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Daniell, Christopher. Atlas of Early Modern Britain, 1485–1715

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Daniell, Christopher.

Atlas of Early Modern Britain, 1485–1715.

New York: Routledge, 2014. Pp. 147 + 117 maps. ISBN 978-0-415-52177-2 (hardcover) \$195.

In 1621, the English clergyman Peter Heylyn published a series of lectures on historical geography entitled *Microcosmus, or a Little Description of the Great World* (London, 1621). Musing early on about the relationship between his two modes of exposition, he declared that “As Geographie without Historie hath life and motion but at randome, and unstable: so Historie without Geographie like a dead carkasse hath neither life nor motion at all” (Heylyn, 11). For Heylyn, it was clear that events have both a history and a geography to them; thus, both discursive modes are integral to any attempt to understand why the past unfolded the way that it did.

The publishers of undergraduate history texts have long appreciated that space conditions the progression of events, and accordingly have tended to supplement their narratives with maps highlighting topography’s influence on history. But Christopher Daniell’s new *Atlas of Early Modern Britain* offers a more sophisticated attempt to capture the geography of history in the period between the coronation of Henry VII and the death of Queen Anne, intended, his publishers claim, to serve as “an indispensable background and reference resource for all students of the early modern period” (i). While this overstates the case, the result is certainly a useful and, at times, challenging resource.

The atlas is comprised of 117 black and white maps organized into four thematic sections: geography and counties; politics and wars; religion; and economy and culture. Some of the maps are fairly conventional in their focus. There are, for instance, maps that show the physical geography of Britain (map 1), the distribution of languages (map 105), the location of specialist industries (map 97), the route of the Spanish Armada (map 30) and the military situation at various points during the civil war (maps 43–46).

But the strength of this collection comes with those maps where the spatial representation of historical data actually enhances the understanding of the particular events. Map 27, for instance, plots the regions through which Mary Queen of Scots made her progressions in the period between 1562 and 1566. This demonstrates quite clearly the importance of Edinburgh and central Scotland to her thinking. Map 84 locates the sites where Protestants were

burned under Mary between 1555 and 1558. But far from underscoring the brutality of the regime and confirming Mary's popular epithet of "bloody," the depiction of the geographical distribution of these executions makes clear how limited and precisely targeted the queen's policy actually was. Elsewhere, other maps, when taken together, alert the user to particular points of social and political tension. Map 41, for instance, depicts the counties that petitioned for the abolition of the episcopacy in 1641. But read in the context of map 86, which shows the distribution of Catholics at the same time, it is clear that some counties were deeply divided along confessional lines as the civil war broke out.

In all of his maps, Daniell's emphasis is on the spatiality of events. Accordingly, he tries to keep text to a minimum. What narrative he provides is usually limited to a short paragraph (generally a sentence or two) that contextualizes the subject matter of the map; this is often supplemented by explanatory captions located within the map itself. In many cases, though, this is inadequate for his intended audience. Map 3, for instance, entitled "Tudor expansion of the County of Northumberland," is presented without any explanation as if the context and significance of the data are self-evident. Nor would it be clear to the untutored student why the fairly stark, unembellished depictions of the baronies of Cumberland (map 4) or the marches of the Scottish border (map 5) are important.

At other times, though, Daniell's maps are too dense to follow easily. This is particularly true in the case of maps 35, 40, 50, 53, 54, 55, and 63 where he tries to depict the chronological progression of an event spatially. In such cases, Daniell is forced to insert lots of explanatory tags that describe particular temporal developments at the appropriate locations on his maps. But without the use of colour to distinguish, say, the events of a particular year or the activities of a particular soldier or monarch, in these cases his maps actually serve to flatten the temporality of events, providing almost a God's-eye view in which all time is simultaneously present. The results are simply confusing.

Sometimes it is not clear what is gained by presenting chronological data spatially. Map 25, for instance, shows the various locations of Mary Queen of Scots in Scotland before she left for France at age five; map 115 shows the location of early museums and significant collections on a base map of the whole of England—despite the fact that these are to be found only in Oxford and London. More profoundly, though, several of Daniell's maps actually show the limits of presenting historical, temporal data spatially. The information in maps

70 to 74, for instance, which show the progressive closure of Benedictine monasteries in England from 1500 to 1540, would be clearer and easier to assimilate in the form of a table.

While there are some excellent maps here that highlight the spatiality of events, the coverage is uneven. There is little attempt, for instance, to come to terms with the spread of the Reformation in Scotland or Ireland. Some of the economic maps—especially those depicting the population of towns and communications infrastructure in the very early eighteenth century—could usefully have been extended to include Scottish data, too.

That said, Daniell's *Atlas* is accessibly priced for students and performs an important service in challenging its users to consider the geography of history. While its coverage can be patchy and not all of the maps succeed, overall the *Atlas* is an important and useful contribution for teachers of this period who want to follow Heylyn and give some life and motion to the dead carcass that is chronology.

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