



Medieval Ireland (New Gill History of Ireland 1): The Enduring Tradition - Ireland from the Coming of Christianity to the Reformation

Michael Richter

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Medieval Ireland – The Enduring Tradition, the first instalment in the *New Gill History of Ireland* series, offers an overview of Irish history from the coming of Christianity in the fifth century to the Reformation in the sixteenth, concentrating on Ireland's cultural and social life and highlighting Irish society's inherent stability in an very unstable period.

Such a broad survey reveals features otherwise not easily detected. For all the complexity of political developments, Irish society remained basically stable and managed to withstand the onslaught of both the Vikings and the English. The inherent strength of Ireland consisted in the cultural heritage from pre-historic times, which remained influential throughout the centuries discussed in Professor Michael Richter's engaging and informative book.

Irish history has traditionally been described either in isolation or in the manner in which it was influenced by outside forces, especially by England. This book strikes a different balance. First, the time span covered is longer than usual, and more attention is paid to the early medieval centuries than to the later period. Secondly, less emphasis is placed in this book on the political or military history of Ireland than on general social and cultural aspects. As a result, a more mature interpretation of medieval Ireland emerges, one in which social and cultural norms inherited from pre-historic times are seen to survive right through the Middle Ages. They gave Irish society a stability and inherent strength unparalleled in Europe. Christianity came in as an additional, enriching factor.

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