

**MUNICIPAL
GOVERNMENT IN
IRELAND:
MEDIEVAL & MODERN**

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Municipal government in Ireland: medieval & modern by John J. Webb

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JOHN J. WEBB

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GOVERNMENT IN
IRELAND:
MEDIEVAL & MODERN**

Do éum Glóire Dé agus Onóra na n-Éireann

Municipal Government in Ireland

Mediæval & Modern

BY

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Chapter I. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CHARTERED BOROUGH INTO IRELAND	1
Chapter II. THE HUNDRED COURT	21
Chapter III. CIVIC REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE	36
Chapter IV. CONTROL OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY	51
Chapter V. RELATIONS WITH THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	59
Chapter VI. RELATIONS WITH THE NATIVE POPULATION	73
Chapter VII. THE TUDOR PERIOD—A PERIOD OF TRANSITION	82
Chapter VIII. TOWN PLANTING IN ULSTER	90
Chapter IX. INCREASE OF THE ROYAL POWER IN IRELAND	111
Chapter X. THE RESTORATION PERIOD	143
Chapter XI. THE ERA OF MUNICIPAL MISGOVERNMENT	154
Chapter XII. A CHAPTER OF ILLUSTRATIONS	206
Chapter XIII. THE REFORM OF IRISH MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS	238
Chapter XIV. THE TOWNS IMPROVEMENT (IRELAND) ACT, 1854	252
Chapter XV. THE PUBLIC HEALTH ACT, 1874	257
Chapter XVI. CONFLICT OF JURISDICTION IN IRISH TOWNS	260
Chapter XVII. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1898	267



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MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN IRELAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CHARTERED BOROUGH INTO IRELAND.

The importance of the town in the system of government established in Ireland by the Anglo-Normans is a matter which has received scant attention from historians of Irish affairs. The greatest empire builders of history, the Romans, used the municipality as an instrument for extending their sway and maintaining their power throughout the lands surrounding the Mediterranean. This was so much the case that at the time of its greatest power the Roman empire may be regarded as consisting of a network of municipalities. In Ireland a similar policy was pursued by the Anglo-Norman government. The

2 Municipal Government in Ireland

chief Irish towns in existence at the period of the invasion of Ireland in the reign of Henry II., towns situated generally on the sea coast or in communication with the sea, fell into the hands of the Anglo-Norman invaders. The government of these towns was remodelled, the chartered borough of England serving as an exemplar. New towns were established throughout the tribal lands which were conquered, they in turn receiving a similar form of government. Settlers were induced to come across from England by the grant of various privileges to those who should take up their abode in Ireland. In this way many towns sprang up around the castles of Norman nobles throughout the land.

The chief privilege conferred upon the inhabitants of Irish towns, old and new, was that of self-government. They were empowered to elect their own officers and councils, establish their own courts, and appoint their own magistrates. They were given the complete control of industry within their towns, while without they enjoyed important commercial privileges.