, but also about the buildings in which they were produced and housed, and more generally about the physical environment of the landholdings in which learned kindreds lived, worked, and farmed.

⁷⁰ E. Campion 1571 (reprint 1809) *A historie of Irland, written in the yeare 1571*, 25–6. Dublin. Hibernia Press.

⁷¹ O. Bergin (ed. and tr.) 1970 *Irish bardic poetry*, 147–8, 280. Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

⁷² Campion, *Historie of Irland*, 26.

⁷³ McLeod, *Divided Gaels*, 106, notes a “close correspondence” between Gaelic Ireland and Gaelic Scotland in respect of the organization of the learned professions, but not to the extent of supporting an argument for a single “culture-province.”

⁷⁴ Bannerman, *The Beatons*, 116–17.

1.2 A NEW APPROACH

It is possible to achieve a long-term perspective on the roles and lifeways of literati, beyond the usual functions attributed to them in written records, by investigating their lived experience in the landscapes of their estates and in the spaces where they were situated in the political map. A unique opportunity to explore the archaeology of social hierarchy, beneath the level of Gaelic chiefs and Old English lords, is presented by the large number of known estates, schools, and residences of learned kindreds. Ninety-four estates were consulted for this study, which is by no means exhaustive (Fig. 1.2; Appendix). The findings are supported by field-based case studies conducted on estates in ten counties, including excavations in law school settlements at Cahermacnaghten, Co. Clare and Ballyorley, Co. Wexford (6.1.1, 6.1.2).⁷⁵ The choice of individual sites for high-resolution study largely reflects the survival of built heritage on learned kindred estates and authoritative historical references linked with locations of specific families between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. Detailed survey and excavations on the Cahermacnaghten estate of the Ó Duibhdábhoireann brehon lawyers have yielded some significant findings for this study (Figs. 1.3; 4.2, 6.1.1).⁷⁶

1.2.1 *Theorizing relationships between territory and learned kindreds*

The primary late medieval territorial unit of Ireland was the lordship (*oireacht/pobal*), variously ruled by Gaelic chiefs (*taoiseach*, pl. *taoisigh*) and by Old English lords of Anglo-Norman origin (Fig. 1.1).⁷⁷ The islandwide map of politics was a great jigsaw of mostly collective names, incorporating those of ancestors.⁷⁸ Chiefs claimed their titles through the male line and were commonly addressed by their surnames, such as the Ó Domhnaill and the Ó Lochlainn.⁷⁹ This form of title is also found among some Old English lords who had adopted Gaelic practices. For example, Richard Óg was

⁷⁵ Archaeological surveys were conducted at Ballymacegan and Redwood (Co. Tipperary), Ballyorley and Pallis (Co. Wexford), Cahermacnaghten, Toomullin and Lettermoylan/Formoyle (Co. Clare), Dromnea (Co. Cork), Dysart and Syonan (Co. Westmeath), Inishmore, Kilboglashy, Killerry and Kilglass-Lackan (Co. Sligo), Kilbarron and Ballymacaward (Co. Donegal), Kilronan (Co. Roscommon), Kilcloony and Park (Co. Galway), and Smarmore (Co. Louth); The excavation at Ballyorley (Co. Wexford) was directed by C. Ó Drisceoil (license E001065) for the O'Doran Law School Project.

⁷⁶ E. FitzPatrick and R. Clutterbuck 2013a Late medieval/early post-medieval Gaelic schoolhouse. In I. Bennett (ed.), *Excavations 2010: summary accounts of excavations in Ireland*, 26–7. Dublin. Wordwell; E. FitzPatrick 2011 Cahermacnaghten: late medieval/early post-medieval building. In I. Bennett (ed.), *Excavations 2008: summary accounts of excavations in Ireland*, 41–3. Dublin. Wordwell.

⁷⁷ Nicholls, *Gaelic and gaelicised Ireland*, 8–11, 21–5.

⁷⁸ F. J. Byrne 1973 *Irish kings and high-kings*, 93. London. Batsford; P. Woulfe 1923 (reprint 1993) *Sloinnnte Gaedheal is Gall: Irish names and surnames*, 685–96. Baltimore. Genealogical Publishing.

⁷⁹ Simms, *From kings to warlords*, 34–5.

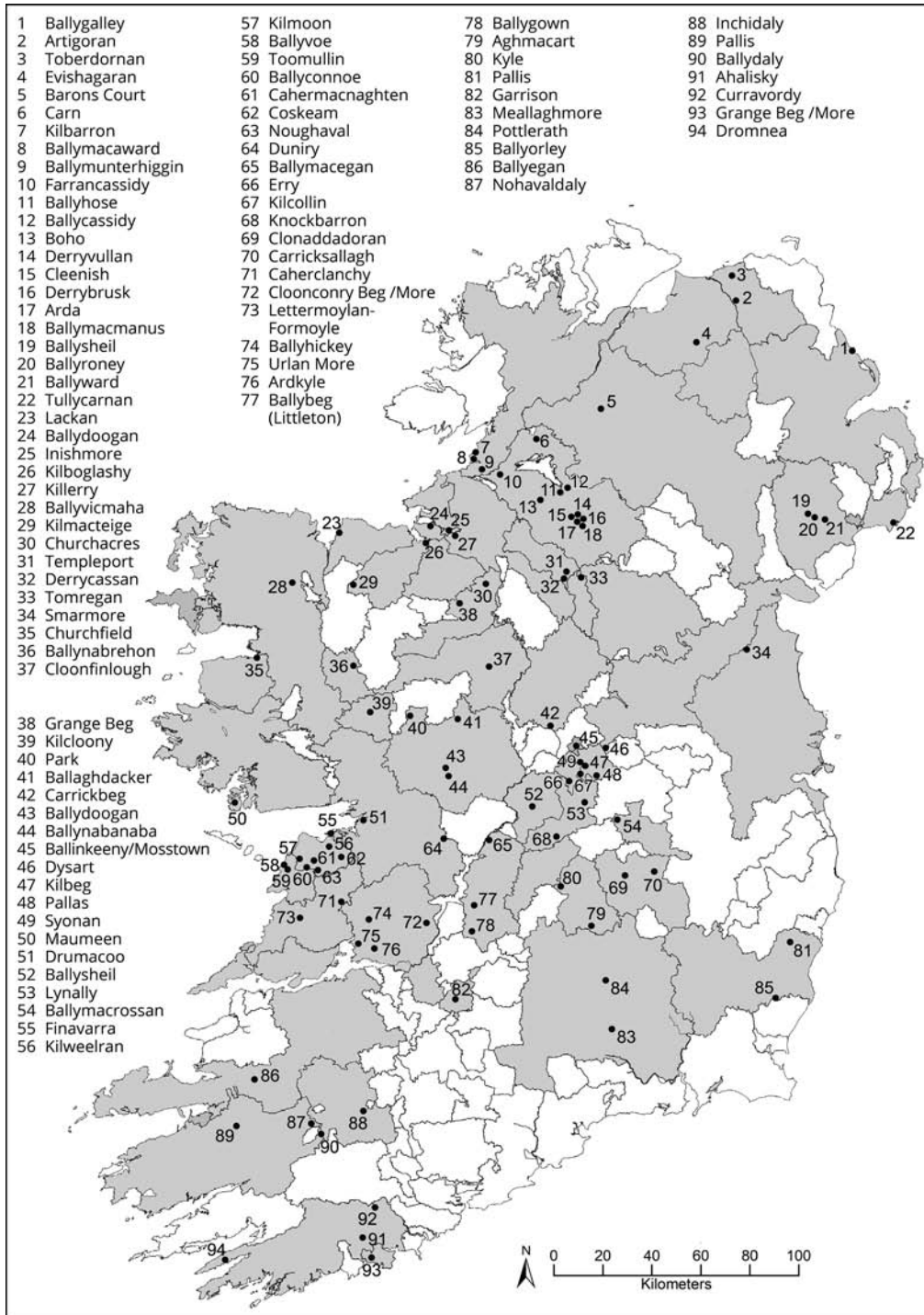


FIG. 1.2. Distribution of learned kindred estates and centers of learned activity in the lordships of Ireland consulted for this study. Use in conjunction with Appendix table (map N. McCarthy and S. Nylund).



FIG. 1.3. Excavation in *Teach Breac*, Cahermacnaghten (photo E. FitzPatrick).

the first of the Connacht branch of the Anglo-Norman family of de Burgo or Burke to carry the title “Mac Uilliam Uachtair”, indicating that he was the leader of the “upper” or Co. Galway sept of the family.⁸⁰ Throughout the Gaelic lordships of Ireland, territory and landholding were framed by a concept of geography as lineage.⁸¹ The bond between people and place is evident in the broad meaning of the words *oireacht* and *pobal*, an assembly of people together with their chief and territory.⁸²

The map of the lordships of Ireland used in modern scholarship (Fig. 1.1) is based on early modern maps and surveys, mainly drawn up by English cartographers serving the Tudor administration in Ireland, with the intention of recording the strategic places of Gaelic lordships.⁸³ It is also founded on back-projecting boundaries from later English administrative units, such as the barony and county. The hard lines used to delineate the boundaries of a Gaelic lordship may be convenient spatial measures, but they do not reflect the reality of the *oireacht*. Gaelic chiefs, apparently, did not commission maps of their territories. There is no surviving evidence for or record of

⁸⁰ See Nicholls, *Gaelic and gaelicised Ireland*, 146–8.

⁸¹ J. Leerssen 1994 *The contention of the bards (Iomarbhágh na bhfileadh) and its place in Irish political and literary history*, 17. Irish Texts Society subsidiary series: 2. London. Irish Texts Society.

⁸² Nicholls, *Gaelic and gaelicised Ireland*, 225.

⁸³ See, for instance, MPF 1/36, 1602–3, A map of the southern part of Ulster, Ireland, by Richard Bartlett. Kew. National Archives; M. Escobar 2003 *Exploration, cartography and the modernisation of state power*. In N. Brenner, B. Jessop, M. Jones, and G. MacLeod (eds), *State/space: a reader*, 33. Oxford. Blackwell.