

Series editors' preface

The study of early modern Ireland has experienced a renaissance since the 1990s, with the publication of major monographs examining developments in the country during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from a variety of different perspectives. Nonetheless, these works still tend to group around traditional topics in political, military or religious history, and significant gaps remain. The idea behind this new series is to identify key themes for exploration and thereby set the agenda for future research. Manchester University Press, a leading academic press with a strong record of publishing Irish-related material, is the ideal home for this venture.

This interdisciplinary collection seeks to situate the Irish lords and chieftains, both Gaelic and 'Old English', and their courts, within a broader European, Renaissance context. While noble and princely courts have long been central to discussions of the Renaissance in Europe, they have not to date featured in the historiography of Tudor and early Stuart Ireland, which instead emphasises the central (and centralising) role of the English royal court from the reign of Henry VIII onwards. By adopting the chronological framework of the Northern Renaissance (*c.*1400–*c.*1625), the volume pursues a deeper understanding of the impact of the mid-sixteenth-century English intervention, by retrieving the cultural vibrancy and adaptability of the self-governing Irish lords that dominated most of the country until then. Their courts reflected a range of powerful influences, external (Continental, Scottish, English) as well as internal, novel as well as traditional. From this foundation, the ensuing English conquest and colonisation of the island can be seen as part of a wider Renaissance process of intrusion by a powerful aggrandising state into a neighbouring and diverse autonomous region. The emergence of Ireland as a major political issue at the English court is also addressed here for the first time, while the subsequent displacement or reorientation of local Irish rulers and their courts is identified as one of the key issues in the reshaping of early modern Ireland. We anticipate that the volume will generate much rigorous debate and further discussion.

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