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Irish Latin American Research Fund
Application Form

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Member of the Faculty?	No [] Yes [x] If yes, rank: profesor contratado ayudante
Student?	Undergraduate [] Graduate [] Principal advisor or thesis director:
Independent Scholar?	No [x] Yes []
Intended Product	Thesis [] Dissertation [] Book [x] Article [] Documentary [] Other [] (describe)
Date degree expected or date of project completion	2008
Title or research topic (please include the time period being studied):	The Irish Experience in the Spanish Caribbean Frontier: migration, identity formation and political participation in the island of Hispaniola (c.1640-1660)
How did you learn about this research grant opportunity? (Please be specific)	Through the SILAS list.
Proposed field trip: purpose, destination, dates of travel and proposed duration of stay (may be changed)	The purpose of the travel to Santo Domingo to research for a month (between March and April 2007 depending on flight prices and teaching responsibilities) mainly on the Archivo General de la Nación, Biblioteca Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña and the Archivo Histórico de Santiago
Estimate of actual expenses; please provide details of air, automobile, bus, rail, or	1488€

The Irish Experience in the Spanish Caribbean Frontier: migration, identity formation and political participation in the island of Hispaniola (c.1640-1660)

Summary

This project, based upon experience on the island of Hispaniola in the 1640s and 1650s, considers the process by which Irish migrants to the Spanish Caribbean, formed a community there, identified themselves as a distinct group and equipped themselves to engage in the Spanish power system from a Caribbean base.

Description of the project

The territories of the Spanish Monarchy absorbed a high percentage of the tens of thousands of Irish people who left Ireland for Continental Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries. Although Irish and European historiographies have begun to recognize the general migration phenomenon, no attention has been given to those emigrants who ultimately made careers in Spanish America. This study, based upon experiences on the island of Hispaniola during the 1640s and 1650s, proposes to analyse Irish migration to the Spanish Caribbean and to investigate the gradual articulation of an émigré community there. It will also analyse the means by which their fabrication of an identity and historical memory, as well as their creation of a community, equipped them to participate in Spanish power systems and struggles.

The central chronologic period is one of the most convulsing of the whole early modern period. In the Spanish Caribbean, Hispaniola then became a frontier land and society in which both subjects of the Spanish crown and those of other European powers -whose presence was illegal in the eyes of the Spanish authorities- cohabited and fought. Caught in the middle, the small Irish community made its way, sometimes hazardously, to and within the Spanish colonies.

This migratory movement will be explained principally by the attraction that Spanish colonies held for those Irish people who arrived, by a variety ways, to the new world. It will be shown how in Europe, political considerations, as well the privations associated with Spanish military service, and the promises of a better treatment elsewhere, drove thousands of Irishmen to seek employment elsewhere, including in French and Portuguese armies. Then, I will demonstrate that careers in the Spanish colonies of the new world, where the Irish enjoyed a minimum degree of security and wellbeing, and greater possibilities of economic, social and political promotion, proved to be more attractive than these alternatives. The Irish, it will be argued, were led to Spanish Caribbean colonies, and especially to Hispaniola, because of their accessibility.

I will then demonstrate the newly-arrived Irish adapted to a new political, social and cultural environment in the Spanish Caribbean. I will show how the Irish-in-exile were obliged to create mechanisms of organisation, articulation, and construction of identity and memory to enable them to integrate into Spanish colonial society. Then I will investigate how the Spanish colonies were affected, in their political, military, cultural and social evolution, by the Irish émigré community. The case of Hispaniola, due to its geographical position in the limits of the Spanish colonial system, its internal

characteristics as a frontier society, and its small but active and influential Irish community, offer an excellent microcosm of study. A framework of analysis in which the Irish community, even if much smaller than those from Castile, Flanders, Portugal, France or the German empire, and with less resources at their disposal, will reveal how they integrated themselves more readily into Hispaniola society and conquered a far greater relative level of political weight than other groups.

State of research and bibliography in the area

Irish migration to the European continent during the early modern period has become the subject of increasing research attention in the last decades. The Irish and Anglophone historiographies have considered the Irish migration to Continental Europe and to the New World as complementary expressions of a same phenomenon. Within this authors such as Ciaran O'Sceá, Declan Downey, Karin Schüller, Robert Stradling, John Cronin, Thomas O'Connor, Mary Ann Lyons, David Bracken, Liam Chambers, Eamon O'Ciosain, Priscilla O'Connor and Liam Swords have focussed their research on Irish migration to particular venues including to Galicia, the Low Countries, France or Central Europe.

On the other hand, authors such as Nicholas Canny, Louis Cullen and Donald Akenson, have integrated the study of Irish migration inside broader perspectives including into the much debated and very fructiferous historiographic contexts of Atlantic History and the New British History. Although of later chronological scope, the recent book of Mathew Brown and the ongoing project of Claire Healy are also helpful in understanding the Irish migration to the Americas. The study of Irish migration has contributed to the establishment of the *Irish Centre for Migration Studies* in Cork, the *Irish in Europe Project* in Maynooth, the *Irish in Spanish Military Service Database Project* at UCD and Trinity College, Dublin, and the *Centre for the Study of Human Settlement and Historical Change* in Galway.

In the Spanish historiography, the interest in Irish communities runs parallel to the research on other foreign communities in early modern Spain, such as the Genoese, Portuguese, Flemish, Dutch and French. Inside this historiography, Enrique García Hernán, Ofelia Rey Castelao, María Begoña Villar García, Agustín Guimerà, Diego Tellez Alarcia and Oscar Recio Morales have conducted research on several subjects related to the complex interrelations developed by the Irish communities in the early modern period. However, the extra-European dimension of the problem has been completely ignored by these researches. Nevertheless, the study of Irish migration to the Spanish Colonies, sketched above in its main lines, is a key point to understanding the broader phenomenon both because of its simultaneity and its marked contrast to the process of Irish migration to the European continent.

Contribution to research

In my doctoral dissertation I contributed to knowledge on the political participation of foreign groups in the early modern political world. To do so, I studied the English and Irish communities in the Spanish Monarchy during the 1640s and 1650s. Then I did not have scope to analyse thoroughly the extra-European dimension of the problem despite its importance, complexity and the richness of the surviving sources.

This present research joins the different perspectives offered by the history of migration, of the social representations, of the invention of collective memories and of the political participation of foreign communities in the early modern politics. Through this multiplicity of approaches, it aims to study -starting from the point of view of the history of migrations in the early modern period- the origins, causes and flux of the Irish migration towards the island of Hispaniola. In doing so I will show that the instances of legal migration from the Iberian Peninsula through the port of Seville were rare, and that the migration routes followed were infinitely complex. Building a solid prosopographic study of the Irish community in Hispaniola, offers the possibility of tracing the relations between the places of origin in Ireland and the migrant community. This also will make it possible to analyse the bounds and relationships between the military migration to the European continent and that to the Spanish Caribbean.

Another goal of this study is to analyse the identity formation, the construction of collective memory, the social integration and the participation by the Irish in the political, military and social life of Hispaniola. In comparison with the situation in Europe, the social integration seems to have been faster and more successful. In order to establish this, all matters relating to the internal articulation of the community, the identity formation and the invention of a collective memory and presentation before the host community will be investigated. Here, I will be able to show that the Irish community obtained a stronger military and political influence, both in Hispaniola and in the Spanish Caribbean region generally, than in any sphere of Spanish influence in Europe. Such comparison will make it possible to delineate the parameters of reciprocal influences and alternative modes of interaction on the part of several immigrant Irish groups and several local Spanish societies and authorities. The study will thus inaugurate a fresh branch of historical investigation.

Research plan

I ask for this grant in order to be able to do research in situ in Santo Domingo for a month. The objective is to enrich the information already recollected in European Archives, mainly in Seville, Paris and London. I think that a month's travel would be a fair trade-off between my personal, and financial possibilities of travel. Although I have never been before in Santo Domingo and thus the budget presented is quite approximated, I already contacted local researchers, such as professor Lync Guitar from Santiago de los Caballeros, who kindly helped me to prepare my research trip in anticipation. Also, thanks to the rich deposits on American history of the Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos in Seville, I already worked thoroughly with a good deal of the bibliographical production in the Dominican Republic, thus allowing me to concentrate my research trip mainly in the documental resources on the island.