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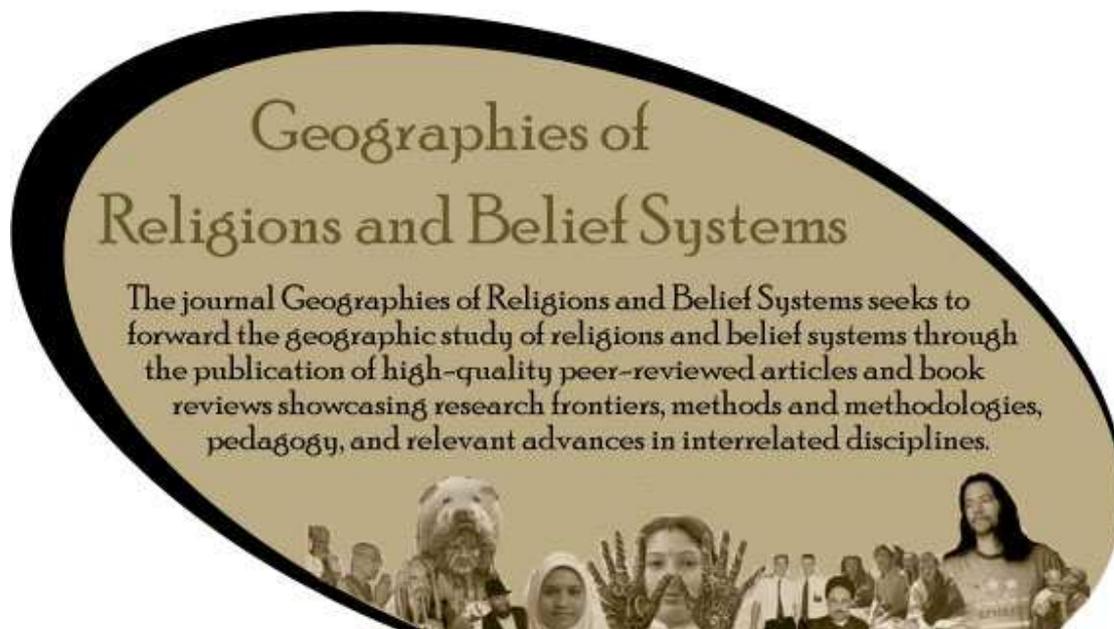
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From the Editor

A little more than 10 years ago, the Geography of Religions and Belief Systems specialty group of the Association of American Geographers embarked on a new project as part of renewed activity following several quiet years. An online journal, offering wider access and greater scope for illustrations than a print publication, would form a venue to showcase research in the field as well as a common project for the specialty group. Our first issue appeared in 2006; subsequent issues followed in 2007 and 2009.

Because of lack of submissions, this issue (Volume 4) will be our last. Nevertheless, the group's leadership wants very much to continue to highlight members' work, especially as religions and belief systems play a vital role in human experience and in world affairs today. We urge scholars who pursue topics related to religions and belief systems to submit to other appropriate journals.

At the Association of American Geographers annual meeting in Chicago in April 2015, the specialty group will be considering what kinds of publications will best meet these goals and further the work of the group and its members. This topic will form an important part of our business meeting. Please watch for schedule information for the time and place of that meeting. We invite ideas from all interested persons, either at the meeting or otherwise. Contact information for board members is on the group's web site (www.gorabs.org).

Elizabeth J. Leppman

Editor

Lexington, Kentucky

Pseudo-Religion, White Spaces, and the Knights Party: A Case Study

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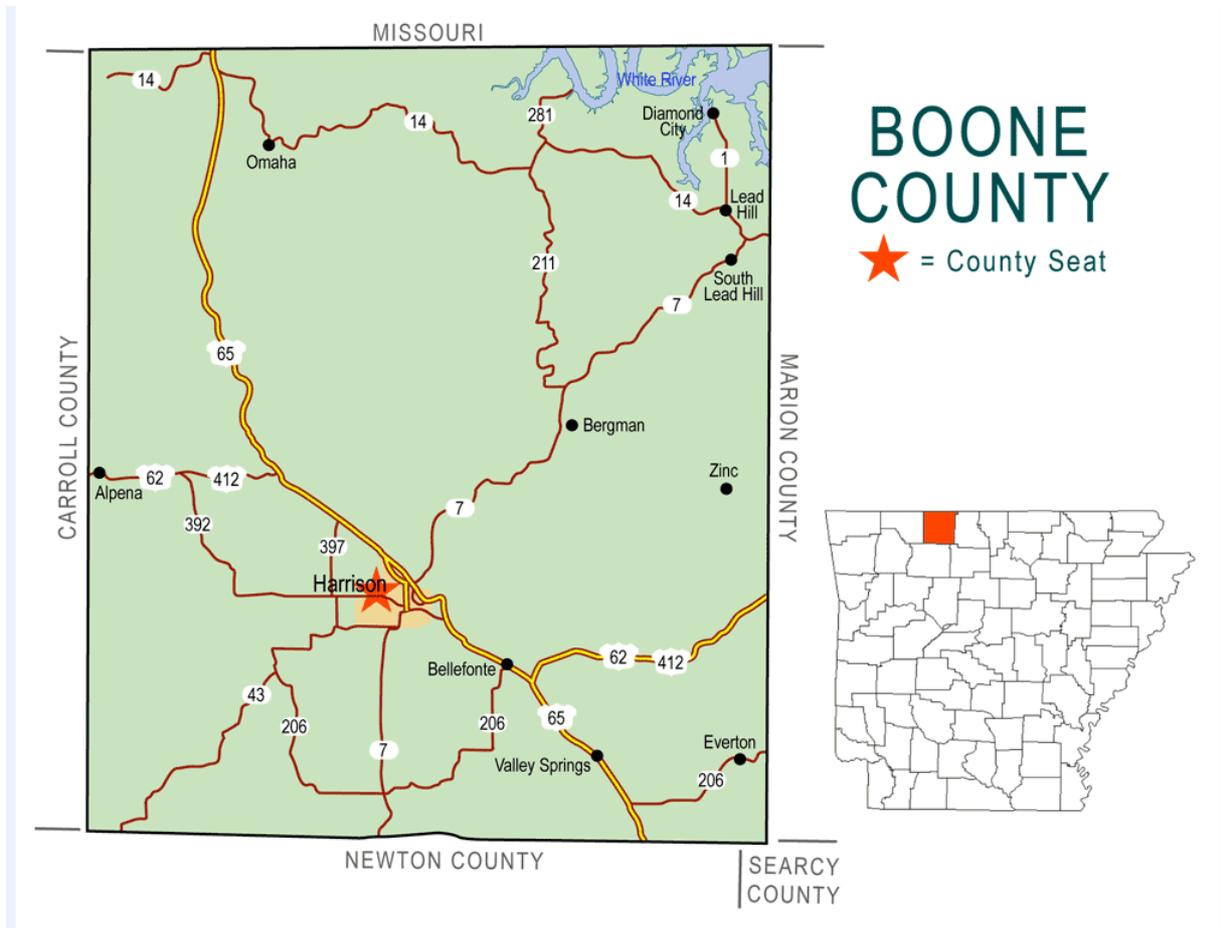
ABSTRACT

This paper explores the dynamics of a Christian Identity church in rural north central Arkansas. The church, associated with a Klan group known as the Knights Party, is led by Christian Identity Minister, Thom Robb. The study includes analyses of the Knights Party Internet Web site, observations of church services, two Faith and Freedom Conferences, and interviews with Pastor Robb and various members of his congregation and Klan group over a three year period beginning in December 2011. Findings indicate that within this enclave community, there appear to be weak ties to the outside world which reinforce the group's marginality and entrenched racist attitudes. By embracing white racial homogeneity and shielding themselves and their families from diversity, members of the sect profiled in this study maintain separate social spaces that are a historical legacy for Boone County Arkansas and the entire north central region of the state.

Key words: Christian Identity; Ku Klux Klan; racialism; group threat; religious extremism

The purpose of this case study is to profile a socially segregated religious sect and Klan group that is located on 300 acres between two small hamlets of Zinc and Bergman in rural Boone County Arkansas (see Figure 1). Christian Identity minister and Klansman, Thom Robb, moved his entire family from Detroit, Michigan to Arkansas in 1980. Robb states that with the move he sought to escape "moral depravity and social decline" caused by Blacks and other non-white groups in exchange for a crime free white community (personal communication, December 11, 2011). He decided to use his new home as a base for his Christian Identity ministry and later his Klan group, the Knights Party. Robb's most recent venture is a summer camp for white nationalists, the Soldiers of the Cross Training Institute. Robb's enclave community (see Figure 2) is unique in that it provides one stop shopping for contemporary

Figure 1: Boone County Communities*



*Source: © Mike Keckhaver 2014 Central Arkansas Library System

Figure 2: Aerial View of the Compound*



*Sources: Imagery Copyright: 2013 DigitalGlobe, State of Arkansas, USDA Farm Service Agency Map data: Copyright 2013 Google

Christian Identists and/or Klansmen/women: a) church; b) library of extremist books and pamphlets; c) and annual events such as rallies and educational conferences.

Christian Identity is a pseudo-religious perspective with roots in the British-Israelism movement of nineteenth century England. The religious dogma espoused by Identity theologians such as Pastor Robb is a revisionist version of traditional Christianity that claims whites are the chosen people of God, created in His likeness. For this reason only the white race achieves salvation. Pastor Robb's message is that religion and race are inseparable and that Christian Identity recognizes the superiority and exceptionalism of white people. Below is a portion of one of his sermons:

Through a mass distortion of history, modern day Christians have been deceived and lied to about the importance of their blood heritage. Our people, white people, are the ones who conquered all the continents and mapped the stars. Now we are facing genocide and unenlightened whites continue to ignore the facts. This congregation has heard the call to find a way to save some of our people through racial redemption (December 11, 2011)

Not all church members belong to the Knights Party, although the Klan's presence is felt in every service because of Robb's racist ideology and separatist attitudes. Currently Robb's ministry is raising funds to build a dormitory that will provide housing for visitors, conference participants, and students of the Soldiers of the Cross Training Institute.

Located in the Ozarks Mountain region of Arkansas, the area where Robb and his family live is remote (see Figure 3). The drive into the compound requires specific directions and is a challenge to access due to several non-paved back-country roads. There are two low-water bridges along the way that flood periodically during the rainy season. Goats, hogs, and chickens often block intersections and teenage boys with shotguns can be seen trekking through the woods that line the roads leading to Robb's compound. This region of Arkansas also has a history of racism. According to Loewen (2005) as late as 1970, more than 100 towns in north central

Figure 3: Counties/Regions in Arkansas*

*Source: www.arkansas.com/maps

The states that border Arkansas are Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Missouri.

Arkansas were known as “sundown towns” or towns that expelled/excluded African Americans. By 1980, the year Robb moved his family to rural Arkansas, “sundown towns” were still a presence in Boone County (Lancaster 2010). This paper sheds light on how self-imposed social isolation helps to perpetuate racism and intolerance among a small group of white separatists and Christian Identists. Robb’s commitment to keeping Zinc, Bergman, and surrounding communities free of diversity includes sponsoring a racist billboard in the nearest small city of Harrison. Robb and the Knights Party also support activities such as protests and marches for pro-white causes (See Figure 4).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity theology has gone through several incarnations since it was first conceived by Howard Rand and William Cameron in early twentieth century America. There are entrenched differences between Identity dogma and traditional Christianity which teaches to love one’s enemies and forgive those who sin. Even though there are some links between Christian Identity and fundamentalist Christianity, disagreements over definitions of salvation divide the two substantially (White 1989). For example, Christian Identity adherents, also known as Identists, believe that since whites are the chosen people of God, salvation is attainable by whites only and other races are condemned to eternal damnation. These beliefs are supported by Pastor Robb’s ministry as well.

Christian identists revel in the promise of a militant second coming of Christ when whites will be victors in the final battle (Ostendorf 2001/2002). Many active Klan groups and other contemporary white supremacist groups embrace Identity theology as revised by white supremacists Gerald L. K. Smith and Wesley Swift during the 1950s (Milwicky 2014). Pastor Robb’s ministry utilizes Swift’s pamphlets on religion and race that promote ideas such as: a)

Figure 4: Poster Advertising the White Man March*

THE CIDE PIPER SAYS, JOIN THE

WHITE MAN MARCH

March 15, 2014



Piping Up About White Genocide!

March 15, 2014 will be an historic day. What is the "White Man March"? It is an idea. It will be an international day of Pro-White activism. This means, get out there and put out fliers, hold up signs, and let the world know that there are people in your community who stand against the ongoing program of Genocide against Whites.

Our slogans will be:
"DIVERSITY"=WHITE GENOCIDE
 &
ANTI-RACIST IS A CODE WORD FOR ANTI-WHITE

For more info, visit these sites:
www.WhiteManMarch.com
www.WhiteGenocideProject.com

*Source: www.WhiteManMarch.com

blacks are descended from a non-Aryan God and b) Jews are a mongrelized race created by Lucifer. Robb argues in sermons and on his Internet radio program that members of the white race are required by God to live in segregated, racially homogenous communities. According to Robb, this arrangement will secure future white bloodlines by eliminating race mixing or intermarriage between races, particularly blacks and whites (personal communication, May 5, 2012).

Dobratz and Shanks-Meile (1997) and James Ridgeway (1990) argue that the Identity movement in general is highly fragmented and lacks strong centralized leadership. Pastor Robb's Identity sect appears to be an exception to this argument. He has an Internet Web site, a cable television program and radio show which is co-hosted by his daughter, Rachel Pendergraft. His Klan group, the Knights Party, has been stable since 1981 when he inherited it from David Duke who left to found the National Association for the Advancement of White People (<http://www.splcenter.org/get%20informed/intelligence%20files/profiles/Thomas%20Robb>). Robb's ability to blend the Knights Party message with his Identity ministry has earned him the reputation of having the largest and most active Klan unit operating in the United States (<http://www.splcenter.org/get%20informed/intelligence%20files/profiles/Thomas%20Robb>). According to one source, the Knights Party has an active membership of about 500 people with a clear message championing "the rights of white Christians" (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/banished/harrison.html>).

Even though the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has tracked many Christian Identity sects in the United States, it is difficult to put numbers on such a fragmented, fluid, constantly changing subculture that is part of the broader white supremacist movement. According to Barkun ([11](http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

files/ideology/christian-identity/the-christian-identity-movement), the term “Christian Identity” has been so often linked with acts of violence and criminal prosecutions that some Christian Identity ministers are hesitant to use the label to describe their ministries. However, following his research into the Oklahoma City bombing, journalist Joel Dyer (1998) found strands of Christian Identity infiltrating more traditional fundamentalist Christian churches in the heartland. Police records also indicate that Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, convicted perpetrators of the Oklahoma City bombing, had contact with the Christian Identity settlement/commune known as Elohim City in Adair County Oklahoma which borders Arkansas (Hoffman 1998). Robb does not hesitate to promote his ministry as Christian Identity nor does he try to separate his church family from his Klan group.

According to Schamber and Stroud (2000), Sharpe (2000), Dobratz (2001), and Ostendorf (2001/2002), Christian Identists believe in the apocalyptic vision of a countdown of days when whites will win the race war and inherit the earth. Specific doctrinal statements proclaim that Yahweh (white, male, and powerful) is the incarnation of God who chose the white race as the true children of Israel. For Pastor Robb and his congregation, the country’s problems are rooted in the “darkening” of America. For them the current political system embraces values, teachings, and concepts that are foreign to those outlined by the founding fathers in 1787. Robb also predicts in his sermons and lectures that “enlightened” whites such as the people in his church and Klan group will continue to establish racially homogenous communities thus bringing about the rebirth of a white nation.

Pioneering some Little Europes

One of the underlying themes embedded in white supremacist discourse involves imagined, separate communities. The concept was first introduced by a shadowy figure in the

white supremacist movement who used the pseudonym Wilmot Robertson. The author of several books that focused on the decline of white civilization in the United States, Robertson coined the term “ethnostate” and wrote a book by the same name (1992). His thesis states that when American whites become enlightened to the evils of integration and diversity, balkanization will occur with states forming along racial/ethnic lines in various regions of the United States. In Robertson’s worldview, the only hope for American white society is for groups to form autonomous, self-sufficient collectives in segregated regions of the country. Pastor Robb also supports this idea and has managed to carve out his own white enclave community in north central Arkansas.

Taking Robertson’s “ethnostate” concept online, white supremacist and former Klansman, Don Black opened the first Internet Web site devoted to establishing a community of like-minded whites in 1995. That site, Stormfront.org, supports an international community of over 100,000 members (<http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t374371/>). A forum called Pioneer Little Europes (PLEs) posts discussions between members about the formation of separate living spaces devoid of diversity (<http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t768368/>). Early members of the discussion forum envisioned the perfect “white Aryan homeland” in the northwestern region of the United States. Although there are contingents of white supremacists living in communities in the Northwest (Washington state and Idaho in particular), others are beginning to settle in remote areas in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri (<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/ideology/christian-identity/the-christian-identity-movement>). Ongoing posts on Stormfront reveal that some people prefer warmer weather and have elected to form communities in their own region such as the one profiled in this paper.

PASTOR ROBB’S CALL TO RACE

Although Robb is beginning to diversify with the Soldiers of the Cross Institute, the cornerstone of his compound life is the Christian Revival Center which houses his ministry (see Figure 5). Observations over a three year period reveal that Robb's weekend congregation consists of 30 to 35 regular parishioners. This includes children who number between 8 and 10 and range in ages from newborn to 13. The children are watched over by female volunteers during the service. Church members file into the chapel area for the 10:30 AM service on Sunday after having coffee served by Mrs. Robb and her daughter, Rachel. The Heritage Connection which consists of Robb's two granddaughters who sing and play music on piano and guitar. After brief announcements and prayers for the sick, led by Robb's son Jason, Robb steps up to the podium and begins his sermon. Initially, the service appears similar to any small congregation of worshippers on a Sunday morning who come to pray, sing, and listen to their minister deliver a message. The Christian Revival Center is a sacred place for the Christian Identists who call it their spiritual home. However, all similarities with mainstream congregations end when the preaching begins.

Every service I attended contained messages from the pulpit about imminent white genocide, the evils of immigration, and the influence of Jews on American government policies. Most of Robb's biblical references are from the Old Testament and he is very careful to point out that God is vengeful, especially when it comes to race-mixing. Video recording devices stream the service online and the sermons usually last for about one hour. Sermons end with a song and a prayer. There is no communion and Robb does not pass around a collection plate for money. Instead, when entering the chapel area there is a donation box where people place their offerings. Pastor Robb's wife supervises the kitchen and after every service, drinks and light food are served while people mill around and visit. When Robb hosts the annual Faith and Freedom

Figure 5: The Christian Revival Center*



*Source: Billy Roper

Conference in October, Sunday church attendance doubles and some attendees camp out on the property next to the church.

Although Pastor Robb does not allow weapons in his church, his sermons often contain references to the importance of second amendment rights in defense of one's life and property. During a Faith and Freedom Conference that I attended in 2012, one of Robb's parishioners presented a workshop on gun ownership, gun rights, and the importance of fighting for concealed weapons laws. Much of the formal discussions that take place during Robb's church services and other events, concern the importance of the following three goals: a) encouraging people to establish all white settlements; b) electing racial activists to political office; and c) immersing children and young people in white culture. I found that most of Pastor Robb's parishioners come from the small hamlet communities of Zinc, Bergman, and Omaha. Other church members make the 30 minute drive from the county seat in Harrison. Most everyone I met during my time in the field was born in Arkansas although several people said they were not natives but had moved from Arizona and California years ago. Like Robb before them, they desired to escape what they referred to as "big city crime" and "diversity" that goes along with urban life. The remoteness and lack of racial diversity in this part of Arkansas attracted them to the place and eventually they found a church home at the Christian Revival Center.

ONWARD "WHITE" CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

Pastor Robb hosts annual events such as the Faith and Freedom Conference which I attended in 2011 and 2012. There were 80 (2011) and 92 (2012) adults attending each conference respectively. Both conferences drew attendees from as far away as Canada and the average age (estimated) was 40 plus years. Conference sessions from both years featured keynote speakers from different wings of the white supremacist movement. In addition to Pastor

Robb, Identity ministers from Oklahoma, Missouri, and Louisiana attended each conference.

Activities during the two day event(s) included gospel music, bingo, and a pancake breakfast on Sunday morning before church services. Talk by different speakers about the liberal media and its assault on white Christian values mirrored sermons by Robb in his weekly church services.

Robb's daughter, Rachel Pendergraft, is heavily involved in church and Klan activities on the compound. Pendergraft was instrumental in organizing the first Soldiers of the Cross Training Institute that was held in August 2013. In recruitment literature, Robb and Pendergraft specify that even though the institute is organized around Christian values, people who do not embrace Christianity are welcome to attend (as long as they are white). The institute appears to be a way for Robb to recruit younger members to his group and generate more revenue for some of his projects such as construction of a dormitory and library facility. Tuition for the first session of the institute was \$500 per person and a total of 14 people attended in August 2013 (email communication with Billy Roper October 30, 2013).

Robb hopes the creation of the Soldiers of the Cross Training Institute will expand his ministry. He plans to build a full service training center on his property with funds raised from tuition and other fees. Robb thinks that the formation of the institute will be a rallying cry for white people to become more active in fighting for their rights and communities. Additionally, this new project appears to be a way that Robb hopes to build a base from which to train young people (ages 16 and older) to be more articulate when confronting teachers about how they teach American history, among other public school curricula. According to Robb, the institute will serve as a training ground for future local politicians, school board members, and other county leaders (personal communication, July 5, 2013). For that reason, classes taught in the first

institute included: 1) community leadership skills; 2) communication skills; 3) projecting a positive image; and 4) establishing white consciousness in schools and communities.

WHITE PLIGHT

According to 2010 Census data, Arkansas is not a very diverse state (<http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=05:0505440:0530460:0552160:0577600>). With a total population of slightly less than 3,000,000 residents, 74% are white followed by 15.6% African American and 6.6% Hispanic Americans¹. Census data also reveals that most of the African American population is located in the southern part of the state. Robb's

Table 1: Races and Ethnicities Zinc, Arkansas *

Population		Percentages
White alone	91	88.3%
Hispanic/Latino**	2	1.9%
African American	1	1.0%
Other (two or more races)	9	8.7%
Total	103	99.9%***

*Source:

<http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=05:0505440:0530460:0552160:0577600>

**Definition of Hispanic or Latino according to the 2010 Census: Hispanic or Latino refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.

***Rounding error

¹ Definition of Hispanic or Latino according to the 2010 Census: Hispanic or Latino refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.

compound is in the small hamlet community of Zinc in Boone County where 88% of the population is white.

Boone County statistics reveal that 96% of the population is white followed by almost 2% Hispanics and 0.2% African Americans.

Table 2: Races and Ethnicities Harrison, Arkansas *

Population		Percentages
White alone	12,448	96%
Hispanic/Latino	212	1.6%
African American	34	0.26%
Asian	95	0.73%
American Indian/Alaska Native	84	0.64%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	5	0.03%
Other (two or more races)	65	0.50%
Total	12,943	99.8%***

*Source:

<http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=05:0505440:0530460:0552160:0577600>

**Rounding error

Harrison, the county seat, mirrors these population statistics almost identically.

Table 3: Races and Ethnicities Boone County Arkansas *

Population		Percentages
White	35,624	96%
Hispanic	647	1.8%
African American	72	0.20%
American Indian/Alaska Native	263	0.71%
Asian	156	0.42%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	21	0.05%
Other (two or more races)	120	0.32%
Total	36,903	99.5%**

*Source:

<http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=05:0505440:0530460:0552160:0577600>

**Rounding error

In my many trips to this region of Arkansas, I rarely saw an African American. The only time I saw Hispanic individuals was in larger towns located in Conway, Pope, and Faulkner counties. From July 2009 to December 2012, I stayed in hotels and ate at restaurants in Harrison. During my extended visits, I encountered no racial diversity.

Amir (1998) hypothesized that intergroup contact is likely to lead to improved intergroup relations. However, he eventually modified his claims to suggest that the most significant improvements come with close or intimate relations such as marriage or possibly adoption. Because of the entrenched beliefs regarding intermarriage that Robb and his followers equate with the sin of race mixing, close personal contact is not going to happen within this group. Yancey (1999) found that while residential integration does not appear to alter racial attitudes by whites toward their African American neighbors, whites who attend inter-racial churches exhibit less social distance and have less tendency to stereotype based on race. Again, the makeup of the demographics in this part of Arkansas and with specific reference to Pastor Robb's group, attending an inter-racial church service would be the equivalent of sharing Passover with a Rabbi. Neither of these events is likely to occur.

Analyzing racial attitudes has long been a focus for social scientists and findings continue to change as American society becomes more diverse. Link and Oldendick (1996) found that mainstream white Americans tend to view racial minorities less positively than they do their own race. During the time of their study they concluded that the social distance between white respondents and Asian Americans was smaller than for African Americans. Attitudes toward Hispanics fell somewhere in-between the two extremes. Quillian (1996) found that traditional prejudice had declined in every U.S. region except the South. He also concluded that racial attitudes in the South were more hostile toward blacks because of group threat based on population patterns within that region, particularly in urban areas. Even more telling was Gallagher's finding that "the average American" perceives the population of blacks to be twice the actual number (2003: pg. 381). He concluded that the media, residential segregation, and racial stereotypes all contributed to underestimation of the size of the white population (among

whites) and inflation of group size of racial minorities (especially blacks) which results in unsubstantiated perceptions of group threat. Personal interviews and observations of meetings and church services for this study, reveals a small racist subculture that mirror these same attitudes.

THE SUN STILL GOES DOWN ON BOONE COUNTY

According to Loewen (2005), in 1900 there were 115 blacks in Harrison, Arkansas and less than 10 years later there were none. This pattern of racial cleansing was routine in this region of the state and continued throughout the twentieth century. As late as 2002, Harrison still had the reputation of being a place that was not safe for persons of color to walk around after dark. The town square still displays a monument to the Sons of the Confederacy and in a 2005 PBS documentary, *Banished*, the director of the Harrison Chamber of Commerce was quoted defending flying the Confederate flag

(<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/banished/harrison.html>):

The reasoning behind the flags is historical. They were put up to say 'Here is the five governments that have governed this particular area. And it's the Spanish flag, the French flag, the United States flag and the Confederate flag. Because that was all the different parts [sic]. It is not meant as a slap or a sign that says you are not welcome here.

Even though contact does not always ensure good race relations, social isolation from people who are different, accompanied by inter-generational proliferation of racial stereotypes can have major consequences. Recently the Knights Party purchased a billboard that reads: Anti-racism is another word for Anti-White. A series of protests followed between townspeople and members of the Knights Party who claim they are merely standing up for the rights of white

citizens to free speech (email communication Billy Roper October 31, 2013). In sermons and speeches, Pastor Robb is quick to say that he does not hate anyone but he does reserve the right to live where he wants and refrain from contact with people who he is uncomfortable with. He justified his choices in a church service I attended with the following statement:

Just look at Detroit...it is the most violent city in the U.S. I left Michigan and settled here in Arkansas to get away from all that crime. I want to keep my community the way it is. As soon as blacks move in here, there will be more crime (November 25, 2012).

In sermons and on his radio show, Robb argues that more than 100 million non-white aliens will flood into America in the next 30 years. He laments that, in his opinion, most white Americans have been convinced by the mainstream media, public education, and unenlightened ministers that this does not really matter since the United States has always been a nation of immigrants. He predicts that eventually whites (when properly enlightened) will leave the cities behind and migrate to places like Harrison and Zinc. According to Robb, this is when the nation of our forefathers will be reborn through a process of balkanization. He hopes that his compound, church, and new training institute will draw crowds of whites who are ready to begin the process of rebuilding their “white” nation.

CONCLUSION

The Christian Revival Center is a church community that represents a small pseudo-religious subculture that embraces racism and promotes social inequality for non-whites and ethnic minorities. The enclave community is devoid of diversity through a de facto plan of segregation. Zinc is a closed society for whites only with two primary social institutions: a) the Christian Revival Center and b) the Knights Party. The next largest town, Harrison, continues to

struggle with a history of exclusion based on race and its' residents are divided with regard to the subject of developing initiatives to increase diversity in the region.

This case study opens up questions about the evolution of white flight, broadly defined as when whites leave urban areas to escape changing racial/ethnic demographics ([http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/white flight](http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/white%20flight)). The communities of Zinc and Harrison, Arkansas clearly demonstrate the importance the role of place plays in the collective psyche of people who are uncomfortable with diversity. Entrenched racist attitudes are reinforced by Christian Identity in Robb's congregation. The social milieu of both communities is homogenous and Pastor Robb intends to keep it that way if at all possible. Robb, his family, and his congregation are uncomfortable with diversity and they are committed, outspoken segregationists.

Neither Zinc nor Harrison appears to be threatened from within; however, there are clear (perceived) threats from forces outside the confines of the two communities. As American society continues to experience a significant demographic shift, especially from Latin America, Pastor Robb's church will likely become more insular and isolated although he anticipates growth in his congregation in the future. Robb and others in his church and Klan group defend their right to choose where they live. They are also very clear that they feel the need to protect their heritage which, in their view, is at risk of extinction. Their beliefs are codified in a racist religious system that justifies both choices and actions. In looking back at the history of Harrison and other towns in Boone County, it cannot be denied that expulsion of their African American population resulted in a type of racial cleansing that has yet to be resolved.

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Reflections on Christianity in China

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In the summer of 2011 I was privileged to participate in a seminar on religion and the rule of law in China. Sponsored by the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities and the Nagel Institute, the experience was a once in a lifetime opportunity to explore the complexity of religion and the rule of law alongside Chinese scholars and Chinese Christians. The seminar was an immersive experience as eight North American scholars roomed, debated, studied, participated in worship and explored tourist attractions with twelve Chinese scholars. The experience was especially intriguing in light of my area of academic expertise as my primary field of study is the Geography of Religion. This paper includes academic reflections on the experience and suggestions for future research.

Geography of Religion is a substantial and important sub-discipline of human geography that provides significant insight into the breadth and depth of religious traditions in their multifaceted contexts. (Ferber 2010, Stoddard and Prorok 2003, Stump 2008) Geography of religion involves the spatial study of religious systems and phenomena, and includes a robust array of themes at numerous scales including, but not limited to, religious diffusion, religious distributions, religious regions, sacred space, religious landscapes, religion and the environment and more recent developments in cultural and critical geography (Kong 2010, Park 1994). Geographers of religion explore a multiplicity of faith traditions, but tend to be more concerned with the social, cultural and environmental associations of religion than with religion itself, though this is an internal point of debate among scholars (Raivo 1997).

As a geographer of religion, my perspective in the China Seminar was unique among the North American team, which consisted of experts in fields such as Political Science, Government, Philosophy and Literature that tend to lack emphases on spatiality and are not as strongly linked to sociological and anthropological theory. The Chinese team included a few Sociologists and an Anthropologist in addition to scholars of Religious Studies, Theology, Literature and Law. Hence, I found significant commonality with the Chinese scholars in subjects I have previously published including the insider / outsider problem in religion (Ferber 2006), scale and religion (Ferber and Harris 2011, Ferber and Harris 2013), poverty studies (Seaman and Ferber 2007) and religious – environment interaction (Haluza-DeLay and Ferber 2011, Wood and Ferber 2010).

Throughout the seminar countless potential research projects emerged that, with effort, could become ground-breaking studies. Few geographers of religion are exploring the phenomenal changes occurring in China, and every day I was exposed to new compelling challenges facing Chinese religious believers in the context of a government attempting to enable a limited freedom while also keeping religion in check. My notes from the seminar field trips include numerous comments in margins reminding me to “dig more deeply” into the contexts I visited, which included the China Christian Council that oversees the Three Self Patriotic Movement Church (TSPM is the officially sanctioned Protestant Church in China), the Shanghai Community Church, the Shanghai Association of Social Scientists and its Institute of Religious Studies, Yanjing TSPM Seminary in Beijing, the Pu Shi Institute for Social Sciences at Peking University, a working session with members from the China University of Political Science and Law at the China Seminar on Human Rights and International Affairs in the Conference Centre of the Temple of the Reclining Buddha and visits I made on my own during time off from the seminar to an unregistered church and an unregistered seminary. Where does one begin to “dig more deeply”?

After significant reflection three areas of potential research emerge that, while interesting, also require significant collaboration with Chinese colleagues. The first research area, special religious zones, is the most explicitly geographic area of research that touches upon the topic of the seminar, Religion and the Rule of Law. The second topic, Christian reaction to Chinese migration, is perhaps the most interesting and

challenging geographic issue facing both the sanctioned Three Self Patriotic Movement and unregistered churches. Finally, since China is known to be the most polluting nation on earth, creation care in Chinese Christian churches is an important area for western Christians to engage the Chinese Church.

SPECIAL RELIGIOUS ZONES

The focus of the China seminar was religious freedom and the rule of law. Rule of law is described by Starr (2010, 240) as when “the law stands above individual office holders as a neutral arbiter to which disputes are referred and on the basis of which are resolved. All citizens are equal before the law, and everyone regardless of position or status, is subject to it.” China is a party state in which the Communist Party is above the law and therefore is not subject to it.

A lack of rule of law in China is especially pertinent when considering religious freedom and enforcement. According to Article 36 of the Chinese constitution, there has been a guarantee of freedom of religion in China since the end of the cultural revolution. Article 36 states, “no state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in any religion.” (Starr 2010, 254) However, religion in China can also be interpreted by the state as a form of spiritual pollution with the capacity to disrupt social harmony and loyalty to China. The government has the authority to prevent religion from disrupting the public order and, in light of the western missionary history of Christianity in China, Article 36 makes clear that “religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.

Even within the church in China there is division regarding the state. Bishop Ding Guangxun uses the term “cultural Christians” to describe sects within China who are drawn to Christianity as a source of western democracy (Xi, 2011). Because cultural Christians have emerged as a force of political dissent, many government officials in China remain suspicious of unregistered Christian house churches. While these Christians have a right in China to believe anything they would like, they do not have the freedom to disrupt social harmony.

Meanwhile, Christianity is exploding in China such that some have compared it to America's great awakening (Johnson, 2011). There are more Christians in China today than there were when foreign missionaries were active. Chinese church historian Lian Xi (2010) does not even dispute Micklethwait and Wooldrige's (2009) claim that China could be the largest Christian nation by the year 2050. In light of Christianity's growth it is not surprising that issues of freedom of religion and the rule of law have been on the front pages of western newspapers.

The primary church in the headlines is the Shouwang congregation in Beijing, which grew to over 1,000 members. Most house churches multiply when they grow beyond the capacity to be held in a home. Pastor Jin Tinming of Shouwang started his house church in 1993 and followed this model. By 2005 there were over a dozen fellowship groups that had multiplied from the original group, and Pastor Tinming decided to conglomerate these groups into one congregation by meeting together in a large office building for weekly services (Yang, 2011). Then in 2006 the church attempted to register with the government as an independent church, despite not wanting to join the TSPM. On April 10 of 2011, only two months before our seminar in China, 169 worshippers from Shouwang were detained after a church assembly that occurred in a public park. (Yu, 2011)

In reaction, a group of pastors from various house churches petitioned the government demanding respect for the constitutional right to freedom of religion in China. The petition sought to initiate a probe to investigate the shut down of Shouwang. In response to the petition the government stated it singled out Shouwang for, "engaging in illegal gatherings and harming social order," insisting that no religious freedoms had been curtailed. (AFP, 2011) The government further stated, "while enjoying their freedom, citizens must respect their legal rights and obligations and cannot harm the public interest."

According to the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), the declared purpose of China's policy to protect freedom of religious belief is, "to unite all people, regardless of their faith or lack of faith in religions, to better exert their will and energy towards the common goal of building up a powerful modern socialist nation." (Peng

2007, 63) Yet, because religion is considered an idealist philosophy it is in direct conflict with the national philosophy of China, atheistic Marxist historical materialism. It is also a cause of concern among government officials because of the close connections many religions make with foreign nations. As one Chinese Christian puts it, “religion has been exploited by colonialists and imperialists in their aggression against China” (Ting 1981, 217). Additionally, Peng (2008) confirms that most of the peasant uprisings in China’s history have been initiated under the banner of religion.

For all of these reasons, Christianity has been suppressed in China. The worst persecution occurred under Mao’s cultural revolution when all religions were banned and a strict prohibition of religion was enforced. After Mao’s death Deng Xiaoping legalized five religions, including Protestant Christianity, and in 1982 initiated Article 36 described above and Document 19, which asserts that religion in Socialist China has the five following characteristics: “it 1) will exist for a long time, 2) has masses of believers, 3) is complex, 4) entwines with ethnicity and 5) affects international relations” (Yang 2012).

The assumption that increased religious regulation will lead to reduction of religion has proven to be false. What has developed in China is, according to Yang (2006), a “triple market economy” with a red market of legal religions, a black market of illegal religions and a grey market of religions with ambiguous legal status. Situations like Shouwang are likely to increase unless China finds a way to loosen its grip on religious freedom.

Dr. Liu Peng of the Institute of American Studies in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who also serves as the Director of the Beijing Pu Shi Institute for Social Sciences and was a leader in our seminar, has proposed a fascinating geographic solution to the “problem” of rapid house church growth. Peng suggests that special religious zones could be created in the same way that special economic zones helped to open China to free economic markets. These special religious zones would encompass a geographical region in which the country's typical or national laws would be modified as a type of social experiment in religious freedom.

The creation of special economic zones in 1980 involved a loosening of economic domination by the central government, something which was previously a hallmark of the Chinese economy. The cities of Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou and Xianan in the

Guangdong and Fujian provinces were provided with lower tax rates and the capacity to receive foreign investment without clearance from Beijing. Their rapid success, in contrast to the rest of the Chinese economy, led to fourteen more cities being pronounced as special economic zones in 1984. According to T.K. Bhaumik (2009, 102), this process of reform was particularly special because it did not involve foreign consultation and was strictly a Chinese solution to a Chinese problem. “China did not borrow any ideas from foreign experts who could have instantly provided a package, along with a roadmap and a timetable for the same. China’s new economic policies were not import-oriented, but were derived from internal debates and the experiences gained.”

Likewise, Peng’s proposal for Special Religious Zones would also be a Chinese solution to a Chinese problem. Based upon what Peng shared with us in the seminar, he believes that a resolution lies in the implementation of the rule of law through a new understanding of the religious management system. He believes that thirty years of experience of reform and opening in China indicates that whenever public policy is made it should always regulate interests, should always balance liberty with order, and rights with obligations. He argues the problem of house churches such as Shouwang is not an isolated one, but touches on several other issues, both domestic and international. Because China is still without a properly implemented, nationwide system of religious legislation, consideration needs to be paid to the difficulty and length of time it would involve to create one. His suggestion is that several localities could be selected to experiment in implementing a progressive religious administrative system, especially to allow religions to enter the field of social service. He suggests that Wenzho, Xiamen, Shijiazhuang, Zhengzho, Lanzhou and Kunming be selected as experimental Special Religious Zones. Peng hopes to see a legal system structured such that internal religious challenges, including the Protestant House Churches, encourage the religions themselves to become positive factors in the promotion of social development.

Peng’s geographic proposal could provide for gradual religious freedom in the country using an indigenous model that has already proved fruitful in the country in economic terms.

CHRISTIAN REACTION TO REGIONAL MIGRATION

Christian reactions to regional migration is a second area of needed research in Chinese geography of religion. China is currently experiencing the largest internal migration in the world as 150 million migrant workers flock to cities from the country side. Known as “floating” workers, their population registrations remain in their rural origins, and so they are essentially second-class urban citizens lacking proper housing, social services and frequently fair wages for their labour. While at the Shanghai Association of Social Sciences we learned that of the 23,000,000 people in Shanghai, 9,000,000 are among the moving population. Of these, it is impossible to know how many are religious. Starr (2010) describes the accommodation of migrant labourers as the ‘thorniest’ of all China’s problems.

Migrant workers are necessary for the economy of China, in a similar way that the U.S. and Canadian economies are dependent upon immigrant labour. Yet, floating workers tend to take the first jobs they find once they move to the city. These are short term, have no job security and no benefits package. Most cannot live in regular housing and so they flock to squatter settlements on the outskirts of cities. Because they are not residents of the city they have no claim to public services. Parents cannot put their children into public schools. For instance, one migrant worker described by Starr (2010) worked fourteen hours a day, seven days a week and cleared only \$120 US a month. Another major issue regarding migrant labour involves the education of the floater children.

Linked to the issue of migration is the growing gap between rich and poor in urban and rural China. The gap is forty-five times what it was in 1978, even while rural income has increased more than sevenfold since that time. A “kind of center and periphery relationship is emerging, in which poorer provinces serve as suppliers of raw material, semifinished products, and labor power for the economic centers, which, awash in foreign capital and advanced technology, reap all the profits.” (Starr 2010, 127) When the economic downturn occurred in 2008, 25,000,000 floaters could not find work in the cities and were forced to return to their rural homes.

For many migrant workers religion provides a solace for the challenges of their lives. Many Chinese are in search of a belief system to replace the Marxist / Maoist ideology of

the past and the rampant consumerism of the present time. Protestant Christianity is growing rapidly among these floating workers, but it is not the only religion challenging growth thresholds in China. While at the Institute of Religious Studies in Shanghai we learned that in the city there are only seven mosques receiving Muslims from many different cultures. Because the government does not want to see religious places vacant when immigrants leave, they infrequently assign permanent space, tending to instead allocate a “temporary worship place” consisting of a three year rental agreement. Hence, most religious migrant workers are in the black and grey markets of religion in China.

A majority (70 to 80%) of the government sanctioned TSPM churches are in rural areas, leaving substantial urban social needs unmet. Young people are flocking to China’s cities leaving the elderly in barren rural and the young in overcrowded urban congregations. The spatial differentiation of wealth follows this same pattern with a wealthy urban east and a poverty-stricken rural west. A representative from the TSPM Social Services shared with us that he hopes to see more wealth within churches move in an opposite direction, but thus far such giving is limited.

Churches in urban areas have had a demonstrable effect on social services. For instance, a study in Shanghai (Zhan et al, 2008) demonstrated that “Christianity can promote social harmony in socialist China in various ways.” Yet, there remains a need for more urban churches to meet the social crises of growth and development in China. Many, such as Liu Peng, believe that unregistered house churches have a tremendous capacity to meet the growing social demands of China’s cities, yet they remain impotent or must serve the poor in secret due to Chinese religious law.

Unregistered house churches provided an extraordinary response to the Sichuan earthquake. This tragic event forced the congregations to organize and find ways to collaborate and provide assistance. The fruit of this effort has demonstrated the capacity of unregistered churches to enhance social harmony in China as the country faces increased stress from internal migration.

CREATION CARE IN CHINA

In coming decades the state of the environment in China will likely be the most pressing issue facing the nation. The country's extraordinary economic growth has come at a cost of air and water pollution, deforestation and nearly every form of environmental degradation imaginable. According to Starr (2010), two-thirds of China's factories are polluting the air and water in violation of regulations. Nine tenths of China's cities do not meet Chinese air standards. Eighty percent of China's fresh water bodies are polluted and ninety percent of water flowing through China's cities is impotable. By 2025 China will produce three times the amount of greenhouse gases currently produced by the United States. China feeds 20% of the world's population on less than 7% of the world's arable land. Many question how China will be able to feed a growing population on a shrinking amount of arable land. Some think that by 2030 China will face a grain deficit impossible for the world's exporters to fulfill. (Starr 2010).

China is challenged with a double burden in that it must deal with current environmental issues while also dealing with decisions made in the past. Socialist industrialization was terribly destructive toward the environment, even more than Capitalist industrialization. Mao's attitude was that nature was an enemy to be vanquished. Additionally the Chinese were provided with little incentive to promote environmental stewardship. For a long time in China water and energy were supplied to consumers at no cost or were heavily subsidized. Hence, there was absolutely no incentive to conserve.

The contemporary situation is nearly as grim. In just seven years the number of cars on China's streets increased seven-fold. China uses more coal than any other country in the world and is also the world's second largest consumer of oil, falling only behind the United States – but gaining quickly (Starr, 2010). Chinese environmental laws are essentially unfunded mandates. There is no financial support to local governments to enforce environmental laws to improve the quality of air and water. Where economic development is pitted against environmental protection in China, economic development wins virtually every time.

In 1992 the Chinese delegation to the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro was forced to admit there “was no such thing as an NGO in China

devoted to environmentalism. The closest comparable are GONGOs – “Government Organized Non-Government Organizations” (Starr 2010). There is currently no grassroots green movement in China, partially because the state is sensitive to groups that may be critical of the government or become political. Those groups that do emerge are local in nature and are isolated from any kind of national movement.

In such a context, the Christian Church in China could step up to represent the moral imperative of environmentalism in the country. In the United States and Canada care for the environment among Christians is a growing area of emphasis. Most commonly called creation care, environmental stewardship in Christian circles is also known as missionary earth keeping, eco-justice, eco missiology and evangelical environmentalism. The website of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE), an association of independent faith groups including the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Council of Churches (NCC) and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, hosts a robust collection of statements from many religious denominations and organizations. Such statements voice denominational goals to carry out certain programs or adopt policy positions concerning ecological issues. Additionally, they help to reorient members’ attention to creation care as a religious responsibility.

Yet, in China there is virtually no emphasis on creation care or environmental stewardship in the Christian Church. During the seminar I had many conversations with indigenous Christian leaders regarding the substantial environmental degradation in China caused in part by severe air and water pollution. In one such conversation with a representative of social services in the TSPM Church at the China Christian Council I used the term “creation care” and had to subsequently define it. There was some mention made of China’s significant environmental problems by the Executive Director of the Amity Foundation while we were in Shanghai. The Amity Foundation is an independent arm of the TSPM created in 1985 to help poorer areas of the country develop. It is also known as the Amity Printing Company because it is the largest Bible producer in China and, currently, in the world. While much of the support provided to Amity comes from overseas, fifty percent comes from Chinese Christians for various advocacy projects,

including some limited environmental intervention. The environmental work focuses on biogas as a renewable energy source for cooking and lighting and on solar energy.

In a government directed study on the capacity of Christianity to enhance social harmony in China, creation care was not mentioned despite the naming of “pollution and over-exploitation of natural resources” as one of the three major problems the country must solve (Zhan et al, 2008). Water and air pollution infrequently affect only the immediate locality at the source. Provinces and regions attempting to enforce environmental regulations find that their efforts are undermined by neighbouring regions.

Chinese air and water pollution, and in particular greenhouse gas emissions, are of great importance to not only the Chinese but the rest of the world. China is currently the world’s leading emitter of carbon dioxide. Because environmental degradation is beginning to effect economic development there are more in China who are willing to concede. The Chinese Christian Church could be on the front edge of a growing environmental movement in China and, unlike creation care in the United States, be a leader rather than a follower for advancing environmental change.

CONCLUSION

This short reflection on the 2011 seminar has attempted to elucidate three potential areas of study for young scholars interested in studying the geography of religion in China. Peng’s suggestion of special religious zones is a Chinese solution to a Chinese problem that may lead to a resolution of the country’s challenges in religion and the rule of law. Chinese migration is perhaps the most interesting and challenging geographic issue facing both the sanctioned Three Self Patriotic Movement and unregistered churches. Finally, since China is known to be the most polluting nation on earth, creation care in Chinese Christian churches is an important area for western Christians to engage the Chinese Church.

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Spatial Distribution and Location of Catholic Mass Rock Sites in the Diocese of Cork and Ross, County Cork, Ireland

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Abstract.

Leading historians (Wall 1960; Whelan 1995; Elliott 2009) argue that the spatial distribution of Mass Rock sites in Ireland, during the Penal era, is reflective of areas of extreme Catholic poverty, where no parish chapel existed or where landlords were hostile to the overt presence of Catholicism. This paper argues that such traditional assumptions require revision and concludes that many locations do not conform to the mythical, secluded, upland sanctuaries that have traditionally been depicted and that their spatial distribution is more indicative of settlement patterns reflecting the cultural differences that existed within Irish Catholicism during this period.

Key words: Mass Rocks, Ireland, Catholicism, County Cork, Penal Laws

The history of Catholicism is an essential component in the history of modern Ireland. As locations of a distinctively Catholic faith, Mass Rocks are important historical, ritual and counter-cultural sites. Their continued use reflects, and helps reconstruct and legitimise, contemporary Irish identity whilst providing a tangible and experiential connection to Irish heritage and tradition. Within the Archaeological Survey Database of the National Monuments Service for Ireland Mass Rocks are classified as ‘a rock or earthfast boulder used as an altar or a stone built altar used when Mass was being celebrated during Penal times

(1690s to 1750s AD), though there are some examples which appear to have been used during the Cromwellian period (1650s AD). Some of these rocks/boulders may bear an inscribed cross' (Archaeological Survey Database 2010).

The mythology surrounding Mass Rocks tends to symbolise the worst excesses of the 'Penal Laws'. Yet, as Elliott (2000) has pointed out, the impact of the Penal Laws was short-lived and the worst was over by 1730 (Elliott 2000, 170). Since the 1990s, most historians have rejected this traditional 'penal' paradigm with its subtext of a heroic but silenced Catholic nation (Dickson 2004, 38). Yet, so pervasive is the Mass Rock in the image of past persecution that Pope John Paul II spoke of it during his 1979 visit to Ireland and annual celebrations of Mass continue to be held at a number of Mass Rock sites across the whole island of Ireland.

An initial examination of the geographical distribution of Mass Rock sites in the diocese of Cork and Ross, county Cork, has yielded some surprising concentrations and absences in certain areas. The actual locations of these sites have proved intriguing since few appear to conform to the mythical, secluded, upland sanctuaries depicted in early and mid-twentieth century history textbooks and more recently on 'republican' murals. This paper does not attempt to assess the implementation, success or failure of the Penal Laws but, rather, aims to provide one of the most thorough syntheses of available information in respect to Mass Rock sites at a diocesan level and to challenge a number of current academic hypotheses about the nature, use and significance of Mass Rocks in the retention of Catholic identity and practice before, during and after the Penal era.

The Penal Laws were passed between 1695 and 1756, although it may be argued that Ireland's Roman Catholics had remained in a state of suppression from as early as Tudor and Stuart times (Morrill 2012). The degrading and dividing influence of the Penal Laws, enacted

in defiance of a Treaty guaranteeing Catholics freedom from oppression on account of their religion, and without the provocation of rebellion, extended to every field of Catholic political, professional, social, intellectual and domestic life (Lecky 1891, 52).

Connolly believes that it was the political danger posed by Catholicism, rather than its religious, cultural and intellectual failings, which provided the main justification for the introduction of legislation (Connolly 1992, 156). Such historians appear to provide an academic discourse of a somewhat secular nature and few attempts to discuss the link between persecution and the retention of Catholicism. As Donnelly points out, there is a true danger in dismissing the religious aspect of Penal legislation because, in reality, religion permeated every aspect of society, the economy and politics during this period (Donnelly 2004, 120).

The introduction of the Banishment Act of 1697 required all regular clergy, bishops and those exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction to leave Ireland and their expulsion was carried out in a highly efficient manner. Those regulars such as the Jesuits and Franciscans that remained, or filtered back into the country, found refuge amongst wealthy Catholic families or remained under the guise of secular clergy, eventually registering under the subsequent act of 1704 (Fagan 1993, 34). Such wealthy Catholic families were critical to the geography of religion and settlement in Ireland. During the previous century their power status and extensive information networks had remained emphatically Catholic in ethos and key cities such as Cork had become the centres of what came to be termed the 'recusant church' (Smyth 2006, 363).

Wall argues that, whilst this Registration Act of 1704 ordered all popish priests in the country to register in court, it merely served to grant legal recognition to the Catholic diocesan clergy who thereafter remained free to say Mass, administer the sacraments and

carry out the daily functions of a parish priest (Wall 1961, 13). Yet the Cork county assizes show that this was not the case. Dickson reports that sixty priests in the county were named at the assizes in April 1714. Of these, he identifies that three were already in custody for not having taken the oath and that twenty-six priests had refused altogether to take the oath (Dickson 2004, 55).

The 1709 Act requiring all registered priests to take the oath of abjuration, accepting Queen Elizabeth I as *de jure* and *de facto* sovereign, and denying the right of James III to the throne, was in part a response to an invasion scare in 1708. Only thirty-three priests came forward to take the oath whilst the remainder forfeited any legal status which the Registration Act of 1704 had afforded them. Despite this resulting in a temporary disruption to religious services, with priests going into hiding and Mass Houses closing their doors, such precautionary measures were only short-lived as the law proved impossible to enforce (Connolly 1992, 275-276).

The Penal Laws did not ensure the elimination of Catholicism nor did they result in the mass conversion of Catholics (Bartlett 1990, 2). It is argued (Elliott 2009; McBride 2009) that the Penal Laws were not applied as fiercely as legend would suggest, in fact becoming gradually inoperative as a system of religious repression. Yet, the Penal Laws were successful to some degree in that they managed to limit the public expression of Catholicism. Elliott acknowledges that there were some parts of the country, such as Munster and Ulster, where the Penal Laws were utilised by 'a particularly bigoted element in Protestant society' (Elliott 2009, 166). She believes that the impact of the Penal Laws upon the Catholic Church and religious practice has come to define the period (Elliott 2009, 165). Although much has been written about the Penal era, the study of Mass Rocks is a neglected area of study despite their

potential in helping to frame Eighteenth-century Irish Catholicism within a broader economic, social, cultural and political context.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN MUNSTER

Despite an early English presence in Munster from the twelfth century, much of the province, particularly in the south and west, remained under the control of Gaelic chieftains. By the sixteenth century, the leaders of many of these Gaelic clans were politically allied with the descendants of the original twelfth-century Anglo-Norman colonists, the so-called 'Old English' (Delle 1999, 17). However, as Breen (2007) recognises, 1570 onwards marked the beginnings of increasing English interest in Munster as well as an emergent period of revolt by a number of Gaelic lords. Smyth draws attention to the major changes in the organisation of Irish society that began to take place at this time (Smyth 2006, 346).

In mapping society and settlement in seventeenth-century Ireland, Smyth uses poll tax listings to assess the relative distribution of Gaelic and Old English names in county Cork. He identifies a strength of Gaelic tradition close to Cork city and further reports that the Gaelic hearthland of the south-west was as clear and extensive in 1660 as it had been in 1260 (Smyth 1988, 62). However, by 1660, the power bases of all the lordships had been smashed and the Gaelic or Gaelicised lands of *na Déise*, west Cork, reveal a dispersed population and a scattering of communities (Smyth 1988, 67). In west Cork, both Bandon and Kinsale showed a Protestant majority (O'Flanagan 1988, 126) and, by 1660, Carbery also revealed strong planter elite.

With the exception of Bandon, the New English settlers moved into Cork areas where Gaelic and Old English communities were already mixed (O'Flanagan 1988, 126). Despite this, the class power of the older Gaelic communities remained and many 'still held on to powerful hinge positions in urban and rural social hierarchies and ensured the relative success

of the new landlord-inspired economy would both depend on and be mediated by them' (Smyth 1988, 72). Also relevant, and reflected in the figures from the 1659 census, is the regional diversity, demographic power and resilience of the Old English which Smyth maintains persisted into the first half of the seventeenth century in Ireland (Smyth 2004, 247).

Mapping first and second names Smyth clearly identifies a Gaelic zone of continuity extending into west and south-west Cork. With the exception of a south-western core of planter names, pivoting around Cork city and the Munster plantation precincts, Smyth finds that Old Irish family names predominated (Smyth 2004, 265). Further, he identifies that despite more than a century of war and plantation 'most of the ancient Irish names and their family bearers persisted strongly in their ancestral localities' and he specifically highlights the O'Sullivans and MacCarthys in south west Munster as examples within this category (Smyth 2006, 395). This is of key importance in respect to the spatial distribution of Mass Rock sites in Cork as this paper argues that their use is reflective of a more traditional or Gaelic strand of Irish Catholic culture.

ONE FAITH—UNITED BUT DIVIDED

Using language sources it is possible to identify a shift in the use of ethnic terminology relating to the Old English, new English and Gaelic Irish from Reformation times to the mid-seventeenth century, with a clear shift in the more exclusive term *Gaedhill* which was used to distinguish the Old English from the New English or *Nua-Ghail* (Smyth 2006, 60). The Old English had founded their own religious houses in Cork and elsewhere soon after their arrival, despite the survival of Benedictine houses at Cashel and Rosscarbery. The religious houses of the Old English excluded the Gaelic Irish and remained distinct from those of purely Gaelic origin throughout the medieval period, being located primarily in Anglo Norman port towns (Meigs 1997, 45). Jefferies' analysis of diocesan possessions between

1485 and 1535 clearly highlights this division (Jefferies 2010, 41). Old English participation within the European reform movement helped them to articulate their very separate identity (Lennon 1986, 89) and the Gaelic Irish continued to harbour a strong hostility towards them (Kelly 1985, 433).

By the seventeenth century, the Gaelic Irish and Old English had evolved into very definable groups (Meigs 1997, 90). However, by the end of the century, the Old English found themselves merged with the mass of the Catholic population (Beckett 1976, 43) with the words 'Irishmen' and 'papists' being used as interchangeable terms (Beckett 1976, 36). However, the country still remained 'highly fragmented' with 'clearly varying and multiple shades of identities' (Smyth 2006, 61). This is reflected in the diocese of Cork and Ross where Mass was celebrated at a number of different venues during the Penal era including open air sites, Mass Houses, Huts or Cabins as well as in private homes.

Bossy points out that the medieval Mass was a composite of two ritual traditions inherited from early Christianity, the tradition of public worship, practiced by whole communities, and that of the private, family, domestic cult (Bossy 1983, 51). Control of church buildings remained firmly in the hands of the state (Lennon 1986, 88) demanding a variety of ritual spaces that reflected both private and communal worship. Walsham maintains that Irish Catholics retained a deep attachment towards spaces and sites that had been violently defaced in the course of the long Reformation, believing that persecution and proscription compelled Catholics to embrace not only the natural environment (Walsham 2011, 155) but also dismantled shrines and redundant churches. Thus the landscape became an arena for individual devotion and collective worship (Walsham 2011, 156). The varying and multiple 'shades' of Catholic identity to which Smyth (2006) refers are clearly discernible in the

spatial distribution of the different venues chosen for worship within the landscape of the diocese of Cork and Ross.

The Location of Private Chapels

In respect to private worship, the *Report on the State of Popery* of 1731 records private worship in a number of parishes throughout the diocese of Cork. They are recorded in Cork city centre locations as well as in the parishes of Christ Church and St. Pauls. A number are also noted in Kinsale, as well as one further chapel in Kilruane parish situated approximately three miles from this port town. The use of private houses is only recorded at one other place outside the diocese and that is in the parish of Rosse, in the diocese of Ross, where Mass was described as taking place in ‘private houses’ although there is no mention of private chapels in the area (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913).

In his analysis of settlement implications upon ecclesiastical structures between c.1550 – 1730, Smyth advises that port towns and cities remained ‘core anchors’ of the counter-Reformation church. He highlights their strong support for its rich liturgical traditions and reports that there were greater concentrations of, and support for, both secular and regular religious (Smyth 2000, 176). Both patronage and protection were offered by wealthy and literate Catholic merchants (Smyth 2006, 371). Significant numbers of Old English remained in the port towns and cities such as Cork, Youghal and Kinsale. Both McCarthy (2000) and Dickson (2004) show that, despite previous expulsions, the population of Old English descent living within the walls of Cork city remained significant during the Penal era. McCarthy records that at least a quarter of the Tituladoes were descended from Cork city’s Old Catholic merchant oligarchy. This included Old English families such as the Goolds, Skiddys and Ronanes (McCarthy 2000, 46) as well as the Galweys and McNamaras (Dickson 2004, 40). In Youghal, the Coppingers and Terrys were among the families of Old English (McCarthy

2000, 45). Bolster reports that they were also powerful in places such as Bandon, Innishannon and Kinsale (Bolster 1972, 109).

The Jesuits had played a vital role in the Counter-Reformation and their mission strategy often targeted affluent and influential members of Irish society (Jones 1995, 145). Their schools and colleges promoted a positive Catholic image and classrooms became powerful instruments of the Counter-Reformation cause (Jones 1995, 145). Catholic gentry and mercantile families often retained clergy in their homes, providing them with both financial support and protection (Lennon 1986, 82). The *Report on the State of Popery* of 1731 acknowledged that ‘most of the wealthy Papists’ had ‘private Chappels in their Houses, where Mass is often celebrated’ (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913, 131). This paper suggests that the location of private chapels strongly mirrors the Old English settlement patterns identified by McCarthy (2000), Dickson (2004) and Smyth (2006), reflecting a strand of Irish Catholic culture that was strongly influenced by Jesuit teaching.

The Location of Mass Houses

Research has revealed that former Old English domination within the port towns and cities is also reflected in the existence of established and substantial Mass Houses. In more rural parishes the *Report on the State of Popery* of 1731 generally describes Mass Houses as ‘mean thatched Cabbins’ with ‘many, or most of them, open at one end’. Those located within port towns and cities are, in contrast, described as being well established, large and, occasionally, sumptuous (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913).

The 1731 report states that the Parish of Christ Church in Cork city had ‘a public mass house’ which had been ‘considerably enlarged and beautified within five or six years last past’ (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913, 135). It mentions that there were also two new Mass houses in the city. One of these was slated and built in 1728. The other was built in

1730 'on a fine eminence, in a Large sumptuous manner in the north suburbs on a new foundation' despite the fact that there was already 'a Large Convenient mass house before, near the place where the said new mass house is built'. Another Mass house or Chapel existed in the centre of the city and this had been recently enlarged (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913, 131). In Kinsale there was 'one Mass house' and '.... another house now building' which authorities suspected as being designed for a Mass House (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913, 140).

In county Tipperary Butler confirms the widespread existence of Mass Houses as early as 1670. In a similar vein to Cork and Kinsale, he emphasises the relationship between these Mass Houses and a safe-house support network of Roman Catholic gentry households. He draws upon a report written to the Vatican, in 1684, highlighting these close links. Of great significance is the fact that this report emphasises that these gentry desired private masses in or near their own houses in order to avoid being associated with open-air masses and other indignities (Butler 2006, 142). The same safe-house support network certainly existed in Cork as authors (Burke 1914; Lennon 1986) have shown, the Old English forming a core area of settlement within port towns and cities such as Cork, Youghal and Kinsale (Smyth 1988; Bolster 1982).

Whilst Old English families had possessed lands throughout Cork, much of the coastal territories of west Cork were controlled by Gaelic lordships (Breen 2007, 21). Such areas show a high preponderance of Mass Rock sites, supporting the hypothesis that the use of Mass Rocks is reflective of a more traditional or Gaelic strand of Irish Catholic culture.

The Location of Mass Rocks

The arrival of Christianity in Ireland could easily have eradicated the existing learning and institutions associated with paganism but, as Mac Cana identifies, this was not the case.

Instead it achieved a remarkable symbiosis between native institutions and modes of thought (Mac Cana 2011, 48). Whilst the arrival of Christianity heralded ‘a sea-change in ritual practice’, its adaptation to the existing social order was aimed at achieving a smooth and unchallenged transition (Ó hÓgáin 1999, 199). The new religious orthodoxy permitted the complementary coexistence of two ideologies within the same Gaelic community; one explicitly Christian, the other originally pagan (Mac Cana 2011, 48). The success of this symbiosis ‘adopting a Christian mould without abandoning the native culture’ is reflected in the cultural distinctiveness of Early Christian Ireland (Bradshaw 1989, 18). Religious sites were cleansed from pagan association by the blessings of the missionaries subsequently becoming a central focus for new religious and secular activities (Zucchelli 2009, 107).

Walsham identifies that, by 1500, the Christianisation of the landscape had all but displaced memories of ancient paganism in Ireland. However, she acknowledges that the notion that nature was invested with sensitivity to the sacred never ceased to test and challenge the Church’s equilibrium (Walsham 2012, 36). This is demonstrated by Meigs who maintains that the characteristics of late medieval Irish Catholicism were impacted significantly by the inter-relationship between the Catholic Church and the *aos dána* poets. These poets belonged to a learned class of scholars and enjoyed a position of high status within Gaelic society. Meigs argues that this symbiotic relationship was ‘indispensable to the process through which the counter-Reformation was able to enter Ireland and disseminate its reformation ideologies among a receptive population’ (Meigs 1997, 77).

Walsham proposes that ‘the bible provided a rich repertoire of iconographical motifs connected with the natural environment and supplied plenty of evidence that it was the setting for sublime spiritual experiences’ (Walsham 2011, 39). Whilst paganism tended to view physical locations as inherently sacred, Walsham points out that Christianity was reluctant to

accord such sanctity to certain places within the landscape. Instead, through those writers and poets recording the lives of the saints in medieval Ireland, Christianity created ‘a tissue of topographical legend to explain the appearance of the physical landscape’ (Walsham 2011, 43).

By the time of the Penal Laws the Catholic political culture of west Cork is described by Smyth as ‘predominantly (but not exclusively) Irish speaking oral and manuscript based, with rich traditions and practitioners of bardic poetry, genealogical, historical and legal scholarship, *dinshenchas* and the keeping of annals’. He argues that this fostered strong cultural unity and regional diversity. Catholics in these hearthlands knew the lands of their ancestors intimately and nurtured a potent belief in ‘the place of poetry and the imagination, the spiritual world and “older” faiths’ (Smyth 2006, 61). This paper proposes that such knowledge and tradition was highly influential in respect to the choice and location of Mass Rock sites.

There is already substantial evidence that shows an intimate link between Ireland’s shrines and topographical features or natural vegetation features. Nolan (1983) identifies that at least ninety-two per cent of Ireland’s shrines are ‘intimately’ associated with such features including several at Ballyvourney in county Cork. He emphasises the high prevalence of holy-water features and sacred stones at Irish pilgrimage sites. Sacred stones, particularly megalithic monuments and natural rock formations are nearly six times more common in an Irish pilgrimage context than elsewhere in Europe (Nolan 1983, 431). Nolan concludes that Irish pilgrimage almost certainly has stronger pre-Christian roots than pilgrimage elsewhere in Europe (Nolan 1983, 432). Only thirteen per cent of active Irish shrines postdate the Reformation (Nolan 1983, 436) demonstrating that older traditions have predominated. The

location of Mass Rock sites clearly echoes Nolan's findings as there is robust evidence of an engagement with topographical features and nature.

The symbolism reflected by the element water occupies a most important place amongst the sacred spaces of many nations (Radimilahy 2008, 86) and Ireland is no exception. The power and regenerative force of water is acknowledged as an important aspect of Irish mythology as it played a central role as a creative force in the cosmic religiousness of pre-Christian communities (Brenneman & Brenneman 1995, 22). The distribution of Mass Rock sites in the diocese of Cork and Ross shows a close correlation between Mass Rock sites and water sources. Raftery (1994) identifies that rivers figure prominently in Celtic mythology and a significant number of Mass Rock sites are located adjacent to streams and rivers such as those at Kilshinahan and Glenville (Plate 1).

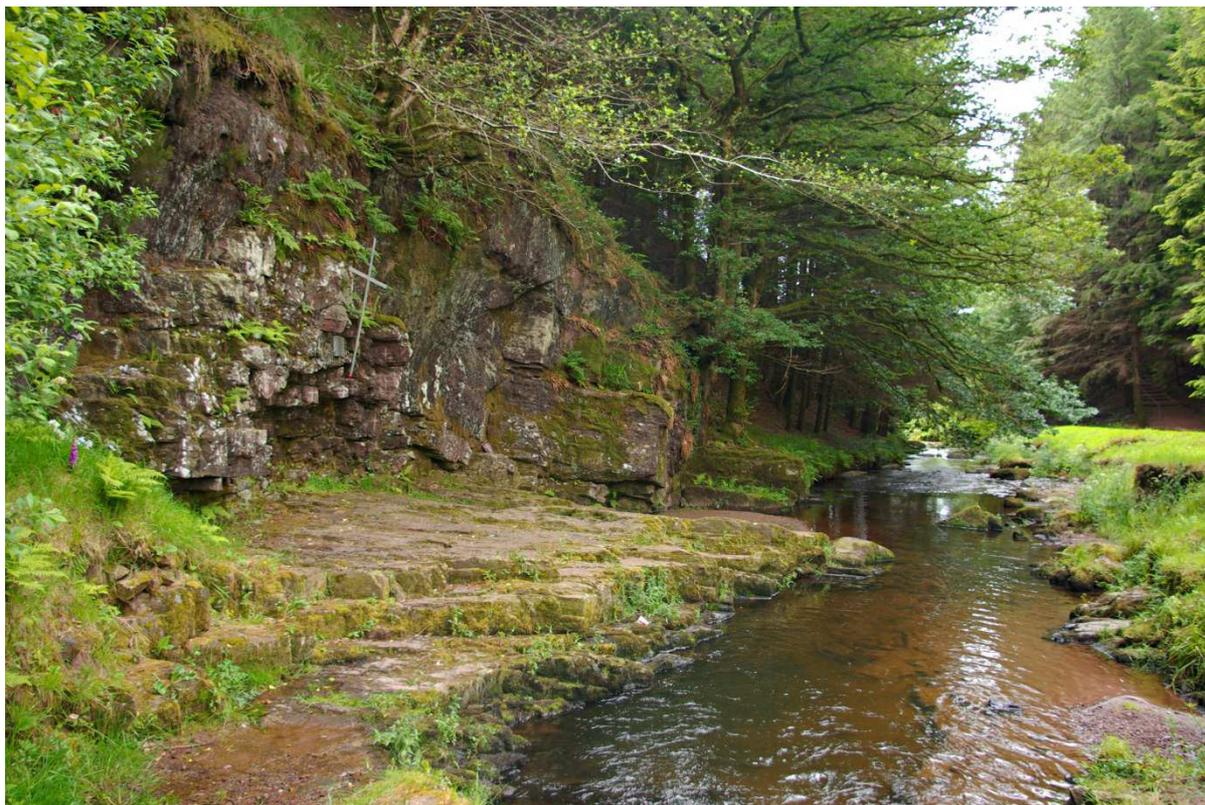


Plate 1. Glenville Mass Rock at the edge of the River Bride (Photo by the Author)

Walsham (2012) identifies that, in Ireland, Holy Wells were widely regarded as locations where supernatural power was especially potent so it is not surprising that a number of sites are located beside Holy Wells. The Beach Mass Rock, which is found beside Lady's Well in Bantry, is one such site (Plate 2). Other Mass Rocks are situated close to lakes such as those at Coornahahilly and Curraheen in Inchigeelagh, whilst some, such as Mishells, are found in close proximity to fords. Many ancient Celtic battles were staged at fords because they were believed to be places of crossing and transformation (Brenneman & Brenneman 1995, 22).

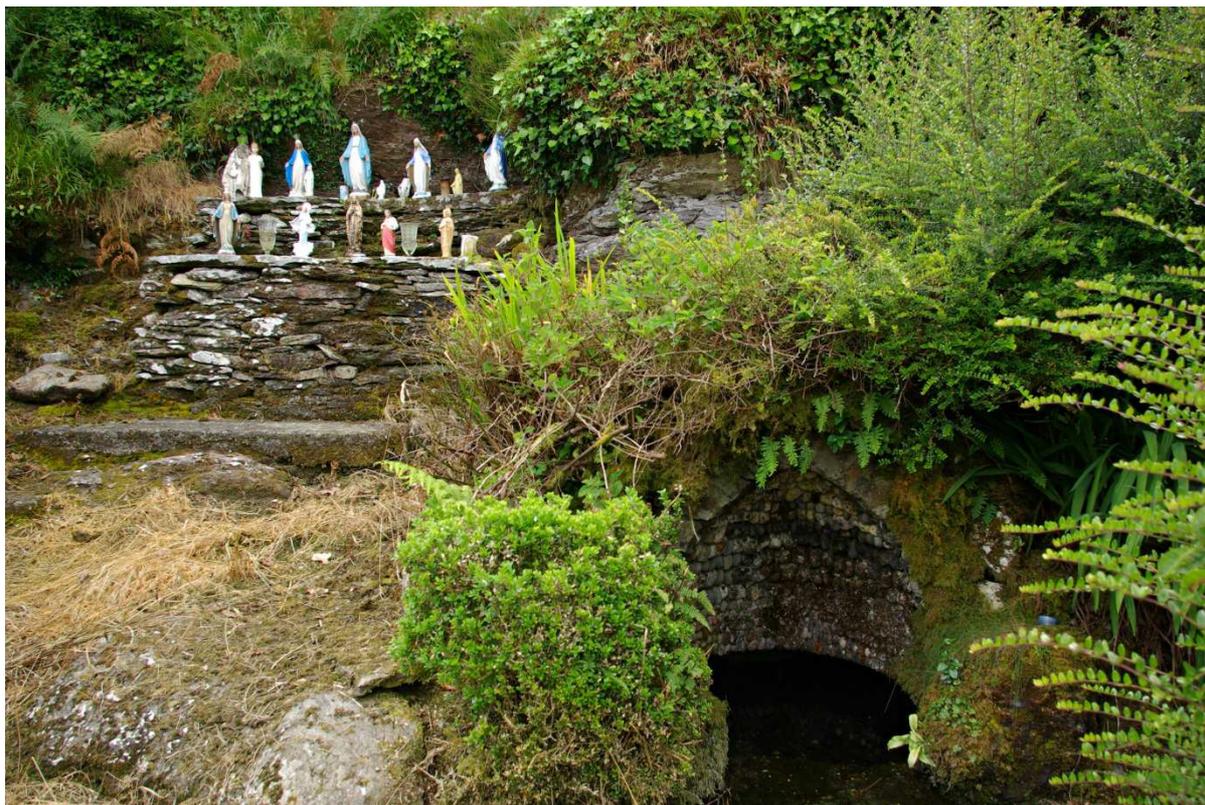


Plate 2. Beach Mass Rock in close proximity to Lady's Well, Bantry (Photo by the Author)

The sacredness of stone is clearly apparent in its use as an altar and, according to Moss, stone has always been the preferred material for altar use although there is some evidence for the use of wooden altars during the later middle ages (Moss 2006, 81). The large number of Mass Rocks that utilise natural rock formations is strong evidence that sites were often chosen because of specific topographical features. At Ballyshoneen, in the diocese of Cloyne, Mass was celebrated at a rock face that resembled a human face in profile. The Mass Rock at Gortnahoughtee (Plate 3), known as *Carraig an tSeipeil* (Rock of the Chapel), resembles a small chapel whilst at Cúm an tSagairt (Hollow of the Priest), in Ballingearry, the Mass Rock is an unusually shaped prow-like boulder which stands in an isolated position within a natural hollow in the landscape (Plate 4).



Plate 3. Gortnahoughtee Mass Rock also known as Carraig an tSeipeil, Inchigeelagh (Photo by the Author)



Plate 4. Cúm an tSagairt, Ballingeary (Photo by the Author)

Cooney highlights the fact that some areas in Ireland had already become ‘special’ places in the Neolithic period and that these have remained the scene of continuing attention in archaeology, history and mythology, as people have referred back to their past (Cooney 2008, 34). Cooney’s observations have specific relevance to the location of Mass Rocks sites, particularly in Cork, where archaeological monuments such as ringforts, stone circles and wedge tombs were re-used and re-interpreted during the Penal era at sites such as Cooldaniel, Derrynafinchin, Drombeg and Toormore (Plate 5). This practice is certainly not confined to the Cork area and similar examples can be found in other counties including a re-used wedge

tomb at Scrahallia, Cashel, Connemara (Cooney 1985, 134) and the Srahwee or Altoir Wedge Tomb in Clew Bay, county Mayo (Plate 6).



Plate 5. Toormore Mass Rock, Schull, Cork (Photo by the Author)



Plate 6. Srahwee (Altoir) Wedge Tomb, Clew Bay, Mayo (Photo by the Author)

The Shehy Beg Mass Rock is situated high on a south facing slope in the Shehy Mountain range. Its location, close to the old Cork Butter Path, would have meant that it was previously far more accessible from Coolmountain townland and the Keakil Valley than it is today (Ryan 1957, 26). This area is prolific in archaeological monuments comprising fourteen hut sites, two enclosures and a bullaun stone. This was already an established ritual landscape when the Mass Rock was constructed suggesting that this site was chosen specifically because it was already considered to be a 'special' place by the local community.

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF MASS ROCK SITES

Mass Rocks in the Modern Day Parish of Clonakilty

When Lewis completed his topographical survey of Cork, in 1837, Clonakilty was described as 'an incorporated seaport, market and post-town ... in the parish of Kilgarriffe situated on the Gorar or Farla river, which falls into the bay close to the principle street, and in a pleasant fertile valley environment by hills of moderate elevation, which descend to the harbour' (Lewis 1837, 111-112).

Clonakilty has had a long and turbulent past. The area was once part of the *Tuath Ó nDúngalaig*, a territorial division belonging to the *Corcu Loígde* (Ó Corráin 1993, 71). A strip of their territory, extending from Ballincarriga to Clonakilty, belonged to the O'Hurleys who were tributaries of the McCarthy Reaghs (O'Leary 1975, 32). Originally known as *Tuath-na-Coillte* (or *gcoillte*) meaning the 'tuath of the woods' (Holland 1949, 158), these lands had passed to the powerful Anglo-French Barry family around the time of Henry II. However, the lands were subsequently lost to the MacCarthys of Duhallow, in the northwest, and to the Desmonds, in the east (Nicholls 1993, 176).

The area was heavily settled by New English, as a result of the Munster Plantation, and not as a result of Anglo-Norman colonisation. The town itself did not come into existence until 1620 when these lands, having been originally granted to Sir Walter Raleigh (Buchanan 1986, 89), passed to Richard Boyle, Earl of Cork. In addition to Clonakilty, Robert Boyle also assisted in the establishment of additional settlements at Enniskeane and Ballydehob (Breen 2007, 120). The town is first highlighted in the wars of 1641 when the town's charter was carried by the English inhabitants as they fled to Bandon to protect themselves (Lewis 1837, 111-112). Work has been undertaken on the 1641 depositions, which record witness testimonies concerning their experiences of the rebellion, by Canny. He identifies that 26 of the deponents who came forward from the parish of Kilgarriff generally belonged to the town of Clonakilty thus confirming a sizeable English settlement there (Canny 1993, 256).

In 1691 the town was again attacked as Irish troops rallied in support of James II (Lewis 1837, 111-112), suggesting a core of established Gaelic resistance within this area. The exclusion of the town from the 1731 *Report on the State of Popery* suggests that authorities were not aware of the presence of any Mass Rocks in the parish. However, research has revealed a number of sites within the vicinity indicating that the location of Mass Rocks at Drombeg, Dungannon, Councambeg, Knockatlowig and Tawnies Lower is testament to the tenacity of Gaelic Irish Catholics living within this parish.

Mass Rocks in the Modern Day Parish of Dunmanway

East of Drimoleague, Dunmanway parish is a union of the ancient parish of Fanlobbus and certain townlands from Ballymone. It is situated between Ballineen, Coppeen and Rossmore. The area has a very ancient parochial history as Fanlobbus is mentioned among the churches of the diocese as early as 1199 (Cork and Ross Dunmanway ID 27 (2011) Diocesan website). O'Donovan believes that the valley in which the town now sits may have been known

previously as *Dun-Maonmuige* or the 'Fort of the Noble Valley' (O'Donovan 2004, 1). In tracing the history of the area he refers to an entry within the *Annals of the Four Masters* referring to the McCarthy Reagh of Kilbrittain. Their castle of *Dun-na-mbean* was built on the banks of the *Abhainn Sallaigh* or the Sally River but was subsequently forfeited in Cromwellian times (O'Donovan 2004, 2).

The modern day town was not founded until around 1700 when Sir Richard Cox, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, built a mansion there for his residence. He also obtained the grant of a market and fairs in the area (Lewis 1837, 231-232). By 1738, the area had not yet blossomed into the flourishing mill town it was to become and Richard Hedges, a new settler in Macroom, reported that 'from Dunmanway to Canturk which is 40 miles of barbarous country there is not an English gentleman of note that lives there, except Wm. Browne, minister of Macromp' (Hedges (1738) cited in Whelan 1995, 13).

The landscape here is relatively rich in Mass Rock sites. The parish website records a Mass Rock site at Ardcahan with two further sites listed in Behagullane. An additional site at Kealiriheen, *Cumainán na hAltárach* (Little Hollow of the Altar), is described as being in a secluded hollow. A Mass Rock at Ballyhalwick is reported as the most picturesque of all the Penal sites within the district. In addition a further site is identified in Gurteensownee near Gearannbawn Rock close to *Ath an Aifrinn* or the 'Ford of the Mass'. Other sites are present in both Ballinacarriga and Togher. At Togher, sites may be found at Kinrath, Shiplock and Cooranig and at Ballinacarriga in Lisheenlish, Upper Thoam, Gortnamuckla and Clashnacrona (Cork and Ross Dunmanway ID 27 2011).

The *Schools' Manuscript Collection* of the Irish National Folklore Collection has a number of entries concerning the area which highlight several potential additional sites. These include 'a big stone called the 'Mass Rock' in the townland of Nedineagh and 'a field called the

‘priest’s field’ in the townland of Moreigh where Mass was also said in the open’. The record advises that there ‘is no altar to be seen there but it is said that the altar was made of timber and it rotted after a time’ (S303, 299). There was clearly a strong continued Gaelic presence in this area duly reflected in the large number of Mass Rock sites identified, through field work, as being located within this parish.

Mass Rocks in the Modern Day Parish of Bantry

Bantry, otherwise known as West Land and comprising the (later) parishes of Kilmow, Soole (Schull), Kilcrohane, Durrus, Kilmacomoge (Bantry) and Caheragh, was originally part of the territory belonging to the O’Mahoneys (Bolster 1972, 1). Bolster identifies that three districts of Iffanloe were tuath lands belonging to the O Mahoneys. It is unusual for early tuath parishes to survive intact down to modern times but the parish of Bantry is a good example of such continuity. Bantry evolved from the *tuath* of the *Beanntraigh* into the barony of Bantry. This in turn became the basis for the ancient parish of Bantry and Kilmocogue (Bolster 1972, 262).

The Bantry area was eventually settled by the New English during the Munster Plantation. Breen has undertaken considerable research in respect to the west Cork landscape. He advises that Bantry witnessed two primary waves of planters in the seventeenth century; the first in the very early part of the century associated with the pilchard entrepreneurs and a second group that arrived during the period of the Commonwealth and the initial years of the Restoration in the 1650s and early 1660s (Breen 2007, 47). Once a Gaelic hearthland, the decline of status and power among the Irish is very evident in Bantry. The O’Sullivan Beare tower houses, once central features of the west Cork landscape, were replaced by mansions. These were built at Reenadisert outside Bantry overlooking a small shallow sheltered inlet (Breen 2007, 131). Subsequently, during the primary phase of Cromwellian activity in the

Bantry/Beara area, all O'Sullivan Beare lands were confiscated (Breen 2007, 133). However, some family members survived as chief tenants under the new Protestant elite (Breen 2007, 48).

Many land grants were bought by Protestants in order to create very large estates. The lands of the *Mac Fínn Duibh*, for example, passed to Sir William Petty (Breen 2007, 48). In 1671 Arthur Earl of Anglesey obtained a grant of the forfeited estates of the baronies of Bere and Bantry under the Act of Settlement. These estates included Arnagashell, Ardneturish, Comeholly (Coomhola), Kilcaskan, Glangarrufe and Island, Berehaven, Derehin, RossMcOwne, Loughanbegg, Argroome, Coulagh, Ballydonogane and Abbey Land. As Breen identifies, the earl had essentially received all of the lands of the former O'Sullivan lordship and was, in fact, to hold them for the next century (Breen 2007, 135). By the onset of the Penal Laws the area retained a strong Protestant presence.

The *Report on the State of Popery* of 1731 reports three 'Mass-houses or thatch'd cabbins'; one in Kilmoe and two in Skull. These can only have been rudimentary shelters because, whilst their position remained fixed and Mass was celebrated in them, they were 'frequently rebuilt'. There was a further hut or cabin covering an altar in Caheragh which is reported as having been fixed in the same place for many years (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913, 130-141). Research has revealed a plethora of Mass Rock sites located in this parish. Indeed, Father Henchy records a total of twenty one sites in the townland of Caheragh alone (cited in Carey 1957, 99). Given the ancient pedigree of this parish, it may be argued that such a preponderance of Mass Rock sites is indicative of the remnants of a strong Gaelic presence within the area.

An Acceptable Middle Ground

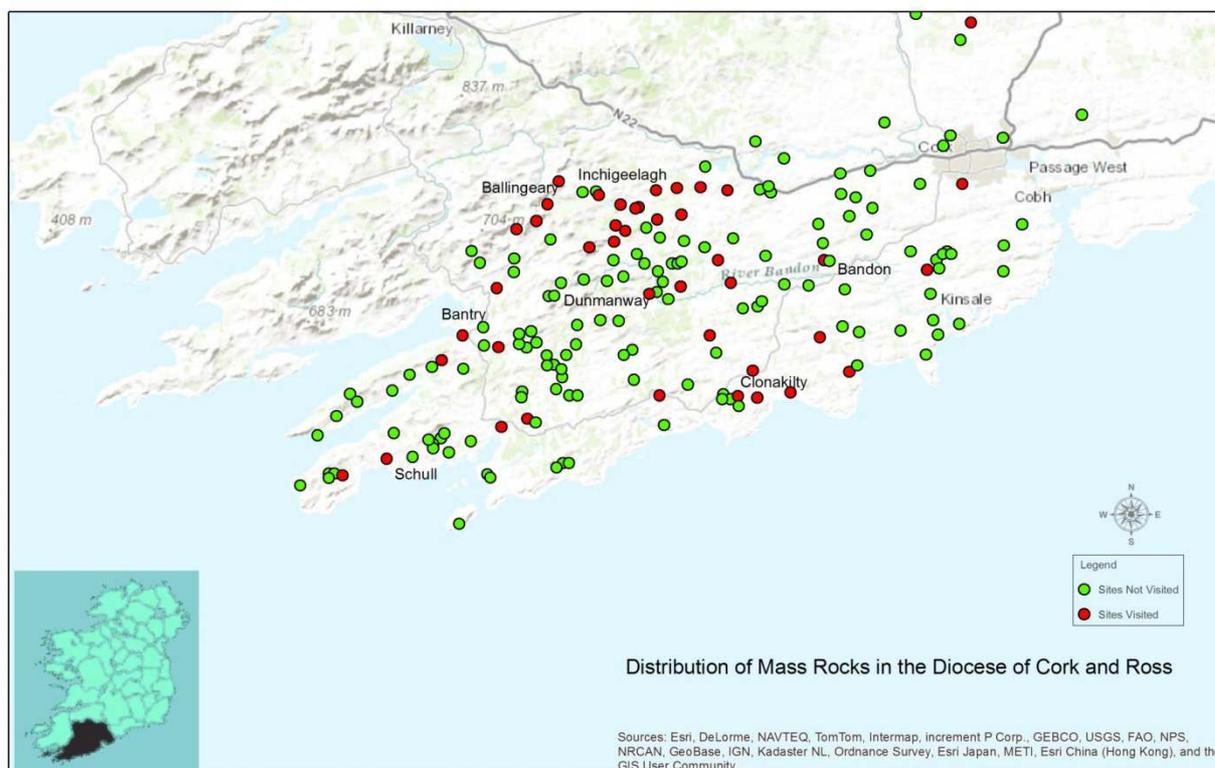
Despite the differences that clearly existed between the two Catholic cultures, the role of the Franciscans, in promoting a middle ground between the more 'traditional' strand of Gaelic Catholicism and that of the Jesuit style counter-Reformation Catholicism, needs to be addressed. Munster had always been an area where the Franciscans were strong (Bolster 1972, 432). Prior to the Reformation there had been thirty Franciscan Observant Friaries in the province, far outstripping numbers of Augustinian and Dominican houses (Bolster 1972, 447). Research undertaken by Gillespie demonstrates that the Franciscan order in Ireland had undergone a dramatic transformation by the end of the seventeenth century. Whilst it had shrunk to a small fragmented organisation by 1600, a century later he reports that it was a 'well-established' body with almost 600 members by 1700 (Gillespie 2009, 75).

Gillespie believes that their success was due, not only to their vision of themselves as distinctively Irish and distinctively Franciscan, but also to the fact that many were trained in Europe (Gillespie 2009, 75). Gillespie writes that 'the genius of the Franciscan order in seventeenth-century Ireland was its ability to recognise the changing needs of successive generations of seventeenth-century Irish people and to maintain support from the ethnically diverse groups that the order served in that changing world' (Gillespie 2009, 76).

There is both temporal and spatial evidence to show that the use of Mass Houses and Mass Rocks was not mutually exclusive. As already discussed, there were a number of large and sumptuous Mass Houses in Cork city which is expected given the strength of Old English settlement there. However, in the *Report on the State of Popery* of 1731, the curate reports on his enquiries within his own parish of 'St. Finbarry Corke' that priests also officiated in 'private houses' as well as 'open fields' close to the city (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913, 134). Whilst there was also a strong Old English presence in Kinsale, it is evident from

the *Landed Estates Database* that Gaelic families such as the O'Driscolls and O'Mahoneys lived in juxtaposition alongside Old English families such as the de Courcys and Galweys (Landed Estates Database NUI Galway Galway/Galwey Estate 2011). There was a Mass House in the port town of Kinsale, in addition to two houses that had 'private Chappells in them' where priests often celebrated Mass. Another building was being erected that the writer, John Jephson, believed to be a further Mass House. However, there were also two other places where the Papists assembled 'but have not any house or walls' (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913, 140).

It is clear from the *Report on the State of Popery 1731* that some Mass sites remained in their original location for a considerable period of time whilst others were frequently moved or rebuilt. In the parishes of Dromaleague and Caheragh there were two reported sites with one 'often removed from place to place the one now in being is scarceley of six months standing'. The movable celebration of Mass was also a feature in Desert Surges parish where it was reported that 'Mass is often said in several places in this parish, it was not very long ago near to the Parish Church' (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913, 136). Yet in Skull parish, there were 'fixed places for celebrating Mass' (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913, 140). The fact that Mass Rocks were temporally and spatially mutable may go some way in explaining the significant number of Mass Rock sites that have been identified during research. Using a synthesis of historical, geographical, archaeological, folklore and oral sources it has been possible to expand the potential number of Mass Rock sites in the diocese of Cork and Ross to 181 (Map 1).



Map 1. Potential Mass Rock sites, Diocese of Cork and Ross, County Cork

REVISITING TRADITIONAL ASSUMPTIONS

Mass Rock sites are Confined to Areas of Extreme Catholic Poverty, Where No Parish Chapel Existed or Where Landlords Were Hostile to the Overt Presence of Catholicism

It has been repeatedly argued by leading historians (Elliott 2009; Whelan 1995; Wall 1961) that Mass Rock sites were confined to areas of extreme Catholic poverty, where no parish chapel existed or where landlords were hostile to the overt presence of Catholicism. The historical evidence for this viewpoint would seem to lie in the words of the Archbishop of Cashel. Whilst writing to the Vatican, in July 1684, he declared that, in Cashel, Roman Catholics still held land where Mass-houses were erected. However, in a few unspecified upland parishes and due to a combination of poverty and opposition of ‘heretics’ to providing

mass-house sites on their estate, he reported that pastors celebrated Mass on movable altars in the open air (cited in Butler 2006, 142). Yet, McBride believes that the customary image of Catholicism throughout the Penal era, as a religion of the poor, requires adjustment (McBride 2009, 230) and I propose that the distribution and location of Mass Rock sites, at least in the diocese of Cork and Ross, certainly supports an alternative view.

Poverty in the modern day parish of Bandon

The modern parish of Bandon is a union of Ballymodan, Kilbrogan and a few townlands from the ancient parish of Desertserges, including Bandon Town. In Irish the parish is known as *Droichead Ui Mathuna* (village/town of the O'Mahoneys). This name refers to the O'Mahony sept (Cork and Ross Bandon ID 10 2011) who took the land from the O'Driscoll's, *Uí Drisceoil*, at the Battle of Morrahin, near Kilcoe, in 747AD. The O'Mahonys settled around Bandon and subsequently obtained lands throughout the Mizen and Sheep's Head peninsulas (Daly2004, 6).

The heritage of south-west Munster was a mixed one which underpinned the most innovative and wealthiest overseas English settlement anywhere in the seventeenth century. Towns such as Bandon, described as 'Munster's most shining example of a successful plantation town' (O'Flanagan 1988, 125) became pivotal to future colonisation within the area (Smyth 1988,76). When Cromwell arrived in 1649 he declared Bandon to be 'a fine sweet town and an entire English plantation without any admixture of Irish' (cited in Bolster 1982, 218). By 1685 Protestant control of head leases in Bandon was virtually total (O'Flanagan 1988, 127). Even Gaelic owned lands were often leased to the New English settlers. This process slowly diluted Gaelic control in the area (Breen 2007, 36). Dominated by the New English, the Established church became pre-eminent in Bandon during the early

decades of the seventeenth century. Two churches were built in the area; Christ Church in 1610 (Breen 2007, 82) and Ballymodan in 1614 (Breen 2007, 84).

Research, by O'Flanagan, shows that the town remained predominantly Anglican from 1659 until the mid-1770s (O'Flanagan 1988, 128). Even after this date, Bandon retained its exclusive Protestant character with Catholic residences almost totally absent within the old walled sector of the town. He observes that there were no Catholic institutions present within a one mile radius of the town's walls (O'Flanagan 1988, 131). Canny's work, in respect to the 1641 depositions, also reveals an English presence in a contiguous line of relatively dense settlement in the valleys of the rivers Blackwater, Lee and Bandon (Canny 1993, 254), suggesting that such areas 'were more densely settled with migrants from Britain than any area of comparable size in the province of Ulster' (Canny 1993, 256).

By the onset of the Penal Laws, O'Flanagan confirms that those Catholics living in Bandon were 'invariably marginal' living, for the most part, in lowly cabin dwellings (O'Flanagan 1988, 127). This area was clearly strongly Protestant and its Catholic community relatively poor. If historians are correct in their assumptions that Mass Rock sites are situated in areas of extreme poverty or where landlords are hostile to the overt presence of Catholicism then one would expect a significant number of Mass Rock sites to be located within this particular parish.

The *Report on the State of Popery* in 1731 records 'no reputed Mass house or popish Chapel. The reputed priest when he says mass it is only in some private Cabbin' (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913, 139). Research has identified only one confirmed Mass Rock site in Bandon, that of Corravreeda East, where a stone known locally as a Mass Rock was broken up and buried in the 1970s (Archaeological Survey Database 2012). It is possible that Bandon parish is simply an anomaly. However, a lack of Mass Rock sites in this

parish contradicts traditional assumptions concerning their presence in areas of extreme poverty or where landlords were hostile to the overt presence of Catholicism.

Wealth in the modern day parish of Kinsale

In contrast to the Catholics in Bandon, those living in or near Kinsale appear relatively wealthy. The Catholic community was sufficiently affluent to be in the process of building a second Mass House in 1731, having already built the existing Mass House in the town. If traditional assumptions are correct, one would not expect to find Mass Rocks in an area that was so affluent. However, this is not the case. Despite a number of alternative places for worship, the use of Mass Rock sites continued in parallel with worship at Mass Houses in this particular parish.

Mass Rocks Are Found in Secluded Upland Settings

The actual locations of Mass Rock sites are equally intriguing. Less than a quarter of sites visited during research conformed to the mythical, upland sanctuaries depicted in early and mid-twentieth century history text books. The image of an upland scene depicting worship at a Mass Rock was also one of the earlier images to appear on more cultural murals introduced after the ceasefires of the 1990s (Plate 7). The painted image, found on the gable end of a house in Ardoyne Road, Belfast, is almost a carbon copy of that painted by Reigh (1884) entitled *A Christmas Mass in the Penal Days – The Alarm!* which appeared as a free Christmas supplement to the *United Ireland* newspaper of 20th December 1884 (United Ireland 1884). In 1933 a further painting was completed by a Dublin Fireman, James Conway, and entitled *The Mass Rock*. A photograph of the artist and his work was published in the July issue of the *Irish Independent* and, similarly, depicts a priest celebrating Mass with a small congregation in an upland setting (*Irish Independent* 1905).



Plate 7. Mural, Ardoyne Road, Belfast (Photo by the Author)

Despite such pre-conceptions, in the diocese of Cork and Ross, relatively few Mass Rock sites are found in upland mountain settings or at high elevation. The majority of sites are found within fields or pastureland or situated within wooded glens and gallery woods. Reports within the *Schools' Manuscript Collection* support the rich variety of locations identified during field research. One entry reveals the presence of a Mass Rock in Borlinn in a 'lonely isolated glen' (S282, 114). In Kilbrittain 'on the eastern slope' of *Gleann na mbrathar* or Friars Glen, another entry reveals that 'a rough table has been cut in the rock'. While this Mass Rock was on one side of the glen, between the Mass Rock and the stream was 'a green level patch where the people knelt during Mass' (S313, 306a).

The *Schools' Manuscript Collection* also records open air sites in fields throughout the diocese; a Mass Rock is reported in Kilbrittain 'In James O'Mahony's field of Cloundereen' (S313, 150) and in Inchafune, in Ballinacarriga, where there is a report of 'a field in which Mass was celebrated in the days when priests were hunted'. The reader is informed that the field still bears the name *Páirc na tSéipéil* or Field of the Chapel (S303, 298).

Other entries, however, do reflect the tradition image of Mass in the mountains. One child records that two priests passed through Drinagh to say Mass in a hidden place in the mountain which was known as *Conacán na Holóracs* or the Little Hill of the Altars (S303,195). Another child locates a Mass Rock on Round Hill mountain in the parish of Dunmanway (S303, 298). Further entries confirm that in Penal times Mass was said on the side of *Cnoc Buide* (Yellow Hill) in west Cork (S281, 133) and on the top of hills near Bantry (S281,165) and in the Mealagh Valley (S281, 425).

The Evolution of the Mass Rock Tradition

Whelan identifies the 'open air' phase of worship as the first stage in the history of modern chapel building in Ireland and proposes that, contrary to popular belief, 'this episode was brief and spatially restricted'. He does, however, highlight isolated pockets where open air Mass survived for a long period of time, arguing that such pockets were confined to areas with hard-line landlords such as Dundrum and Templemore in Tipperary or in areas of extreme poverty such as the Ballingearry area of west Cork (Whelan 1983, 6).

O'Riordan's research in county Laois confirms that such hard-line landlords did exist. He reports that Lord Castlecoote inserted a clause prohibiting a tenant from providing any site for a Catholic chapel, school or priest's residence in each of his leases. This resulted in Catholics of the parish of Castletown, two miles from Mountrath, worshipping at a thatched house built on a sandbank in the river Nore (O'Riordan 1999, 461). In county Clare the

Church of the Little Ark, in Kilbaha, holds the only surviving ‘ark’ from Penal times. The ark was an altar-like structure that was carried or rolled on to the beaches in some coastal areas. It was placed within the tide marks where Mass could be celebrated on land was not technically owned by landlords (Donegal Public Art 2014). Elliott also acknowledges that in some parts of the country, such as Munster, the Penal Laws were utilised by ‘a particularly bigoted element in Protestant society’ (Elliott 2009, 166). Such views are supported by the location of a Mass Rock at East Ferry, in Cork. Situated on the Great Island side of the strand, here too the congregation would have stood on the sandbanks with access to the site dictated by the tidal flows of the river.

However, research in Ballingearry, does not seem to support Whelan’s suggestions that isolated pockets remained where open air Mass survived for a long period of time due to the poverty of the area. If this was the case then one would expect to find a high preponderance of Mass Rock sites in Ballingearry. However, only two Mass Rocks were identified during research as being located in *Béal Átha'n Ghaorthaidh* (Ballingearry); Kilmore Mass Rock and that at *Cum an tSagairt* (Hollow of the Priest). In contrast there were a significant number of Mass Rock sites in neighbouring Inchigeelagh where Ó Murchadha (1993) documents the existence of ‘good farmhouses’ and a ‘slated’ dwelling amongst approximately 130 ‘cabins’ by 1700. By the mid-seventeenth century, slate houses were considered to be around five times more valuable than chimney houses (O’Flanagan 1993, 406). Additionally, the inhabitants of Inchigeelagh and neighbouring Kilmichael were sufficiently affluent to support three ‘popish’ schools and two priests as recorded in the *Report on the State of Popery* in 1731 (Catholic Historical Society Ireland 1913, 135).

One other reason given for a preponderance of Mass Rock sites is an absence of parish chapels or landlord hostility to the overt presence of Catholicism. Land was clearly available for the erection of Mass Huts, and subsequently Penal Chapels, in *Uíbh Laoghaire* (Iveleary)

as demonstrated by sites located at Rossmore and Currahy in Inchigeelagh. There is robust evidence to show that Mass Rocks in this parish were already being replaced by 1753 and a carved stone at *Séipéal na Glóire* (Chapel of the Glory) near to the Currahy Mass Rock is testament to this. A small stone built structure, believed to be a Mass hut, was also recorded during research located in a field opposite the shrine at Rossmore.

Despite the availability of these buildings, Mass Rocks continued to be used in this parish well beyond these dates. A Mass Rock at Carriganeela was used by locals up to the 1950s and the Curraheen Mass Rock is believed to have been used up until the appointment of Father Holland as Parish Priest in 1816 when its use was superseded by Mass in a private cottage in the village prior to the building of the Catholic church in 1842 (Ryan 1957, 27).

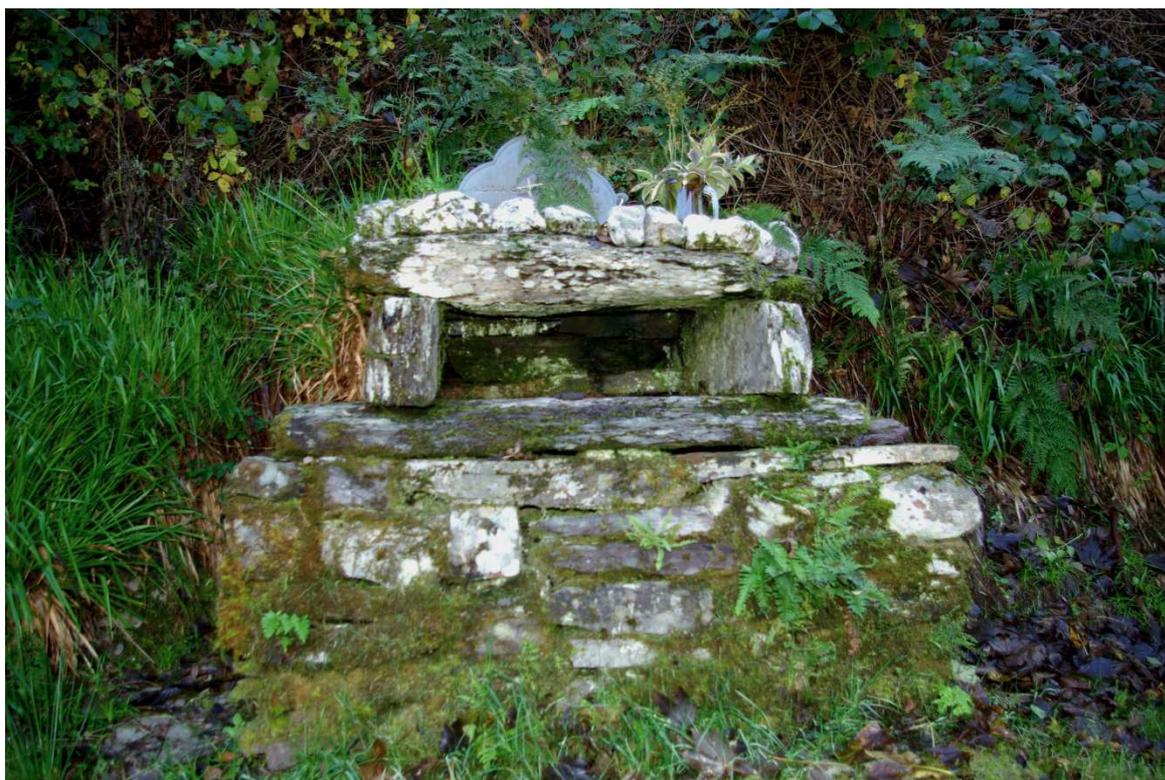


Plate 8. Curraheen Mass Rock, Inchigeelagh (Photo by the Author)

Today the physical expression of reverence or veneration toward these sacred places is demonstrated by the continued celebration of Mass at Mass Rock sites throughout the country

and by the bodily involvement of the Eucharist. In *Uíbh Laoghaire*, Mass is celebrated annually at the Curraheen Mass Rock (Plate 8) and was celebrated during the Millennium at the ruined Penal chapel at Currahy, *Séipéal na Glóire*, by the local history society *Cumann Staire Bhéal átha'n Ghaorthaidh* (Ballingeary Historical Society).

CONCLUSIONS

The mapping of the spatial distribution of Mass Rock sites in the diocese of Cork and Ross, county Cork, challenges a number of traditional assumptions that have been made concerning their location. This paper proposes that they are not predominantly located in areas of extreme poverty, where no chapel was available as an alternative place of worship or where landlords were hostile to the overt presence of Catholicism. Instead, it suggests that the spatial distribution of Mass Rock sites is reflective of a more traditional or Gaelic strand of Irish Catholic culture within the diocese. Further, it cannot be assumed that the majority of Mass Rock sites are found in secluded upland settings, as depicted in mid-nineteenth century history text books and on modern day Republican Murals. The location of sites, instead, reflects the varied topography of the landscape and a close engagement with nature. Mass Rocks may also be found in fields and pastureland, wooded glens, gallery woods, ravines and in coastal areas. The coastal nature of sites is reflected in other counties such as Galway where the spatial distribution recorded within the Archaeological Survey Database shows a majority of sites as situated on or near the coast (Archaeological Survey Database 2012).

As Nugent (2008) argues, the memory of religious association of certain spaces remained a strong focus for the Gaelic Irish and it appears that this is reflected in the location of Mass Rock sites within the diocese of Cork and Ross. Here a number of ritual archaeological monuments continued to be selected for the celebration of Mass throughout the Penal era. This is not unique to Cork and research in county Mayo, which has an entirely different

settlement history to Cork, has revealed a number of such sites at Callow, Clogher and Srahwee. There are a further six Mass Rocks situated along the *Tóchar Phádraig* in Mayo, a route regularly followed by pilgrims from Ballintubber Abbey to Croagh Patrick (Ballintubber Abbey 2006). This association ensures that Mass Rocks remain a focus for contemporary society. When Redwood Church was renovated in 1978 the Mass Rock at Moatfield, in the parish of Lorrha, was removed from its original site and placed in the sanctuary of the church (Murphy 1991, 21). Similarly, a Mass Rock was installed as the altar in the new confessional Chapel of the Cistercian Order at Our Lady of Bethlehem Abbey, Portglenone, in county Antrim (*Irish Independent* 1973). Such continued use reflects, and helps reconstruct and legitimise, contemporary Irish identity whilst providing a tangible and experiential connection to Irish heritage and tradition.

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