SCHOOL OF POLITICAL

ENTITLEMENT METHODS – AN EXAMPLE OF THE GREAT FAMINE IN IRELAND, 1845 – 1851

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MAY 21, 2024

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

M.SC. APPLIED SOCIAL DATA SCIENCES

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

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October playing a symphony on a slack wire paling.

Maguire watches the drills flattened out

And the flints that lit a candle for him on a June altar,

Flameless.

— "The Great Hunger" by Patrick Kavanagh. (Kavanagh and Quinn, 2006)

The Irish Great Famine (1845 – 1852) reshaped the entire history of Ireland. Before the Great Famine, according to the 1841 census, the population of the Ireland had close to 8.5 million [1] . In 1851, when the Irish Great Famine had not yet ended, census noted that about 1 million people had died for hunger, and a similar number had gone into overseas exile [2]. In 1926, as a result of the Irish independence 5 years earlier, the Central Statistical Office was capable to integrate historical documents since famine and showed the fact that the population was decline of roughly 22% [3] in the 10 years from 1841 to 1851. Using parish baptism data, some scholars have estimated that in the year 1847 alone – which is also known as black'47 in Ireland history – there existed counties with a nearly 70% reduction in baptisms in Munster province in the south of Ireland (Cousens, 1960), especially from southwest Cork and including north and east Clare [4] , while it was not the worst hit by the famine compared to the province of Connacht in the west [5] . Apart from these quantitative explorations, the Great Famine is equally pivotal in Irish cultural history and ethnography. From Joseph O'Connor's fiction "Star of the sea" to W. B. Yeats's "The Countess Cathleen", together they expressed that the Great Famine not only pointed to the corpses of the dead, but also to a black hole of identity, naming and meaning (Luchen, 2019).

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[1] 1841 Census of Ireland, Last accessed: 13 May, 2024
[2] 1851 Census of Ireland, Last accessed: 2 May, 2024
[3] 1926 Census of Ireland, Chapter II, Last acceseed: 9 May, 2024
[4] RTE, How "a truly modern famine" devastated Ireland, Last accessed: 11 May, 2024
[5] Wesley Johnston: The Famine: The Summer of Black'47, Last accessed: 13 May, 2024

The effects of the Great Famine were far-reaching, and reflected in the long-term population development, land institution structure and attitude to the UK government directly. It was not until 120 years later, in the 1960s, that Ireland's population began to grow consistently due to large-scale emigration, late marriage and a high incidence of permanent celibacy no longer hold (Grada, 1979), but it was still nowhere near as large as it had been during the Great Famine [6]. This also makes Ireland one of the few countries in the world to suffer population decline over the past 170 years when the world's population has increased more than 6 fold [7]. Regarding the land, on the one hand, in the aftermath of the famine, there was a tendency in Ireland to shift from agriculture to livestock husbandry [8], and on the other hand, when the late blight back in the 1870s, the Land War, which was directed at the landowners and the government, took place at the same time, with a deep consequences for the land structure of Ireland. Also, there raised hostility between Irish and UK government, which was described as "a bankruptcy of the British-Irish Union of 1800" (Gray, 2021).

But data on Ireland's food imports and exports show increases in specific commodities, even barley, oats and butter, that violate the characteristics of the Great Famine. In History Ireland magazine, Christine wrote:

> *Almost 4,000 vessels carried food from Ireland to the ports of Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool and London during 1847, when 400,000 Irish men, women and children died of starvation and related diseases [...] The most shocking export figures concern butter [...] That works out to be 822,681 gallons of butter exported to England from Ireland.*[9]

Scholars pondered if potato blight was the root cause of the famine, and they have engaged in many discussions about the origin factor, like Catholic and religious behavior (Miller, 1975), anti-Irish racism (Waters, 1995), the poor law and colonial bio-politics (Nally, 2008) and, typically, the potato blight (Bartoletti, 2001), etc.

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[6] 2022 Census of Ireland – Summary Results, Last accessed: 8 May, 2024
[7] Blog by Ambassador Mulhall on Black'47: Ireland's Great Famine and its after-effects, Last accessed: 9 May, 2024
[8] CSO: Farming Since the Famine, 1847 - 1996, Last accessed: 12 May, 2024
[9] Ireland's Great Hunger Museum: Learn About the Great Hunger, Last accessed: 13 May, 2024

To this day, we can be certain that the root causes of the Irish Great Famine were multiple, regardless of the perspective used, and so in fact the academic debate is about which of these multiple factors, or which factors, played a greater role in the brewing of the famine. Historically, the academic discussion of the root causes of the famine has followed this pattern (Henderson, 2005):

Table 1.1: Timeline of Great Famine Root Cause Academic Discussion

Timeline	Root Cause Summary	Reference
1845 – 1852: famine	Few food importation and opposition in poor law	1850/01/05 The Illustrated London News[a]
	UK government	
1852 – 1939: ignore	—[b]	(Kinealy, 2017)
1940 – 1975: revisionism		
1975 – Now: diverse	Malthus population theory	(McGregor, 1989)
	Anti-Malthus theory	
	Blight biological analysis	
	Foucault's bio-politics and colonial perspective	(Nally, 2008) & (Kennedy, 2020) & (Madden, 2016)

[a] The original newspaper mentioned: *Free importation of corn into this union is essentially necessary – [. . .] any attempt to re-impose a duty on the importation of food can only [. . .] tend to the starving of the people. Poor law [. . .] relieves the struggling farmer of a heavy burden he had hitherto.* (McNamara, 1850)

[b] The famine seems to have been forgotten by Irish scholars during this period. Not only was the quantity and quality of work on the famine sparse, but it was also of poor quality: *Until the 1990s, the two standard books on the Famine were "The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History" by Robin Dudley Edwards and Desmond Williams, [. . .] and "The Great Hunger", by Cecil Woodham-Smith, [. . .] The chapters were uneven in quality and lacked coherence (some lacked footnotes, some were lost).* (Kinealy, 2017)

Reality, like a block of marble in our hands, is carved into whatever likeness we choose.

Chapter 2 | *Literature Review*

2.1   Refuting some hypotheses

This part I will refute some hypothesis of famine origin. Many people regard single factor as the root of the Great Famine.

1. Blame potato blight as the only origin of famine

People believe potato blight was responsible for the Irish Great Famine.

lumper potato

Blight became a semi-permanent fixture until the end of the century, when effective treatments were found (O'Rourke, 1994).

2. Ireland have the bad land quality.

2.2   Entitlement Approach

I will operationalize entitlement approach into these 4 dimensions according to the book:

(1) trade-based entitlement: price, grain amount,

(2) production-based entitlement: tax policy

(3) own-labour entitlement: wage, land own amount, poor law

(4) inheritance and transfer entitlement: none, hard to get data

Chapter 3 | Data

Chapter 4 | *Methods*

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