

All the Tudors until Elizabeth had pressing matters in England that precluded any serious action in Ireland. Henry VIII had tried to take control of Ireland cheaply and easily. In order to do so, Sir Anthony St. Ledger, Lord Deputy of Ireland, developed the policy of surrender and regrant in 1541.¹ This policy offered an English noble title to any chieftain who would surrender his land to the crown. The crown would then grant the land back to the chieftain, thus making him an English nobleman. Along with the title came the duty to adopt the English language, take an English name, support the king with arms, and generally support the transformation of Ireland into England.²

The surrender and regrant system appealed to Irish chieftains because they thought they could use it to their own advantage. The Irish leaders were not naive savages; they weighed the possible advantages and disadvantages of an agreement with Dublin Castle, the seat of the English government in Ireland.³ One advantage the chieftains saw was the adoption of English inheritance principles. Traditional Irish practice, a political system called tanistry, tended to result in succession disputes that often led to armed combat. The term tanistry comes from the Irish tanaiste, meaning second or successor. According

to Irish law, a clan selected only the best and most able man as chieftain. This leader was decided upon at a meeting of the clan. Often several clan members believed themselves to be most worthy and were willing to prove it. A dispute could be settled by force of arms or by the splitting of the clan.⁴ This habit of splitting clans explains the number of clans with the same surname, for example, the O'Neills and the O'Neills of Clandeboye.

An English title was subject to English inheritance laws based on primogeniture. This gave a ruling chieftain the ability to determine his successor since he could adopt whomever he wished. The English-recognized heir could then gain aid from the Dublin government to suppress his rivals; this strategy ensured the continuation of the dead chieftain's lineage in power. The basic problem with surrender and regrant was that it violated the laws of Gaelic Ireland.

Under Brehon law, the legal code of Gaelic Ireland, a chieftain did not own land. Clans corporately controlled land. The chieftain controlled people, their labor, and their goods. He mainly ensured the clan's defense and attempted to increase its holdings through warfare. This system did not allow a chieftain to alienate land from

the rest of the clan and then receive it back as a feudal grant to which he held sole title.⁵

The difference between English and Irish law regarding surrender and regrant came to an explosive head under Shane the O'Neill. When Shane's father, Con Bacach, had been the O'Neill, he surrendered the O'Neill lands and the crown titled him the first earl of Tyrone in 1542. After Con died, Brehon law and English law recognized different successors. The clan O'Neill selected Shane to be the O'Neill while English law recognized Con's young son Matthew as the Baron Dungannon and the next earl of Tyrone.⁶

Shane resorted to force of arms to secure his claim. The queen asked Shane to travel to London to explain the situation. When asked to defend his actions, he responded, "But I am the true heir by the law of God and man, being the first son of my father born in lawful wedlock and called O'Neill by the common consent of chiefs and people according to the laws of our ancestors called tanistry, by which the man grown is to be preferred before the boy...."⁷ Shane never became the earl of Tyrone, nor did his successor Turlough. The second earl of Tyrone became the last great leader of the Gaelic world, Hugh the O'Neill.

The English attempted to alter the Irish leadership in Ulster by taking young Hugh O'Neill, Matthew's son, to England for protection from Shane. After Shane's death at the hand of the MacDonalds, who sent his head to decorate Dublin Castle, Turlough became the O'Neill.⁸ For his own reasons Turlough seemed to be less concerned with the English than Shane and spent most of his tenure in disputes with his Irish rivals instead of with the crown. The lull in the North allowed the Dublin government to concentrate its forces on the powerful Old English lords in Munster.⁹

The surrender and regrant policy placed any who agreed to it under the crown's authority. In English eyes it made the Irish chieftain subject to English law. Elizabeth and her administrators considered Irish chieftains who defended their freedom not as hostile foreigners, but as rebellious subjects. By enforcing surrender and regrant agreements, which the crown received from every major chieftain, the Elizabethan government believed that it legally controlled all of Gaelic Ireland.¹⁰

The surrender and regrant agreements provided the English with the legal justification for their armed incursions into Gaelic Ireland. The queen's men used

force to rein in the powerful Irish leaders. The equally powerful Old English lords also had to be dealt with before the English crown could be the sole political power in Ireland. Regarding the Old English lords, the crown hoped only to remind them that they were already subjects of the English crown and that they should act accordingly.

The fate of the Old English leaders showed the crown's desire to bring Ireland into line with the rest of the queen's possessions. Eliminating the traditional Irish lifestyle, while a part of the plan, was not the only objective. Destroying the power of the Old English lords was a major policy goal of the Dublin government. Some Old English families had become powers in their own right and, to further annoy the English, had adapted to Irish culture. Many had made marriage alliances with the Irish and some heads of families had started to see themselves as chieftains rather than noblemen.

In his View of the Present State of Ireland, Edmund Spenser described areas of Irish life he believed needed to be eliminated. Some were minor (Irish hair and clothes) and some major (Irish religion and leaders). Yet none of these were more important to Spenser than the Irish freedom of movement. Only after their freedom had been

taken away could they be reformed.

The Irish kept cattle and moved them seasonally to new grazing land, setting up temporary camps here and there across the countryside. This way of life could not be accepted by the English. According to Spenser, these camps or booleys (buaile in Irish), allowed thieves and "loose people" a place to hide and "finde reliefe, ... being vppon the wast places, wheras els they should be driven shortely to starve or to come down to the towne to steal reliefe where by one meanes or other they would sone be Caughte: besides such stealthes of Cattell as they make they bring comunlye to thes Bollyes wheare they are receaved readilye and the theif Harbored from danger of lawe or such officers as might light vppon him".¹¹

As well as a gathering place for outlaws, booleys existed "beyond the pale" of civility (a phrase derived from the pale or palisade which protected the northern portions the English colony from the Irish in Ulster). In a booley it was thought men could behave however they wanted. They could and, according to Spenser, did fall prey to their basest nature. "Moreover the people that live in these Bollies growe theare by the more Barbarous and live more licentiously then they could in towns vsinge

what meanes they will either against private men whom they maligne by stealing their goods or murdering themselves; for there they thinke themselves halfe exempted from lawe and obedience and having once tasted freedom doe like a steere that hath bene long out of his yoke grudge and repine ever after to come under rule again".¹² Spenser and his countrymen believed that any man would revert to a barbarous state if the yoke of civility were removed.

While the English feared that any man could easily toss off the yoke of civilization, they also knew that even the wildest of the Irish could be yoked. The English hoped that if the Irish leaders could be removed, their followers would adopt English ways. Spenser blamed the trouble in Ireland on the leaders: "all the Rebellions which youe see from time to tyme happen in Ireland are not begone by the common people but by the lordes and Captines of Countries upon pride or willful obstynacie against the government."¹³ Like the English government, Spenser was sure that all of Ireland already legally belonged to the English and that only a few rebellious subjects stood between violence and peace.

Spenser saw no difference between an Irish chieftain resisting English attacks against his clan and an Old

English noble resisting governmental attempts to curb his power. The government agreed with Spenser. The Dublin government's quest was to eliminate any power in Ireland that could stand against Dublin Castle; it did not care whether that power was Gaelic like the O'Neill and O'Donnell or Old English like the Butlers and Fitzgeralds.

The Fitzgeralds and Butlers had come to Ireland during the Norman invasion. By the fourteenth century the head of those families were the earls of Desmond and Ormond respectively and between them they controlled most of southern Ireland.¹⁴ By the 1560s, the Desmonds and Ormonds had become bitter rivals. Warfare between the two houses broke out in 1565.

Enraged that two of her noble families were warring on each other with private armies, the queen demanded that the heads of both families appear in London. Private warring had ended in England a century earlier, with the rise of the centralized Tudor monarchy. When the Old English leaders arrived, the queen received 20,000 pounds from each as a bond of good behavior. While the earl of Ormond, Black Tom Butler, stayed at court for years helping himself and his house, the earl of Desmond, Gerald Fitzgerald, spent his time in London "under virtual house

arrest" until his release in 1573.¹⁵ Black Tom received this light treatment because he had been more politically active than Desmond and had friends at court.

The instability caused by this dispute presented an opening for English adventurers. Both the adventurers and the English government in Dublin believed that the queen would be better served by replacing the troublesome and powerful Old English lords of Munster with stable and loyal Englishmen.¹⁶ The major drawback of this plan was that it placed the Butlers and Fitzgerlds in a position where their best option was to join together against those trying to take their land.

Peter Carew, an English knight, saw in the unstable Munster countryside an opportunity for land and wealth. Carew claimed to have rights to land in Munster by an ancient Norman connection, so he hired a lawyer to prove his claim.¹⁷ When Edmund Butler fought Carew in the English-controlled courts of Dublin, Butler lost. Butler could only defend his ancestral lands with force of arms.¹⁸

Edmund Butler of the House of Ormond stressed that he rose in defense of his land and not against the queen. His rising fused together the rival houses when James

Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald joined his cause. Fitzmaurice fought to protect his family and its interests, but he also fought for his faith. This religious factor would change the complexion of war in Ireland forever.¹⁹ Not until the rebellion of Fitzmaurice did the religious issue become important to the Irish.

In A View of the Present State of Ireland, Spenser broached the question of religious reform in Ireland. He concluded that the time was not right. "Instruction in religion nedethe quiett times and ere we seke to settle a sound dicipline in the clergie we must purchase peace unto the loyalty for it is ill time to preach amongst swordes...."²⁰ Spenser likened Ireland to an ill man, "for if youe should knowe a wicked persone dangerously sicke havinge now bothe soule and bodye sore diseased, yeat both recoverable, woulde ye not think it ill advizement to bringe the preacher before the phisicion".²¹ He believed that Ireland's political and social ills needed to be solved before her religion could be reformed.

Spenser saw only one real problem with Irish religion: "they are all Papistes." Besides that they were poorly informed, "but in the same so blindly and brutishly enformed for the most part as that ye would rather think them

Atheists or infidells but not one amongst a hundred knoweth any ground of religion anie article of his faith but can saie his peter noster or his Ave Maria."22

Spenser hoped that the reformation of the Irish Church would follow the precedent set by the English Church under Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth. During that reformation the crown utilized its power, with the aid of parliament, to legislate the Catholic Church underground or out of existence.²³ The crown could only hope that Ireland would go through the same process. Political control would lead to the crown's ability to peacefully yet completely remove the Catholic Church from Ireland at a later date.

While Spenser planned to wait until the civil problems had been solved by Elizabeth's victory, the Catholics hoped to rally support for their defense against a heretical queen. In 1570 Elizabeth officially became a heretic when Pope Pious V issued the bull Regnans in Excelsis, ordering Elizabeth's Catholic subjects to rebel against her. Those Catholics already fighting in Ireland hoped to gain support from the Mother Church and her continental allies.²⁴

Philip II of Spain was a good son of the Church.

The Irish desperately hoped to gain his aid, while the English desperately feared they would. The English worried that Ireland or Scotland would be used as a route of invasion. During the late sixteenth century the Irish lords courted aid from Spain, and Mary Queen of Scots played her connections to the French court to the hilt. Hugh the last O'Neill wrote to Philip in 1595, "Our only hope of re-establishing the Catholic religion rests on your assistance. Now or never our Church must be succoured."²⁵ Philip showed interest in helping the Irish, but only a minor interest; the needs of his vast empire kept his attention away from Ireland.²⁶

The fear of Spanish intervention in Ireland explains some of the ferocity the English exhibited during the sixteenth century. The English used brutal, so called "extra - legal", tactics designed to terrorize and starve the Irish populace into living in more orderly and "civil" ways. The English believed that Irish lifeways, portions of which had been adopted by the Old English, were as great a threat to English-style living as a Spanish invasion. If the English could not reform Irish customs, they feared that they themselves might adopt those customs, degenerate and end up like the Irish. This fear showed how thin a veneer the English believed their civility to be. Some

English were well aware that their ancestors painted themselves blue. Sir Thomas Smith wrote in 1572 that he was aware "how England was as uncivil as Ireland until colonies of Romans brought their laws and orders, whose moulds no nation, not even the Italians and Romans, have more straitly and truly kept".²⁷

While the English believed that the Irish needed both political and religious reform, they also believed that a proper education would do the trick. Spenser claimed that political warfare in Ireland was caused by disgruntled, unruly, and over-mighty leaders. The solution to such a problem was clear: raise a generation of Irish leaders to be loyal to the crown. Humphrey Gilbert at one point suggested taking the children of Irish leaders and raising them in the English court in order to train them and, if necessary, to use them as hostages for their families' good behavior.²⁸

This idea was tried out with an heir of the earl of Tyrone, Hugh O'Neill, the Baron Dungannon. Hugh received the supposed benefits of an English upbringing, mainly because the English hoped someday he would be able to counter the power of his uncle, Shane the O'Neill. The English took Hugh to England to educate him and to protect

him from his powerful uncle. Shane did not have the boy's interests at heart since the boy's father had been Matthew, the brother Shane contested for the title of Earl of Tyrone. The need to protect the younger O'Neill became obvious when Turlough killed Matthew in a power struggle.²⁹ At court Hugh would be safe from his political rivals and could be trained in proper and loyal English style-living.

The hope was that Hugh would be able to take his place as the leader of the clan O'Neill. Behaving as an English nobleman, Hugh would be able to introduce English-style living into Ulster. For a while it looked as if the plan was working. Hugh helped the English put down some of his rivals in the North for which he was elevated to the earldom of Tyrone.³⁰ English hopes were dashed when Hugh rebelled in 1596, starting what has come to be called the "Nine Years War" or Tyrone's Rebellion.

Hugh O'Neill used his position vis-à-vis the Dublin government to aid the planning of his rebellion. He suggested that in order to ensure peace in the North he be allowed to maintain a small garrison. Since this force would stand between the pale and the "Wylde" Irish, the government agreed. This force served as the core of

Tyrone's army, and they were armed with weapons provided by the English, purchased from Scotland, and later given by the Spanish king.³¹ This force received training from English officers, Irishmen who had deserted the queen's service, and later Spaniards sent by Philip II and after his death in 1598 his son, Philip III.³²

Tyrone's uprising did the two things the English most feared. First, it made common cause with other powerful Irish leaders, like the O'Donnell and the Macarthy More. Second, it finally involved the king of Spain. The king's observers convinced Philip that O'Neill's uprising was truly a religious war and started to believe that the O'Neill would prove a serious problem to the English. The king agreed to aid the rebels by sending an expeditionary force to Ireland to help the O'Neill.³³

The size of the expeditionary force and the location of its landing were subject to much thought by the Irish and their Spanish allies. The first attempt at a landing failed when the Spanish fleet ran into foul weather - "a Protestant Wind" - and had to return to Spain. The second attempt in 1601 succeeded in landing a force of some 3,400 men at the Irish town of Kinsale.³⁴ This landing location in the southeast of Ireland was not only easier for the

fleet to reach but also would force O'Neill to take his uprising out of Ulster. O'Neill knew that he could not win by merely defending Ulster; instead he would have to expand his area of operations. Linking up with Spanish forces in Munster seemed a good plan. Munster, which had been devastated by the Butler and Desmond revolts, had felt the harshness of English occupation for many years. O'Neill and his men hoped that the presence of the rebels and their Spanish allies would enlist the countryside to the Irish cause. By this time the O'Neill's cause was not just familial but nationalistic. He hoped to establish a Gaelic Free State with the help of the Spanish.³⁵

As is widely known, the formation of the Irish free state did not occur in 1601. It was declared in 1916 and accepted by the British in 1922. What happened at Kinsale was a disaster for the Irish. After traveling the length of the country, they were forced to engage the English in a pitched battle, never their strong suit. They attempted to use the very complex infantry strategy of their Spanish allies. The battle turned quickly for the English, the Spanish never sallied forth from their fortified positions, and the Irish were routed. The O'Neill kept his rebellion up for another two years, but in 1603 he surrendered and agreed to live under English law.

After four years of living under English rule the O'Neill left Ireland forever. Traveling to the continent, he kept trying to raise support for his cause.³⁶ Thus 1607 marks the end of the English crown's problem with one native chief and the beginning of its problems with another.

Notes for Chapter One

- 1) Steven G. Ellis, Tudor Ireland: Crown, Community and the Conflict of Cultures 1470-1603 (New York: Longman, 1985), 137.
- 2) Ibid., 138.
- 3) Mary O'Dowd, "Gaelic Economy and Society," in Natives and Newcomers: essays on the Making of Irish colonial society, 1534-1641, ed. Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie (Suffolk: Chaucer Press, 1986), 135.
- 4) Ellis, Tudor Ireland, 41.
- 5) Ibid., 42.
- 6) Ibid., 238.
- 7) Grenfell Morton, Elizabethan Ireland (Bristol: Longman, 1971),
- 8) Cyrill Falls, Elizabeth's Irish Wars (London: Methuen, 1950), 99.
- 9) Ellis, Tudor Ireland, 261.
- 10) Ibid., 337.
- 11) The Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, Frederick Morgan Padelford and Ray Heffner, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1958,), 10:98.
- 12) Ibid..
- 13) Ibid., 205.
- 14) Morton, Elizabethan Ireland, 11.
- 15) Ibid., 45.
- 16) Ibid., 46.
- 17) Edward M. Hinton, Ireland through Tudor Eyes (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935), 19.
- 18) Ibid., 20-22.

- 19) Morton, Elizabethan Ireland, 47.
- 20) The Works of Spenser, 10:138.
- 21) Ibid., 139.
- 22) Ibid., 136.
- 23) G.R. Elton, The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 395-423.
- 24) Morton, Elizabethan Ireland, 47.
- 25) Ibid., 127.
- 26) Ellis, Tudor Ireland, 300.
- 27) David Beers Quinn, "Sir Thomas Smith (1513-1577) and the Beginings of English Colonial Theory," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 89, no. 4, (December 1945), 346.
- 28) David Beers Quinn ed., The Voyages and Colonising Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Hakulyt Society 2nd. ser., vol. 83, (London: 1940), 127.
- 29) Ellis, Tudor Ireland, 24.
- 30) Ibid., 285.
- G.A. Hayes-McCoy, "The Completion of the Tudor Conquest and the Advance of the Counter-Reformation 1571-1603," A New History of Ireland (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 3:112.
- 31) Ibid., 125.
- 32) Ellis, Tudor Ireland, 300-301.
- 33) Ibid., 309.
- 34) Ibid., 304.
- 35) Ibid., 307.
- 36) Hiram Morgan, "The End of Gaelic Ulster: a thematic interpretation of the events between 1534 and 1610," in Irish Historical Studies, 24, no. 101 (May 1988), 31.

Chapter Two:

During their attempt to subdue Ireland, the Elizabethans also encountered the native inhabitants of Virginia. While the English felt animosity towards the Irish that only several hundred years of close contact could bring, they were more hopeful regarding their relations with the Indians. Unknown to the English, Virginia held leaders that rivaled the O'Neill or Fitzmaurice - Wahunsenacawh or Powhatan and Opechancanough. Both Indians would hold the title mamanatowick and defend their domains to the best of their considerable abilities.

Elizabethan adventurers attempted to colonize two different areas of Virginia. The first area was Roanoke Island on the Outer Banks of what is now North Carolina; the second was the tidewater region of the present state of Virginia. The area around Roanoke Island the English believed to be called Winginadoca by the natives, although that was most likely not the case.¹ The tidewater region of Virginia was called Tsencommacah or "the densely-peopled land" by its inhabitants.² In the area of Roanoke Island the English encountered several different groups of