

The History of the Scottish Parliament, Volume Two: Parliament and Politics in Scotland, 1567-1707. Edited by Keith M. Brown and Alastair J. Mann. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2005. xii, 303 pp. £50.00. ISBN 0748614958.

The creation of a new Scottish Parliament in 1999 has naturally helped to stimulate a resurgence of interest in the history of the Parliament that existed in Scotland up until the union with England in 1707. That interest has borne fruit most notably in the Scottish Parliament Project (S.P.P.) at the University of St Andrews, which was established in 1997 under the direction of Keith Brown. With funding from the Scottish Office and latterly the Scottish Executive, together with the British Academy, the S.P.P. is currently creating a new digital edition of the Acts of the Scottish Parliament from its earliest known proceedings in 1235 up to 1707, and it aims to complete this edition by the end of 2005. The S.P.P. is also producing a three-volume history of the Scottish Parliament, of which the present volume is the second. This is a fascinating and highly accomplished collection that takes discussion of the Scottish Parliament during the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to a new level of sophistication while also locating it within the wider context of early-modern European assemblies most successfully.

The introduction, by Keith Brown and Alastair Mann, presents a splendidly detailed survey of the historiography and sources for the Scottish Parliament in this period. Their discussion shows the need not only to assess the Scottish Parliament on its own terms without imposing inappropriate (frequently English) yardsticks of comparison, but also to set it against the background of continental assemblies, whose equal it was in terms of political effectiveness and procedural development. In particular, the continuing influence of the nobility in leading the unicameral Scottish

Parliament emerges very strongly in the introduction and in many of the essays that follow. To take just one example, John Scally's excellent study of the Covenanter Parliaments between 1639 and 1651 demonstrates the crucial role that James Hamilton, third Marquis and first Duke of Hamilton, played in guiding both the Parliaments and Scottish politics more generally. This essay is particularly notable for its use of Hamilton's parliamentary diary for 1648 – a 12,000-word manuscript which has only recently been discovered – and it whets the appetite for Scally's edition of this diary and for his biography of Hamilton.

A number of the essays are significant for the light that they throw on individual monarchs and the changing nature of royal policies. Alan MacDonald and Vaughan Wells draw out the underlying wisdom and skill of James VI in handling the Parliaments of 1592, 1612 and 1621. By contrast, John Young shows why Charles I's Scottish coronation in June 1633 was so provocative, and why his treatment of the Scottish Parliament that met in the same month, together with his sweeping aside of grievances that the conventions of estates had expressed in 1625 and 1630, appeared unnecessarily high-handed. Perhaps the most striking reassessment of a monarch's behaviour is Alastair Mann's study of James VII, which suggests that James's greatest failing was not that he was guilty of unprecedentedly heavy-handed manipulation of the Scottish Parliament, but rather that he insisted on working with a dangerously narrow circle of advisers comprising only a few favoured ministers. This opens the way to a major revision of James's rule in Scotland and the origins of the revolution of 1688-9.

Another virtue of this collection is that its coverage extends to sections of the story that have often been relatively neglected hitherto. Thus Gillian MacIntosh's account of the Restoration period and the role of Lauderdale examines Charles II's

reign as a whole, whereas many previous accounts (Clare Jackson's is an important and noteworthy exception) have tended to concentrate on the years 1660-3. Similarly, the 1690s are often a rather shadowy decade, sandwiched between the drama of the revolution against James II and the events leading up to the union of 1707. Derek Patrick helps to redress this with an intricate reconstruction of the bitter electoral contests that followed the revolution: he shows that such contests were far more widespread and divisive than has often been supposed, but that they ultimately left the Williamite interest with an unassailable dominance over the Jacobites. Keith Brown develops this line of argument further in the final essay, in which he offers an acute and subtle reconstruction of the tangled political and parliamentary context of the 1707 union. In particular, he shows how the growing development of the politics of party gave rise not only to more frequent and more fiercely contested elections but also to a period of increasingly volatile parliamentary politics. The fact that the Scottish Parliament appeared, by 1702-3, to be less and less susceptible to management was crucial in giving momentum to those, in both Scotland and England, who wished to see the two kingdoms united. Once again, detailed parliamentary research thus helps to shed new light on broader historical developments.

Overall, this is a very scholarly and important collection, and the essays are of a consistently high standard. Taken as a whole, the volume reveals a fascinating blend of continuity and change in early modern Scottish Parliaments, in which the influence of the nobility persisted alongside the shifting nature of political factions and groupings, and in which the relationship between Crown and Parliament proved to be highly variable. The need to place the Scottish Parliament firmly on the European stage, where it deserves to be, also emerges very plainly. In short, this

collection takes early-modern Scottish parliamentary history to a new level of achievement and deserves to be warmly welcomed.

DAVID L. SMITH

Selwyn College, Cambridge