

International Conference

THE IRISH COMMUNITIES IN SPAIN AND THE CORTES DE CÁDIZ, 1812



To be held :
Sala *Menéndez Pidal*, 18 and 19 October 2012
Instituto de Historia, CCHS-CSIC (Madrid)

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The presence of an important Irish community in Spain dates back to the middle decades of the sixteenth century, when Philip II (1556-1598) began to welcome Irish Catholic exiles to his kingdoms. The first wave of immigrants came to occupy influential positions in both the Church and the royal armies. A new era in relations between Spain and Ireland began in the early seventeenth century. At this point Philip III (1598-1621) had the opportunity to incorporate the island into the Monarchy, as the majority of the Irish nobles

proffered their support to him and recognised him as the 'King of Ireland'. The King duly dispatched an expeditionary force of 4,000 troops to the south of Ireland, leading to the famous battle of Kinsale of 1602, in which the Catholic army was defeated by an English force. This reverse did not reduce links between Spain and Ireland. On the contrary, the Irish immigrant community in Iberia dramatically increased in size and significance as the Habsburg government welcomed Irish nobles who, like true Spaniards, had pledged themselves as 'vassals' or subjects of the King. Consequently a large number of exiled nobles were awarded membership of the Spanish military orders; some were even invested with noble titles. Furthermore the government sponsored the creation of Irish colleges in Spain and even established military regiments (*tercios*) that were specifically Irish in origin.

With the arrival of the Bourbons as kings of Spain in 1700/1713 the majority of the Irish opted to support Philip V and adapted themselves to the demands of the new royal house. In broad terms, by this date the immigrants were no longer considered 'foreigners' or 'outsides'; rather, they had succeeded in forging a dual-identity, one which while predominantly Irish in origin was simultaneously Spanish in form. This arrangement ensured that they remained beneficiaries of all of the rights and privileges that Spanishness entailed. A crucial point in the history of the Irish in eighteenth century Spain was the spectacular career of Ricardo Wall, who in the years leading up to 1777 was successively Secretary of State and Minister of the Indies and War under Charles III. Wall was able to favour the cause of the Irish, appointing many of them to positions of military command. His patronage also led to the emergence of three Irish regiments (those of Ireland, Ultonia and Hibernia.) One of his most prominent 'creatures' was General O'Reilly, who rose to the position of Military Governor of Cadiz (1779-1786). In this capacity O'Reilly distinguished himself as a military reformer. He was not alone. Another Irish Spaniard, Gonzalo O'Farrill, served as minister of War and President of the Council of Fernando VI.

The 'War of Independence/ Peninsular war' against Napoleon brought about a decisive change for the Irish in Spain, as the campaigns against Bonaparte unleashed a wide-ranging debate about the nature of Spanish nationhood and freedom, and in turn this discourse inevitably led to questions being asked of the allegiance and identity of the Irish communities. But by this point the terms of debate had shifted and taken on a new dimension: one of the pivotal questions was whether the Irish felt loyalty to Spain and to the Spanish people, or whether their allegiance was, more prosaically, to the royal house and to

the figures whose patronage had been decisive in expanding their influence under the *ancien régime*. The theatre in which these ideas and debates would be most thoroughly tested and played out was the famous *Cortes de Cádiz* held in 1812. Among the deputies there were four whose Irish ancestry was matched by an unmistakeable enthusiasm for liberal political ideas, although the stance or outlook of each of these figures must be differentiated and studied for its shades of nuance and emphasis. This was especially true for those who were linked in some way to America. In the final instance, some of these men would find that their loyalty to Spain was outweighed by their enthusiasm for the independence movement, and several would subsequently ally themselves with the rebels of South America.

The dates of this conference are rich with commemorative significance: it takes place on the Feast Day of St Patrick in Spain and coincides with the commemoration of the famous *Pepa*, which was signed on the day of San José. Furthermore it is the first major conference organized under the auspices of the Council for Spanish-Irish Historical Studies, which was founded in March 2011 during the visit of President of the Irish Republic to Spain. The intention is to bring together a group of international scholars in order to provide an in-depth study of the four major Irish protagonists at Cadiz: Santiago Key (1772-1821) was in turn Vice-president and Secretary of the *Cortes*, before ending his career as rector of the University of Seville; Juan O’Gavan (1728-1858) was Vice-president, *auditor de la Rota* and one of the signatories of the Constitution of 1812; Ramón Power (1775-1813), was a deputy in the *Cortes* and served as Captain General of Puerto Rico; finally Enrique O’Donnell (1776-1834), count of La Bisbal, was a prominent soldier and signatory of the Constitution who had previously played an important role in the Regency Government. The fascinating figure of Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva cannot be overlooked: he was a priest, member of the Royal Academy of History and a deputy to Cadiz; he travelled at various times to Ireland, where he maintained an extensive circle of friends, amongst whom were a number of members of the Royal Irish Academy. He spent his last years in exile as a result of his espousal of liberal Catholicism and died in Dublin in 1837. A notable scholar and a staunch defender of the Irish Catholic Church, he published four volumes of Hispano-Irish studies, one of which was a biography of St Patrick.

To commemorate these figures the Council for Advanced Academic Studies (*Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas*) in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (*Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad*), the Embassy of Ireland, the

Council for Spanish-Irish Historical Studies (*Consejo Hispano Irlandés de Estudios Históricos*), and the Foundation of the Second of May (*Fundación Dos de Mayo*), is organizing an international conference entitled ‘**Ireland in the Spain of the Cortes de Cádiz, 1812**’, (*Irlanda en la España de las Cortes de Cádiz de 1812.*). This conference aims to study the enormous repercussions of this pivotal constitutional document in both Spain and Ireland, and the intention is to proceed through the in-depth study of individuals in order to see how the new dynamics unleashed by the 1812 Constitution shaped their destinies. The aim is to examine these developments on a number of different levels (political, religious, economic, social, literary), and to look at each individual within a multidisciplinary framework. The schedule of conference is divided into four blocks: Politics; Army; Religion and Culture. The hope is to bring into focus a number of figures of Irish origin who played a role in the dynamic political and/or military debates which culminated in the *Constitucion*. At present it is expected that emphasis will fall upon the following figures: Juan O’Donojú O’Ryan, Luis de Lacy, Teodoro Reding, Almirante Brown, Ramón Power y Giralt, José María Blanco White, J. Bernardo O’Gavan y Guerra, Demetrio O’Daly, Luisa Ward, General Joaquín Blake, Enrique O’Donnell, James Florence Burke, General Jorge Flinter, Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva. However, the organizers are keen to stress that they would welcome any contribution that brings to light the role of similar figures.