

science, and seems to have no point; and one by Conrad Reining, who disarmingly confesses at the outset that his article was an unplanned by-product of a larger study of a different topic. Indeed, he lacks the expertise that the other contributors so obviously have.

The general reader, who is neither a scholar of modern Hungary nor an anthropologist, would benefit from a longer introduction that would place Hungarian agriculture within the context of the national economy. Further, most readers would want to know more about the historical background, especially about the difficult years between the land reform of 1945 and the second collectivization of 1959.

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KEVIN O'NEILL — *Famine and Farm in Pre-Famine Ireland. The Parish of Killeshandra*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984. Pp. xiv, 232.

Although local studies have long been a strong part of the English and Scottish historiographic tradition, they have been rare in Irish historical writing. This is only the second parish-based study done by a professional historian. The first was my own study of Islandmagee, County Antrim, and this volume by Dr. O'Neill is a quantum step forward from that benchmark in its sophisticated and focused use of parish data to illuminate historical questions of national importance.

To appreciate this fascinating study, one must realize what it is not: it is not a cultural or social history. It is "hard" history in the sense of being an attempt to explain the demographic patterns of a single pre-Famine parish by the use of economic variables. The parish of Killeshandra in County Cavan is not presented as being either typical or atypical, but rather as an important laboratory for discovering fundamental processes that may well have permeated hundreds of other Irish parishes in those dark years before the Famine. Since Killeshandra is virtually the only Irish parish for which manuscript census data survive, it is an extremely important laboratory indeed.

Dr. O'Neill presents a tightly-argued model of demographic transition that he denominates the "market implosion model". This is a three-stage model, in which the low-level equilibrium found in traditional agriculture gives way under market pressures to a "Chayanovian" stage and then to a "surplus-producing" stage, and finally to a "developed" stage. The details of this process are complex, but the most fascinating aspect is the way in which he has married a basically neo-Marxist view of land and capital to a recognition of the impelling power of the growing British market economy that is seen to operate in the way that the classical economists described it a century and a half ago.

Rigorous and, simultaneously, creative as this book is, reading it leaves one with a great sense of opportunity lost. The grounds of the debate were previously determined by Joel Mokyr's *Why Ireland Starved* which appeared in 1983. This was probably not available to O'Neill before his own book went to press. The basis of Mokyr's work, however, was available in print in 1980 in major, easily-accessible journals. Both in method and on several substantive matters, O'Neill differs sharply from Mokyr, and these differences should be directly confronted. In the first place their methods are radically different. O'Neill provides a rigorous micro-study, scrupulously based on primary sources, while Mokyr works in aggregates and eschews manuscript material. Second, their views of the impact of the British economy upon Irish demographic patterns are different in emphasis: O'Neill focuses on the British market demand for Irish agricultural goods, Mokyr on capital underinvestment by English landlords. Third, they differ sharply on the matter of leases. Mokyr claims, alone among Irish scholars, that most Irish land was held on secure leases, a claim for which O'Neill's work provides no evidence. Fourth, O'Neill's study shows a myriad of middlemen in the landholding

process, while Mokyr claims that they had become a rarity. Fifth, O'Neill makes a good deal of the importance of small insecure "conacre" holdings, a form of landholding greatly underplayed by Mokyr. Sixth, O'Neill gives considerable credit to L.M. Cullen's view that the potato was not very important in determining Irish demographic patterns, while Mokyr devastatingly attacks that view.

There are other differences as well as some points of agreement. The sad thing is that this fine book is already a scholarly generation out of date, because it did not directly address Mokyr's earlier studies. Nevertheless, it is stimulating reading.

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ROGER PRICE — *The Modernization of Rural France. Communications Networks and Agricultural Market Structures in Nineteenth-Century France*. London: Hutchinson, 1983. Pp. 503.

On no other issue have the reassessments of the "new economic history" had quite the same impact as on the relationship of railway construction to national economic development. Though the title does not make this immediately apparent, Roger Price's book is very much concerned with that issue. The author, however, has not set out to become the Fosel or Fishlow of the S.N.C.F. He is not concerned with attempts to measure the industrial linkages or social savings generated by railway building. What interests Price is how both producers and consumers of agricultural products were affected by the coming of the railway age. The question, he argues, cannot be tackled by economic history "narrowly conceived"; rather it is a job for the social historian who understands that economic problems are embedded in a broader social system. Thus, in this study "... economic history is seen not as an end in itself but as a means of understanding society better" (p. 13).

*The Modernization of Rural France* is divided into three parts. The first raises the curtain on France's poorly developed pre-rail transportation network. Here the author stresses the seasonal waterway bottlenecks and high cartage costs that limited the growth of an extended market for basic foodstuffs (whose low value-to-bulk ratio makes them especially sensitive to transport costs). The transport constraint becomes the motor driving Price's model of an economically inhibited countryside. "The hallmarks of this society were isolation and localism. The economy was far from stagnant, but the volume of trade, and in consequence the incentives to innovation in both agriculture and industry, were restricted by the costs of transport. The potential for dynamic action was limited" (p. 45).

Part Two discusses how this transport-hobbled *ancien régime économique* shaped the perceptions and behaviour of most Frenchmen. Here the author is concerned primarily with the origins and development of subsistence crises during the first half of the nineteenth century (though there is also much information on levels of living among the "popular classes"). Price includes a long chapter on time-honoured forms of protest by which the common people in cities, market towns, and along transport corridors tried to impose traditional, "moral economy" standards — attacking hoarders, blocking grain shipments outside the region, demanding fixed, "fair" (to the consumer) prices on bread. Three generations of social historians have addressed these themes, so most readers will find themselves on familiar terrain here. Price's particular contribution is to provide a wealth of local examples plus an analysis of the incidence of various forms of popular protest during the crop failures of 1846-47 and 1853-55. He is especially good at evoking the collective mentality aspects of subsistence crises, notably how the mere fear of dearth could push prices above levels actually warranted by local shortfalls in production. The author clearly feels himself on home ground when dealing with these topics; this chapter stands out as the best in the book.