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

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

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1 | Introduction

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In 1926, as a result of the Irish independence 5 years earlier, the Central Statistical Office was capable to integrate historical documents since famine and showed the fact that the population was decline of roughly 22% ³ in the 10 years from 1841 to 1851.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).

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 accessed: 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 during nine months of the worst year of the Famine. ⁹

Indeed, potato blight happened. However, scholars pondered whether it was the root cause of the famine or not.

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

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

3 | Data

4 | Methods

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