

COLONIALISM AND COMMUNITY STRUCTURE IN WESTERN IRELAND¹

by

Lawrence J. Taylor
Lafayette College

ABSTRACT

This article attempts a tentative explanation of structural differences and similarities among contemporary Irish communities as described by anthropologists. Two ideal-typical case studies of community development are described in which the role of landlord-tenant relations is critical. In the first type, exemplified by County Clare, the structure of social relations was affected by disincorporating processes active through the colonial period. In the second type, exemplified by Teelin, a fishing community in southwest Donegal, such processes were much mitigated by forces both ecological and social. These ideal developmental types shed light on the contemporary rural Irish landscape, as well as on the effects of landlord-tenant relations on the social organization of local communities generally.

Introduction

The rural west of Ireland is well known to the general anthropological audience through Arensberg and Kimball's (1940) classic account of social relations in County Clare. Recently, however, anthropologists working in other communities in the same general area of Ireland have reported significantly different settlement patterns and social relations. Those insular communities described by Fox (1966), Kane (1968), and Messenger (1969) are characterized by generally higher degrees of nucleation and more clearly defined 'local communities' than was Arensberg and Kimball's Clare. Kane (1968:245) has implied that the differences in community and settlement may be explained by ecological variation. While a synchronic analysis of ecological adaptation would account for some of the grosser differences in social organization between Clare and, for example, West Donegal, synchronic analysis is inadequate insofar as it perforce ignores historical facts of basic significance to social organization. Contemporary patterns of settlement and social relations in all Irish rural communities are only the most recent stage of an ongoing historical dialectic, involving the continuing adaptation of peasants not only to local circumstances, but to the demands and influences of a ruling elite.

Although the anthropological literature on Ireland is still relatively sparse, since Evans' (1939) seminal work in Donegal, there has accumulated a rich corpus of geographical literature dealing with historic forms of settlement and community in the

West of Ireland.² Much of this is concerned with unraveling the details of social and economic life in what many geographers consider to be the dominant pre-colonial settlement form in at least the west of Ireland: the *clachan* (Gaelic for 'cluster'). This material has obvious implications for social anthropology's concerns with contemporary social organization, but the precise nature of this relevance is problematic.

Social anthropologists are naturally wary of interpreting contemporary Irish hamlets as 'survivals' of *clachans*. The historical process, as stated, is essentially dialectical, involving the interaction of local peasantries, no matter how evidently 'isolated', with elites. Local peasant communities in the west of Ireland were involved in a very long process of market integration. Their internal social relations were increasingly a function of their involvement in an expanding mercantile capitalism (cf., Wolf 1966:13ff). This process was complex, and the results differed regionally according to both the nature of landlordship, and local patterns of social structure.

Social anthropology, perhaps more than either history or geography, is concerned with the construction of ideal types of comparative value. Thus, at the expense of much local variation, the following discussion is a 'typification' of what may be two 'paths' of social evolution for communities of western Ireland. County Clare, as described by Arensberg and Kimball (1940) will be taken as exemplary of one variant, while the other will be based on historical and field research in Teelin, a fishing-farming hamlet on the southwest peninsular of Donegal. Such a comparison will illuminate not only the differences between Clare and the more nucleated communities of the west, but the possible relation of 'corporateness' to the interaction of peasants and elites, a question of very basic significance to the social anthropology of complex societies.

Clachan Social Organization

The *clachan* has been described functionally by Evans (1942) as the dominant pre-16th century settlement form, and an ecological adaptation to the alternating highland-lowland geography of western Ireland. Although actually situated in a relatively fertile lowland, each *clachan* depended on access to a much larger area of relatively infertile 'mountain' (referring more to a condition of soil and vegetation than a necessarily high elevation). The settlement was a loosely arranged, but closely knit, geographically distinct cluster of households.

Surrounding these dwellings and their gardens, until the introduction of the potato, was a small area of intensively-farmed arable: growing oats, vegetables, flax and such winter fodder as was necessary according to local climatic conditions. This 'infield' was divided into strips, the cultivation of which was the individual privilege of each household. 'Ownership', or rather control, rested with the community as a whole, and the usufruct of individual strips rotated periodically, providing equal access to the various qualities of land, in an agriculture regime termed *rundale*. Beyond this cultivated area stretched extensive 'mountain' land which was of equal importance to the *clachan* community, and was also held in common. Fuel, in the form of wood, but more often peat, was gathered there. Most importantly, the mountain commons served as summer pasturage for the community cattle when the infield was in cultivation. The practice of keeping cattle in the hills for the summer, where a temporary camp housed

those in charge of watching and milking the cattle, was called *booleying*. In the fall, after the harvest, the cattle were brought back to the lowland, where they grazed on crop stubble through the winter, till spring brought a new planting and the return of the cattle to the *booley* (Evans 1942:47-55).

Evans was inclined to accept the *fine* of ancient Irish law as coterminous with the *clachan* settlement.

The *fine* was the family group and included all relations in the male line of descent for five generations. It corresponds to the Hindu *joint* family, and it was vested the ultimate ownership of land, *finiu*. If anyone died without immediate heirs, his property was distributed among his more distant relations in well-defined proportions. The individual as such had few or no legal rights — these were contingent on his membership of the *fine* (Byrne 1967:49).

The alleged correspondence of the *fine* to the Hindu joint family can be traced to Sir Henry Maine (1875), who as a student of the 'Ancient Laws of Ireland' was inclined to interpret their depiction of corporate responsibility and ownership as evidence for the primacy of 'primitive communalism' in the then raging debates over the 'village community'. He further assumed that this kin corporation was the basis of the 'shifting severalty' communities reported in his own time in Highland Scotland and Ireland. The existence of such communities needed no further explanation, for Maine, than the 'primacy' of the 'corporate group' in primitive (and hence Irish) society.

In a more sophisticated fashion, Evans has argued that the *clachan* represents an ecological adaptation to the geographical conditions of Ireland. He has stressed the pastoral emphasis of the Irish rural economy, as over against the heavier agricultural investment of English, and most continental, village communities. While much of the early medieval rural Irish lifestyle was probably based on a pastorally-biased agriculture, the argument that such a rural economy was more likely to be lineally-based than a contemporaneous agricultural economy is not compelling.

If the *clachan* was an adaptation to ecological conditions of the 'Atlantic Fringe' (Evans 1964), its social composition cannot be explained as a natural concomitant of the settlement pattern. There is reason to suspect that the lineal patterns which adhered in local communities, as described in the 'Ancient Laws', were a function of the role of ranked segmentary lineages in the centralizing chiefdoms in which pre-colonial *clachans* were incorporated.³ 'Sibling solidarity' is not a satisfactory explanation of the existence of lineages as the basis of corporate groups. This, of course, is to leave aside the difficult problems of assessing how much any such lineal rules were ideal rather than real. In any case, pre-colonial local communities were likely characterized by a lineal ideology which probably functioned not only to relate the members of one community to each other, and justify their corporate enterprises, but also to relate whole communities to each other in a hierarchical social and economic structure. Neighbors, under these circumstances, were at least kin, if not brothers.

It is difficult to assess the relation of these pre-colonial *clachan* to settlement and social forms contemporary to Maine and reported in the oral traditions of modern Ulster (Evans 1939; McCourt 1972). In the debates over 'village communities' in Europe, Fustel de Coulanges (1841) and later Weber (1961) demonstrated that many of the communities cited as examples of the survival of 'primitive communalism' were in fact the *results* of colonialism.

Social Change in Clare

The Elizabethan wars and the Cromwellian conquests of the 17th century, in clearing land in the east, drove thousands to the marginal lands in the west. In this way the population in these latter regions increased suddenly and drastically, no doubt straining the ecological balance of *rundale* agriculture.

While landlords in these western regions of Ireland remained absentee, for the most part, well into the 19th century, they still extracted rents from an increasingly pressed peasantry.⁴ This meant that local peasants, often very distant from cash markets, were forced to seek rent money elsewhere. Young (1892) reported many migratory laborers from the west doing day labor in harvest season on the estates in the east of Ireland in the latter half of the 18th century.

The potato, introduced through colonial farmers in Munster, had even more dramatic effects on conditions in the west. *Clachan*, already in difficulty sustaining an expanded population, were typically extensifying their arable land at the expense of commonage. The potato, which grew in the most 'mountainy' soils and supplied at least twice as many calories per acre as grain, allowed for this extensification and a rapidly expanding population. With shrinking commonage, *booleying*, the heart of the *clachan* ecological adaptation, became impossible. Collective control gave way to individual tenancies, divided in inheritance between at least all male offspring. These divisible tenancies naturally became smaller and smaller, although English law forbade their division in this manner. Many landlords were happy enough to collect as many rents as possible for their land, and control (through patronage) large voting populations. They meanwhile insured the supply of seasonal labor of peasants holding insufficient tenancies. When, however, world market conditions favored cattle over grains (after the famine of 1847-52), enterprising landlords began to express deep concern over the uneconomic state of peasant holdings. Those commonages remaining in the west, and able to support cattle, were eaten up by graziers, and thousands were evicted from lands held by weak tenancy.⁵ So-called 'improving landlords' consolidated the fragmented holdings created by divisible inheritance and surviving *rundale* custom into fewer and larger enclosed tenancies. Their future integrity was insured by a more vigilant attitude toward inheritance practice. These imposed changes created the social world reported by Arensberg and Kimball in County Clare.

The 19th century brought the peasantry in regions like Clare much more than a change in land tenure and inheritance practice. In effect, all the corporate bases of community were eliminated. The shared social space of nucleated clusters was replaced by the dispersed settlement pattern described by Arensberg and Kimball. The cooperation basic to the cycle of *rundale* agriculture was obviated by much more individualized homestead economies, first of the cattle-poor potato farmer of pre-famine days, and then of the substantial small farmer created by consolidations and emigration. The political cohesion of the *clachan*, both in reference to its relations with larger politics and its internal relations, was destroyed, leaving the isolated and impoverished tenant of the 19th century, and finally the citizen-farmer of the 1930s.

The adaptations of the peasant in regions like Clare to the forces of external elites were of an 'individuating' and 'alienating' nature. Having been set on this path, the

adaptive choices made by most Irish countrymen have continued in this 'individuating' trend, ultimately with the emigration not just of non-inheriting siblings but of the heir himself. The choice to emigrate cannot be explained by the relative economic value of the option alone, for it is also a function of the demise of 'traditional life' as a viable alternative.

The social system described by Arensberg and Kimball was simply not one in 'functional equilibrium' (as Brody has recently and forcefully argued, 1973). The authors implied that the household or farmstead provided the basic element of a static rural Irish social organization. That is to say, the social relations of the household were essentially those of the 'stem family', while those between homesteads were natural extensions of those relationships. Insofar as Berkner (1972:399) has recently stated that Arensberg and Kimball's description is widely accepted by historians as a working model of the stem family, this depiction of Clare social relations demands closer scrutiny.

The *stem family*, a term coined by the French sociologist Frederic Le Play (1871), describes a particular form of European family organization. The primary characteristic of the *stem family* is the inheritance of the family estate (the principal means of production) by a single heir. In this respect, the farmstead of Clare conforms to the model. There is, however, another defining factor: viz., the political status of the familial estate in a larger community. Le Play realized that undivided inheritance of estates was more likely to have been an innovation of the nobility in feudalizing Europe, than of the peasantry. With the entailment of large estates to political offices, the continuity of both land and polity was insured. When finally extended to peasant communities, there is evidence of the continued political significance of the stem family.

In such frontier regions as the Austrian Tyrol, for example, the undivided inheritance of land seems closely related to the indivisibility of the status *pauer* ('homesteader') in highly corporate village communities (cf., Cole and Wolf 1974:99). The political associations in Clare were, of course, missing, for in Arensberg and Kimball's time, nothing like the corporate villages of the Austrian Alps existed. Instead, as has been demonstrated, the settlement pattern and the inheritance practice witnessed in the 1930s were the result of the very processes responsible for sweeping away the traditional communities of western Ireland.

Thus it is not surprising that the social behavior outside the family estate in Clare differs so markedly, for example, from that described in Cole and Wolf's (1974) account of St. Felix, which conforms much more closely to LePlay's notion of the stem family community. The differences are perhaps most striking in relations with emigrated kin. In the Tyrol the emigré is effectively excluded from the parental household economy and system of familial reciprocity (Cole and Wolf 1974:243). In Clare, the sons and daughters in America and England not only contribute to the support of their parental household, but are recognized as constituting a valuable network of social relations in terms of future economic options (Arensberg and Kimball 1940:144).

Rather than a functioning equilibrium, Clare of the 1930s was more likely to have been the last stage in the devolution of the Irish rural community, whose former strength is represented by atrophied *cooring* (once the communal labor of the *clachan*) and nightly visits of the old men in *cuaird*.

Southwest Donegal

The southern coast of the southwest peninsula of Donegal is for the most part granitic and precipitous. The natural seawall is frequently indented, however, providing protected harbors of varying quality. The best of these is the long, narrow and deep fiord of Killybegs, where recent government investment and outside entrepreneurs have fostered the growth of an active trawler fleet, and several fish processing plants. Further west is the smaller though well-enclosed estuary of the Glen River. Along the west bank of the estuary, and for a little way up the gentle slope of the mountain to the immediate west of the community, are ranged the approximately 100 households of Teelin. Most of the houses are situated along the road which runs the length of the estuary and continues northward to a small market town about two miles away. The remainder of the houses line the smaller roads which run up the mountain slope, ending after a short distance in scree and rough pasture.

The landholdings for these households are nearly all very small, most often five to seven acres, running in long narrow 'stripes' behind the road and up the mountain. Typically, only two or so of these acres are considered arable at present. This land grows a garden of potatoes, perhaps a small patch of vegetables and berries, and some hay for winter fodder. Another half-acre might stand as meadow for the summer grazing of a fattening calf, while other stock (usually one or two cows and an occasional small number of sheep) graze on the remaining acres of rough pasture; consisting of grass mixed with much gorse and heather. Beyond the individual plots lie several square miles of very rough pasture and bog, stretching over the mountain. This land is commons and available to members of the community, though it currently supports very few sheep. Turf rights are retained in townlands two or three miles to the west.

In addition to the sustenance offered by this meager agriculture, most households secure cash through other means, including knitting on consignment (women only), seasonal work in Killybegs fish factories, migratory work in Scotland and England, old-age pensions and doles, and fishing. Of these, fishing is in many respects the most important from the point of view of the community.

The place of fishing in Teelin is understandable only in light of the historical path of community development. The dialectic through which contemporary Teelin has been formed is significantly different, as indicated, from that typical of areas like Clare, and may be representative in many aspects of another path of social change experienced by a number of insular communities under similar circumstances.

Evans mentioned (1942:143ff) that, in addition to *booleying* cattle in the hills, fishing and various collecting activities played an important part in insular *clachan* economy. Where the sea offered a dependable supply, a relatively smaller investment in arable production was possible. Labor time could be assigned instead to various seasonal seashore pursuits, including not only various modes of fishing, but seaweed (important manure) collection, limemaking, and all manner of debris collection.

The population in these regions increased dramatically through the 18th century, as with the rest of Ireland, with the consequent strain on *clachan* economy. The results, however, were not identical. 'Mountain' was typically more extensive in areas like west Donegal, west Connacht and west Kerry, and encroaching population still left commonages in which *booleying* could survive. Though land was continuously reduced to

smaller and smaller parcels, traditions of communal control of infields continued well into the 19th century in many areas (McCourt 1954). Coastal areas, however, as McCourt (1954:49) has written, were characterized by a further set of rundale arrangements, including communal ownership of fishing rights, boats, nets, seaweed and wrack. Not only did seashore resources often supply enough supplementary subsistence to allow for the continuation of rundale with greater populations, but the management of sea resources often involved communal economics, even when purely agricultural activities had ceased to be group concerns.

The coast of southwest Donegal was such an area, and within the well-protected estuary of the Glen River, traditions of insular *clachan* settlement, and rundale economy, are ancient. Teelin, and areas like it, were often left relatively undisturbed by the massive evictions and clearances of the mid-19th century, since there was little chance of large-scale cattle grazing. This is not to say, however, that Teelin was left unaffected by the economic concerns of landlord economy. It was the hope of both the 19th century government and landlords that the fishing already practiced in the district could be converted into a more commercial enterprise. Toward the end of the 18th century, this was in fact possible simply by providing a local market for the fishermen to dispose of the then-abundant inshore herring for cash. In the 1770s Arthur Young (1892:177) witnessed the fishermen of Teelin rowing the nine sea miles to Killybegs, where waiting merchant ships bought the herring for worldwide export. But in the early decades of the 19th century, the inshore herring were increasingly scarce, and, not having the means for deepsea fishing, the Teelin fishermen reverted to cod and ling line-fishing. These fish were generally sold at extremely low prices to itinerant merchants, as well as salted for home consumption. This sort of fishing, while providing a valuable dietary supplement that often made the critical difference during the famines, provided the fishermen with only a small flow of cash for rent and consumer goods.

The reports of the various inspectors of fisheries written throughout the 19th century⁶ iterate the same theme — *viz.*, that local fishermen (in Teelin, and elsewhere in the west) were not 'proper' fishermen, which is to say full-time fishermen, able to chase the shoals of herring into the high seas. Almost without exception, the fisherman combined his sea-bound activities with small-scale agriculture, occasional labor, and anything else that came his way. Occasional funds were set up by the government in order to provide loans for larger boat purchase. While some advantage of these loans was taken, most fishermen, and rightly so, considered a full commitment to professional fishing too risky. For beyond the matter of larger craft, there was the critical matter of market. It seems doubtful that Teelin fishermen could have relied on a steady and efficient market for their catch in the mid-19th century if they did pursue large-scale fishing.

Fishing in Teelin, then, continued through the 19th century to be one aspect of an essentially communal adaptation. The efforts to create capitalist fishermen were as unsuccessful as those which sought to modernize and individualize agriculture. Yet, fishing still provided the minimal cash necessary for a marginal existence in an increasingly cash economy. Thus the process of change from an essentially subsistence economy to one geared toward 'money crops', in this case provided an opportunity for strengthening corporate ties (in terms of the group labor and group capital necessitated by fishing techniques). The Ordinance Survey maps of Teelin, drawn up in 1836, give

reason to suspect that each *clachan*, shown with its own community access to the waterfront, operated as a fishing as well as an agricultural unit. Moreover, the group of *clachan* (one for each townland) that constituted the larger community of Teelin, had to cooperate closely in the control of access to, and use of, all vital estuary resources. Thus not only was the corporate structure of the individual *clachan* reinforced by their communal efforts in cash-fishing, but the larger community of Teelin, 'Teelin of the Fish', continued to operate as a vital social entity.

In 1861, Messrs. Musgrave,⁷ of Belfast, 'improving landlords', purchased the estate of which Teelin was part. Although they were able to consolidate holdings to some extent, and probably thus brought an end to rundale agriculture, at least in Teelin (but see Gwynn 1899:74), the narrow area of relatively fertile land militated against too dispersed a settlement pattern. Holdings were still relatively small, and a reliance on the subsidiary income of fishing still necessary. This reliance was moreover encouraged by the landlords, who sometimes purchased boats on share arrangements with the local fishermen and employed local boats in estuary salmon fishing (over which the landlord retained complete rights). A stone pier was erected near the mouth of the estuary in 1881 under a Department of Fisheries grant, again with the encouragement of the Musgraves.

Under these circumstances, landlord improvements did little to disrupt community structure, and Land Commission records (Congested District Board, 1921) indicate that the tenantry continued to divide their holdings among at least several of their offspring since fishing still provided enough of a basis for a 'joint family' economy (cf., Habbakuk 1955). That Teelin was not alone in this adaptation is indicated by material collected by Haddon and Brown in west Connacht during the 1890s. In those communities where fishing offered a means for communal adaptation to the problem of rents and consumer goods (tea, sugar, flour and tobacco being the most important), they report signs of flourishing community life; including rising or stable populations up through the 1890s, more females than males, divisible inheritance and an early marriage age.⁸

Significantly, the efforts to stimulate larger-scale fishing by the Congested Districts Board met with immediate success in Teelin. This time a market was assured since the Board itself provided it, and the fishermen adapted immediately to the 'share-system' upon which the boats were offered (Micks 1925:44). Even so, the men of Teelin never opted for the total commitment to fishing that was envisioned by the Board (Baseline Reports of the Congested District Board 1893:16), and the 'pure' fishing village the Board had hoped for never came into existence. Perhaps the countrymen were right in retaining their bit of land, for the new prosperity that was the happy result of the reappearance of inshore herring and the efforts of the Board, did not survive the First World War in Donegal. The Donegal fleets began to suffer from the competition of British steam drifters, and then a collapsed market finished off large-scale fishing in the west of Ireland in the 1920s. In his history of the Congested Districts Board, Micks (1925:55) complained that the fishermen were not willing to adjust their methods to the low-priced white fish, having had a taste of the 'big money' that herring fishing had procured them in the past decades. There appears to have been much truth in that observation, for it was at that point, in the 1920s, that large numbers of Teelin people opted for emigration, no longer able to envision a return to pre-Congested District Board standards.

Salmon fishing, in the estuary, was still in the hands of the landlord (though the C.D.B. had purchased the lands and resold them to the tenantry in 1921) and continued to engage those who remained, both under the hire of the landlords and in the various illegal manners, collectively termed poaching. When Gael-Linn⁹ purchased the river rights from the last landlord in the late 1950s, however, the local fishermen were offered the opportunity of purchasing licenses and fishing for their own profit. The standard estuary techniques practiced since is the same type Arthur Young observed in 1777, applied at that time to herring: six men operating an open rowboat, dividing the catch into seven shares (one for the equipment). Through the 1960s and early 1970s, this has provided those men remaining in Teelin with a lucrative, if fluctuating, source of cash (in addition to other sources, listed above).

Insofar as the initial outlay of capital for equipment is relatively small, and loans readily available from government agencies anxious to encourage fishing, the central problems are really social ones: *viz.*, the regulation of fishing resources by the community and the recruitment of crews.

Under Gael-Linns's auspices, certain restrictions on the methods and times of fishing are operative, designed to ensure that enough salmon get up the river to breed each season. The fishermen are convinced, however, that any fall in salmon population is due to the inroads on the world supply made by giant Danish operations, and poaching is common.

Another set of usufruct restrictions, however, is at work; and these are subject to communal control. Of the seven crews operating in the salmon season of 1973, almost every crew member was considered 'from Teelin' (including emigrated sons, who returned only for the salmon season). Boat owners from outside the community would have to dock their boat in Teelin, thus subjecting the craft to such nocturnal mishaps as might befall it. Only one Teelin skipper has taken on sharemen from outside the community.

In the actual manner of fishing on the confined reaches of the estuary (an area only several hundred yards across, and perhaps a half mile in length), further communal rules come into play. Most of the salmon fishing consists of the crew sitting and silently staring in all directions, waiting for a salmon to leap. The crews are spaced out evenly around the estuary, each situated in a recognized 'spot' close enough to shore to place one man with the other end of a line leading to the boat. When a salmon jumps in the recognized vicinity of a boat, the crew begins to row furiously in a circle around it, while letting out a ring net. When the circle is completed, the crew hauls in the net, with the aid of tension provided by the shoreman pulling the line in the opposite direction. After such a haul, any nearby boat has the option to begin rowing toward the spot of the initial catch, and take up fishing there. When another craft does begin to move toward the spot, the crew just having made the catch rows quickly and without verbal exchange to another position. During the entire season, no conflict was witnessed over this 'rule', but rather its regular, smooth and silent operation.

The regulation of the river as a common resource has reinforced the communality of Teelin. Beyond that, however, it provides a coherent framework for the people's interpretation of themselves and the surrounding world. Teelin is still known as 'Teelin of the Fish'. The people of the community consider fishing to be their prime, distinctive characteristic, and in fact the key to their corporate personality. The ideological

importance of fishing may even exceed its economic contribution. As with hunting in a hunting and gathering society, fishing in this fishing-farming-knitting community may have more social importance, because it involves corporate activity, regardless of its proportional contribution to the household economy. It follows, however, that if fishing is a central characteristic of Teelin, those who are *not* engaged in it will be, in some sense, less incorporated in the community. This seems in fact to be the case, and makes for an interesting comparison with Arensberg and Kimball's Clare.

If the nightly gathering of men (called *cuaird*, from the Irish for 'visits' in Clare) can be considered 'interpretive groups', that is, the social groups whose task it is to evaluate people and events of the surrounding world according to communal values, then their recruitment is of essential importance to the community's 'social construction of reality', whereas in Clare these groups were based primarily on land ownership, men in Teelin tend to gather in 'crews'. Thus, those not members of crews are excluded in some measure from full 'neighborship', i.e., the right to participate fully in the social construction of local reality. The social composition of crews is a further key to the problem of neighborhood and the maintenance of community.

Six of the seven ring-net crews were composed of entirely agnatic relatives, from at least two households. Given the fact that land holdings, since the Congested Districts Board, are impartible (as in Clare), it should be difficult to find sufficient adult agnatic relations with a small community to man a crew, and nearly impossible in all cases. This situation is made possible, however, by a differential rate of emigration. It is precisely those households not involved in fishing that have the least economic and social (not being full neighbors) stake in the community, and who are hence more likely to 'die off the land', with no heir willing to take up a small farm that is more a burden than a benefice. These farms are typically sold at public auction. If not purchased by a wealthy outsider for a summer home, it is the father-skippers of salmon boats, with capital from fishing, who are able to bid for these properties. Thus they may, if successful, leave their own homestead to one son, and offer another one or two properties in the community acquired through purchase.

The differential in emigration is only relative, however. Although, for the time being, Teelin shows a communal vitality absent in most of the west of Ireland (Brody 1972), the skipper-father is not able to convince very many of his sons to stay in the community, and there is less inducement for his daughters. For many of the young men, their participation in community life is limited to the summer fishing season. The other nine months are usually spent in England as wage laborers.

Conclusions

If only for a limited time, the people of Teelin, and of similar communities, have been able to retain a communal structure that resembles in certain respects that of the old *clachan* settlements, even though land is held now as individual property, privately. It would be a mistake, however, to interpret these communal relations as merely a 'survival'. The community of Teelin was formed, in some measure, out of a series of *clachan*, through its interaction with elites. A full understanding of contemporary social organization is thus given only in an examination of the structural history of the community and region.

The 'structural histories' of Teelin and Clare are not in their essential features unique. They represent general modes of adaptation to the process of economic change imposed on western Ireland. The case of Teelin is particularly interesting, in that it offers an illustration of the possibly positive effects (not meant in any moral sense) of colonialism on local corporateness. Although this point was made in reference to Europe long ago by Weber (1961:32f), anthropologists will perhaps do well to consider again the possibility of similar historical dialectics elsewhere in the ethnographic world.

Beyond that, both cases point to the significance of the local community as an important factor determining the behavior of individuals in 'traditional societies', and discourage us from too narrow an economic analysis which perceives only individuals maximizing economic goals.

NOTES

1. Fieldwork was conducted in southwest Donegal in the summer of 1973, and again from January 1976 through August 1976, and was financed by a Summer Research Grant and a teaching assistantship from the Department of Anthropology of the State University of New York at Stony Brook. I thank the department for its generous support. I have profited from the comments on an earlier draft of this paper of Professors Louis Faron and David Hicks of the Department of Anthropology at Stony Brook. I should like to especially thank Dr. W. Arens, of the Department of Anthropology at Stony Brook, for his constant support and editorial advice.
2. Some useful general and regional accounts are contained in Buchanan (1970), McCourt (1954, 1955, 1971), and Proudfoot (1959). McCourt (1971) is especially recommended as a review of the entire problem and a bibliographic introduction to the literature.
3. The African literature on segmentary societies suggests that such lineal kin groups are not necessarily inimical to political centralization, and in fact may be used effectively in centralizing polities where actual bureaucracies are not feasible (Southall 1957). Richard Fox (1972) has recently dealt with this problem in northern India, and states a strong case for the widespread importance of such lineal groups as organs of political control in centralizing polities. Following Maine (1874), Fox uses Irish chiefdoms as a model of such centralizing polities.
4. This was accomplished often through a chain of middlemen who let large tracts from the absentee landlord, and sublet them again in small lots to tenants.
5. There is a detailed contemporary coverage of, and reaction to, these events contained in the letters of Marx and Engels, gathered together in Marx and Engels (1971).
6. Reports appear for almost every year in the 19th century in British Parliamentary Reports, indexed under 'fisheries, Ireland'.
7. Much of the information relative to the Musgrave estate used in this paper comes from seven manuscript volumes of letters written by Arthur Brooke, the estate agent from 1866 to the turn of the century (Manuscript No. 4723-27).
8. These are: A. C. Haddon and C. R. Browne (1891) and C. R. Browne (1894, 1895, 1896, 1898, 1899, 1900). A great deal of the insular west waited until the first decades of this century, when the Congested Districts Board accomplished the final elimination of remnants of rundale holdings.
9. Gael-Linn is a Dublin-based society, dedicated to saving the Irish language, and investing in schemes to keep the population in the *Gaeltacht* (the Irish-speaking areas in the extreme west).

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