

Guest Editor's Introduction

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This special issue of *IMSLA* considers the challenges and riches of archival sources located in Spain, Peru and Cuba by scholars from different disciplines in the field of Irish-Hispanic studies. The contributors discuss an impressive range of sources and different approaches taken to collection: walking through a cemetery in Lima, Peru to examine Irish names on tombstones; a painstaking trawl through thousands of bundles of documents in the archives of the Spanish conciliar system to reconstruct the lives of Irish families in seventeenth-century Spain; taking time to understand the “colonial sense” of how nineteenth-century documentation is organised in the pre-digitised collections at the Cuban National Archives and getting to grips with a potentially overwhelming abundance of material through state-of-the-art digital online catalogues in Spanish state archives. In dealing with the challenging complexity and voluminous nature of archival sources about Irish immigration in Spain and its American colonies the contributors point to the importance of understanding the history and rationale of particular archival systems and the need for lateral thinking in locating historical records. The locations of the sources consulted give an idea of the geographical spread of an Irish presence at different historical junctures of Spanish imperial history. In the early-modern period, Irish men and women of diverse social classes moved in a trajectory from core to periphery thus presenting a lens through which to analyse the metropolitan narrative in relationship to the colonial narrative in Irish Latin American studies. With independence from Spain, Irish emigrants to Latin American countries travelled directly from Ireland or England or through networks in the United States. Reflecting changes in the Atlantic world economy, the history of nineteenth-century Irish migration illuminates new circuits of colonial labour and “white immigration” schemes in the Iberian Atlantic at a time of transition from slavery to “free” labour.

This is a well-balanced collection, though not laid out in chronological order it begins with two nineteenth-century accounts from Latin American archives, the first from Cuba still under colonial rule and the second from Peru in the decades after independence and the abolition of slavery. The final two articles consider Spanish archives dealing with Irish migration at a time of Spanish Imperial expansion, one of which takes a gendered approach to analyse sources traditionally used in accounts of Irish military men.

Historians Igor Perez Tostado and Ciaran O'Scea outline the wealth of archival sources and rich possibilities in the Spanish state archives for research on Irish immigrants in the early-modern period. Though they went in their thousands to the early Spanish American colonies, Perez Tostado notes that apart from a number of more prominent military personalities, Irish immigration in this period has not received the same scholarly attention as that of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Unlike the network of Irish colleges or Irish regiments in Europe, the Crown prohibited the formation of institutions, such as guilds, associations or religious societies from any particular geographical region in the early Spanish American colonies. In the absence of any expressly Irish military regiments there are no "clearly defined archives" or sections of archives dedicated to their presence. Taking the Spanish archives as a starting point for research on the Irish in the Iberian Atlantic, Perez Tostado sets his work in the context of recent developments in Irish-Spanish historical studies and the emergence of a community of scholars or "*irlandesistas*" who, through close contact with Irish historical trends, have produced a large body of work. This developing field attempts to understand the Irish experience "as part of the worldwide stream of migrants, exiles and refugees that reshaped the Spanish Monarchy and gave birth to the first global culture". Perez Tostado introduces the researcher to an extensive array of sources and lays out an invaluable guide to the major state archives, one which will certainly ease the initial stress induced by what are clearly an "overabundance of administrative documentation rather than the lack of it". We are also provided with helpful links to on-line catalogues for major libraries and state archives at the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville, and the *Archivo General de Simancas* in Valladolid, and relevant sections of *Archivo Historico Nacional* in Madrid dedicated to the nobility.

In Perez Tostado's view, the exhibition of the *Archivo General de Simancas* on "The Irish and the Hispanic Monarchy" curated by our next contributor Ciaran O'Scea, is "the perfect starting place to get a taste of the possibilities of the Spanish archives for the study of Ireland and the Irish in LatinAmerica". O'Scea goes into fine detail about the possibilities for research on Irish immigrants' contact with civil, ecclesiastical and royal institutions through the complexities of the Spanish Castilian conciliar system dating back to the early seventeenth century. In a system structured around territorial divisions of the Spanish Monarchy, the adoption of a principle of bureaucratic literacy meant that "as long as there existed an economic justification or payment, every transaction involving an individual or part of royal property left a paper trail". Given the Irish presence wherever the Spanish Monarchy had influence over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there is "an abundant documentary trail" of sources which O'Scea assures is largely untapped. This article underlines the value of understanding archiving processes, particularly where changes occurred that reflect structural and administrative shifts in

the conciliar system. Through tenacious and painstaking research using royal, ecclesiastical, and notarial archives, O'Scea suggests different methods to "complete the jigsaw of family reconstruction, and the many varied aspects regarding the role of Irish female immigrants". State archives in Spain traditionally used to tell the story of the lives of military men in Irish *tercios* or regiments have been underutilised in terms of the lives of Irish immigrant women and families. In O'Scea's view, there may be "proportionally even more than that regarding Spanish women owing to the difficulties faced by the immigrant communities in protecting their female members". Working with individual letters of petition and the *consulta*, a document containing the summary and decision on the appeal as primary source documents, O'Scea outlines the possibilities for family reconstruction through petitions claiming "inherited services" by Irish women whose spouses, brothers or uncles provided important services to the Spanish Monarch. Written appeals often contain a level of detail about individual men and women, their kinship networks and important events in Ireland "not found in English sources". They can throw up fascinating and unusual fragments of rich social data such as "Gaelic concubinage", as in the case of one Maria McSweeney in 1618 who "was deprived of most of her pension because several years earlier she had been living in concubinage with an Irishman while still married". O'Scea estimates that there are tens of thousands of memorials by Irish petitioners in the principal state archives pointing to the potential for further research on Irish immigration under the Spanish Monarchy. Pension documentation containing details about Irish military widows provides insights "into Irish female literacy, their physiognomy, social networks, marriage patterns, and residence patterns" which, when combined with other sources permit a more complete study.

The term archive for this journal issue was defined broadly to include newspapers, literature, private collections, online sources, oral histories etc. Gabriela McEvoy combines the use of archival records at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM) Library and records at the British cemetery in Callao, Lima to open a new line of investigation into Irish migration processes, a somewhat invisible group in the national memory of Peru. She retrieves a relatively unknown migration episode by examining a number of dissertations on immigration schemes around the end of the nineteenth century. The discourse of attracting immigrants from Europe became part of a modernising imperative; however, McEvoy's reading of the contemporary documentation provides evidence of a racial subtext to the rhetoric of immigration. In 1900, Larrabure y Correa wrote "*solo con una inmigración de hombres blancos trabajadores y enérgicos, saldrá el Perú victoriosamente de su postración actual*". He concluded that immigration schemes from Ireland were unsuccessful, not for lack of numbers but, reminiscent of similar immigration schemes in Brazil and Argentina during the mid-late nineteenth century, because they were badly

organised. One such immigration project imported agricultural labourers from Ireland, sponsored by an Irish doctor John Gallagher and the wealthy merchant William Grace in 1851. Newly arrived immigrants were offered little or no material supports to work on frontier lands that few survived the neglect and hardship.

As a counterpoint to forgetting due to lack of material evidence, McEvoy turns to “*el ultimo sitio de la memoria*” or “*el parque de la memoria*” where she uses tombstone inscriptions and cemetery registers in Callao as physical and written vestiges of Irish immigrant lives in Peru. She finds tombstones with Celtic crosses and discovers Protestant and Catholic Irish graves in the British cemetery. The burial records contain a wealth of socio-economic data on the deceased immigrants and their families where reconstruction of their life histories can begin.

In my own research on the Irish in Cuba, the vestiges of Irish railroad workers in the archives suggest that those who died as a result of cholera outbreaks along the tracks were buried in unmarked graves. Archival sources concerning the construction of the first railroad in Latin America threw up passenger lists of labourers and their families recruited in New York to work under contract for the Railroad Commission in Cuba. While I had limited success in reconstructing individual lives of poor Irish labourers and their families, historical records of the railroad did provide much rich detail on labour relations and the conditions of life that labourers endured. There is an abundance of source documentation from which to build a colonial narrative of the representation of Irish migrants in the discourse of Cuba’s planter elite in the context of labour relations in a slave-based sugar plantation economy. This research underlines the difficulties of reconstructing subaltern lives because of their obscurity and having to rely on sparse first-hand documentation, colonial reportage and travel accounts by a different social class. There is a large quantity of records in the Cuban archives about different waves of Irish migrants such as those who came as part of a “white colonisation scheme” in the 1820s and many more individuals of diverse social classes, sugar planters, slave traders, mechanics, doctors, teachers, merchants, miners and washerwomen, seeking opportunity and wealth in the Spanish colony. Their names turn up in a wide range of records as they come into contact with the colonial authorities, for example, registers of foreign residents and petitions for permission to practice trades or professions. Notarial records and records of criminal proceedings documenting legal transactions or accounts of incidents where people fall foul of the authorities are a particularly rich source and often provide socio-economic data on individuals.

Research on Irish Latin American Migration Studies covers a vast geographical area and is a bilingual endeavour. The challenges of distance,

time and necessary resources are often difficult to overcome, yet the field of research continues to expand in exciting and dynamic ways. This current edition of the journal is a welcome development, not least for the range and quality of multidisciplinary scholarship, but also because it opens up for future researchers a rich seam of archival sources as yet untapped.

I wish to thank the contributors to this volume for creating what is a valuable resource and inspiration for other researchers. This discussion of archival, literary and “vestigial” sources has in my opinion achieved its aim of aiding scholars in diverse geographical, historical and other disciplinary categories. It makes an enormous contribution to furthering the field of Irish Latin American/Hispanic Studies and presents exciting possibilities for new research. Sincere thanks are due to the Editor-in-Chief, Professor Cliona Murphy whose supportive expertise, patience and editorial judgement sets a rigorous standard in bringing this and previous issues of the journal to fruition.