“The Enormous Failure of Nature”
Famine and Society in the Nineteenth Century

Edited by Andrew G. Newby


---

# Contents

   Andrew G. Newby

2. The World of the Cavan Cottier during the Great Irish Famine  
   Ciarán Reilly

   Declan Curran

4. The Question of Moral Economy and Famine Relief in the Russian Baltic Provinces of Estland and Livland, 1841–69  
   Kersti Lust

5. Marriage and Household Structure in Rural Pre-Famine Finland, 1845–65  
   Miikka Voutilainen

   Heidi Reese

7. Televising the Famine: An Audiovisual Representation of the Famine in Northern Sweden, 1867–1868  
   David Ludvigsson

8. Criminality and the Finnish Famine of 1866–68  
   Miikka Vuorela

9. Considering Famine in the Late Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire: A Comparative Framework and Overview  
   Özge Ertem

10. Finland’s “Great Hunger Years” Memorials: A Sesquicentennial Report  
    Andrew G. Newby

List of Contributors

---

*C O L L e G I U M*

STUDIES ACROSS DISCIPLINES IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
“The Enormous Failure of Nature”: Famine and Society in the Nineteenth Century

Introductory Notes

Andrew G. Newby

Department of World Cultures, University of Helsinki

This miscellany is composed predominantly of papers that were presented to the “Nineteenth-Century European Famines in Context” symposium, held at the Bank of Finland’s Museum (Rahamuseo) in Helsinki, in December 2015.¹ The Helsinki meeting was the second of four international events arranged by the International Network of Irish Famine Studies [INIFS] between April 2015 and April 2017, each of which has had a different theme and associated publication.² Under the leadership of Marguérite Corporaal (Radboud University, Nijmegen), with co-directors Peter Gray (Queens University Belfast), Oona Frawley and Luke Gibbons (NUI Maynooth) and Andrew Newby (University of Helsinki), the network received major funding from NWO (Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research) in 2014.

INIFS connects scholars conducting innovative research on the Great Irish Famine, and seeks to develop the interdisciplinary dialogues and methodologies necessary to face four central challenges in the field. These are: (i) comparative analyses of the media through which the legacy of the Famine was transmitted; (ii) an investigation of the imperial power structures that shaped the progression and representations of the Famine; (iii) an examination of the evolution of transatlantic and transpacific diasporas of Famine emigrants; and, (iv) parallel studies of the Great Hunger and famines taking place in other temporal and geographical contexts but under analogous conditions. The Helsinki symposium focussed particularly on the fourth of these challenges, and brought together researchers from a variety of national and disciplinary backgrounds.


² In addition to the current volume see King & Corporaal, 2017; Corporaal, Mark-Fitzgerald & Frawley, 2017 (from the Nijmegen and Maynooth conferences respectively). A publication from Belfast (April 2017) will be released in due course.
Despite the 1860s Finnish famine being recognised as one of Europe’s final large-scale mortality crises, international relations scholar Vanessa Pupavac has noted that it remains "virtually unknown" abroad, a point which was reinforced by Cormac Ó Gráda’s claim that it “received little attention at the time and is rarely discussed or analysed outside Finland.” Moreover, it has been suggested regularly in recent years that Irish famine studies can be strengthened by more systematic comparative work. As a means of addressing these historiographical issues, a provisional agenda for comparative Finnish-Irish famine studies was published in 2015, and a thematic priority of the Helsinki meeting was to therefore to explore and analyse comparisons and contrasts between these “Great Famines”, and facilitate the development of partnerships which could produce collaborative research long after the end of the current project. While acknowledging the importance and potential of a bilateral comparative dialogue, however, it was considered vital to add further context, including contributions on the Scottish Highlands, Estonia, and Lithuania. Furthermore, although Özge Ertem and David Ludvigsson were unfortunately absent from the seminar, their important work on (respectively) the Ottoman Empire and Sweden has been included in the final collection.

Reports from the second half of the nineteenth century reinforce the idea that these crises cannot be studied exclusively on a national level. For example, as the Great Finnish Famine entered its most destructive phase in January 1868, the London Standard newspaper recognised a much larger-scale – potentially global – humanitarian crisis.

No phenomenon of the modern age is more remarkable than the enormous failure of nature in many countries of Europe, Africa and Asia. From all quarters we have heard, or still hear, the appalling cry of famine… It is impossible to suggest to eyes that have not witnessed them the reality of the horrors consequent on these fell visitations. Among ourselves the thought of a few wretched beings perishing of starvation in the winter time causes society to shudder, and the bare fact that a lonely and scattered population were, a little ago, dying of hunger in the glens of Connemara, sufficed to turn a full stream of pity and help towards those barren districts. But the misery we now speak of it the scourge of millions; the victims are not to be counted; the food of whole provinces has been blighted; and the ravage spreads like a pestilence, traversing rivers and mountains, invading frontiers, laying the land desolate for hundreds of miles.

While contemporary accounts in the nineteenth century seemed well aware of the international context of these catastrophes subsequent historiographies

---

4 Ó Ciosáin, 2013, 705; Curran et al., 2015, 2–3.
6 The Standard, 13 Jan. 1868.
of famine have developed very much within national paradigms. Bill Kissane’s recent work on civil war has, however, provided an excellent model for how a historical topic can be developed from (i) a national focus to (ii) a comparative focus (again, in Kissane’s case this was a Finnish-Irish comparison), using the lessons learned from the bilateral comparison to (iii) construct a much broader transnational framework. Such an approach is absolutely possible in the field of historical famine studies. There are consistent themes which emerge in various crises: the role of societal structures in exacerbating or easing the natural element of the disaster; political agency; the increase in social unrest / dislocation (and subsequent downplaying e.g. of incidences of crime in famine societies); the role of domestic and international philanthropy; the tension between charity and “self-help”; the international / imperial political context; commemoration and representation. This volume contains reflections on all of these themes, highlighting some of the latest research on famine in the nineteenth century. The articles make innovative contributions to “national” famine narratives, but also offer insights which provide a basis for new comparative work.

Today, as perhaps befits a “father of the nation”, Johan Vilhelm Snellman’s statue looks out sternly from the main entrance of the Bank of Finland. A key difference between Finland and Ireland in the nineteenth century was that Finland’s devolved position within the Russian Empire had allowed it, by the 1860s, to create that Central Bank and develop independent fiscal policies. As the finance minister in the 1860s, it was Snellman who occupied a role similar to that fulfilled by Charles Trevelyan in Ireland twenty years earlier. And yet, the reputations of the two men could scarcely be more divergent. Even though the economic and trade policies enacted by Snellman and his colleagues did not prevent the mortality crisis of 1867-68, their emphasis on cultural and economic self-sufficiency meant that it was preferable for Finland to “fail alone, rather than be saved by Russian intervention”.

Declan Curran’s article examines the impact of the Bankers (Ireland) Act of 1845, a local variation of Britain’s restrictive monetary regime, imposed on Ireland by the parliament in London. In particular, the Curran ponders the question of whether such a policy was appropriate during a time of famine. Snellman also features

---

7 Two other current research networks are engaged in pioneering transnational famine research. The “Hunger Draws The Map” project, based at the University of Oxford and funded by the Leverhulme Trust (2016-18), analyses the famines that struck Europe during and immediately after World War One. The research group “COMPOT – Famines in Historical Context”, funded by the Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS) and based at the University of Turku, has also held several workshops and is making an important contribution to theorizing famine in a transnational context. This includes the key question of what actually constitutes famine, and the terms used in different languages. For these networks, see <http://greatwar.history.ox.ac.uk/?page_id=2202> and <https://www.utu.fi/fi/yksikot/hum/yksikot/suomenhistoria/tutkimus/projektit/Sivut/COMPOT_nalanhataprojekti.aspx>


9 Ó Gráda, 2009, and Ó Gráda, 2015, have already demonstrated this potential.

10 Newby & Myllyntaus, 2015, 153.

11 Newby, 2014b, 394.
prominently in Heidi Reese’s analysis of the Helsinki administration’s handling of the famine. Many of Reese’s observations resonate strongly with Irish readers, such as the policy that gratuitous aid should be withheld for fear of de-moralizing the people (an idea already apparent in the Quaker aid distributed in Finland a decade earlier). Some comments emanating from the Finnish elite – such as the Governor of Mikkeli Province’s hope that the “harsh hunger” would educate the people in “many things” – also hark back to British attitudes towards Ireland, particularly the idea of, in David Nally’s phrase, “imposing civility”. Stripped to a large degree of the racial and national element which marked metropolitan Victorian attitudes towards both Irish and Scottish Highland Celts, these comments suggest a potential disconnect along class lines, or between metropole and province, which was subsequently erased in an overarching narrative of “Finnishness”. From a Finnish perspective, it is worth considering why Snellman’s reputation is so overwhelmingly, though not by any means universally, positive. The Irish reader, however, might also ponder whether having a Home Rule administration in the 1840s would simply have meant having economic policies enacted by a local “Trevelyan”.

Social insecurity is also a theme that runs through Ciarán Reilly’s study of the cottiers of Tullygarvey, Co. Cavan, in an excellent example of how previously unused archival sources can be used not only to build up a picture of a particular locality, but also posit much broader conclusions. The importance of delving into this under-researched stratum of Irish agricultural society is highlighted by recent work on the Finnish case, which has stressed the huge increase in the class of landless labourers in the 1800s, a development which also had lethal implications for famine-era mortality. The theme of social precarity is also addressed in Miikka Voutilainen’s innovative analysis of marriage and household structure in Finland on the eve of the Great Hunger Years. Although recent studies have implied that Finland’s demographic structure was dominated by the preventive check, Voutilainen argues that the recurrence of famine in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tends to undermine the argument that such behaviour was necessarily a socio-economic safeguard. In examining the structure of households, Voutilainen presents new theories around the interplay between preventive checks and rural precarity.

Although 1867-68 is arguably best remembered for the demographic catastrophe that hit Finland, the crisis was generally framed by contemporaries as part of a wider crisis that also affected Swedish Norrland (to Finland’s north-west), and many parts of the Russian Empire, including the Baltic Provinces. Kersti Lust’s article on famine relief in Estland and Livland raises important questions about regional and imperial structures, as well as the more general notion – recently reformulated by Norbert Götz in the context of nineteenth-century European famines – of a “moral

12 Newby, 2015, 112.
14 Häkkinen & Forsberg, 2015, 105–6; Voutilainen, 2015, 125.
economy”. In a narrative that has strong echoes of the Irish situation – not only in the 1840s but also, for example, during the more localised Gorta Beag of 1879-80 – Lust explores the limits of state intervention, the way in which traditional “community” institutions were able to cope with a modernising economy, and the persistence or otherwise of paternalistic bonds between nobility and peasantry.

A notable feature of the famines which affected Europe in the late 1860s was the extent to which international aid criss-crossed the continent. This fundraising took place on a personal, institutional and even state level, and highlights a complex array of motivations, linked to trade links, geopolitical interests, class, ethnic or religious solidarities, and in some cases simple “Christian charity.” Some of this activity is reflected in Özge Ertem’s article on two famines which hit Anatolia in the Ottoman Empire (1873-75 and 1879-81), both of which received considerable international attention and demands for “a large amount of private benevolence” to be “called in to immediate exercise.” Again, this account of state institutions struggling with the crisis, of a breakdown in social solidarity, and the terms on which charity was provided, has resonances with Finland, Ireland and many other societies. 

Vitally, Ertem points out some of the self-interest inherent in ostensibly philanthropic state actions, and a transnational study of famine relief as a facet of international relations in the nineteenth century seems likely to be a fruitful area for future exploration.

The Great Famine hit Finland in the aftermath of the Crimean War, just as its political leaders were developing a national identity that focussed on hard work, education, and adherence to the law. This last feature was key in distinguishing the Finnish national movement from those rebellious peoples such as the Polish or the Irish, and the Turku-based newspaper Aura made the explicit point in 1894 that:

The position of the Finnish people cannot be compared with that of 1880s Ireland… observance of the law and a sense of justice have always been the Finnish people’s finest properties… Even during the great famine [1867-8], when huge quantities of people died from lack of bread, even though they had been very hard-working, they did not become openly violent [or] steal other people’s property, and [it was] even less likely that they would plot in secret in order to hurt others.

Miikka Vuorela’s article takes this persistent assertion about Finland’s Great Famine Years and scrutinises it with fascinating results, offering suggestions as to why, despite a rise in crime against property, interpersonal violence did not appear to increase significantly in the 1860s.

The memory and memorialization of famine is a theme that has blossomed in recent years, not least because of the potential for comparison between the

18 Aura, 18 Apr. 1894.
Irish and Ukrainian cases. The articles by David Ludvigsson (on Sweden) and Andrew Newby (on Finland) both deal with issues of memory and representation of the hunger years of the 1860s. In his analysis of the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation’s 1977 documentary Ett satans år, Ludvigsson notes the contemporary social context which coloured the representation of the Norrland famine. Newby’s interim report on memorials to Great Hunger Years, likewise, highlights the idea that monuments tell us as much about the society that erected them as the events that they commemorate.

Acknowledgements

Many debts, moral as much as financial, are incurred during the organisation of a symposium and the publication of its proceedings. Perhaps the greatest debt in the case of this project is owed to Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO), the national research council of the Netherlands, for its commitment to international scientific collaboration. The Academy of Finland has been an enthusiastic and supportive advocate of comparative and transnational research, and has funded two major projects on the Great Finnish Famine in recent years. This support, in turn, allowed the participation of the University of Helsinki in the NWO-funded international consortium, the International Network of Irish Famine Studies. The 2015 symposium was hosted by the Bank of Finland’s Museum, and thanks go to Elisa Newby and Vappu Ikonen for all their help in organising the venue and the programme. Laurence Gouriévidis (Université Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand) launched the symposium with an inspiring keynote lecture. Subsequently, the various speakers and commentators ensured that the seminar was filled with lively debate, comment and discussion. For their valued contributions on the day and throughout the project, many thanks to Halley Choiniere, Michael Coleman, Henrik Forsberg, Peter Gray, Antti Häkkinen, Tuomas Jussila, Anna Kuismin, Antti Kuusterä, Kaisa Kyläkoski, Timo Myllyntaus, Mikko-Olavi Seppälä and Milena Zeidler. In addition, it is important to acknowledge with gratitude colleagues at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, particularly Sami Pihlström, Sari Kivistö, Anne Birgitta Pessi, Kaisa Apell, Terhi Elomaa, Minna Franck and Maria Soukkio. All of the articles presented in this collection have been peer-reviewed, anonymously, by at least two experts in the field – the time and effort of all of these extremely busy colleagues is much valued. Last, but definitely

19 Noack et al., 2012.
not least, many thanks to the editorial staff of COLLeGIUM. Maija Väätämöinen and Päivi Valotie have been exceptionally efficient (and exceptionally patient), and have been instrumental in bringing the project to a successful conclusion.

References

Newspapers & Periodicals:

*The Standard*

*Uusi Aura*


**Internet Sources [full page references given in the endnotes]**

<http://www.ru.nl/irishfaminenetwork/>

<http://greatwar.history.ox.ac.uk/?page_id=2202>

The World of the Cavan Cottier during the Great Irish Famine

Ciarán Reilly

Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses & Estates, Maynooth University

In 1845, on the eve of the Great Irish Famine, the cottier class numbered some three million people. Despite such large numbers we know little of the individual experience of cottiers as they are absent from both the historiography and the social memory of the period. At the bottom of the social and economic pyramid, and entirely dependent on the potato as their staple diet, the cottier class remain hidden in the Famine narrative, mainly because of the supposed paucity of sources. And so the cottier class remains the largest body of people in nineteenth-century Ireland about whom we know the least. This essay considers the world of the cottier, using recently discovered primary sources from County Cavan as a case study. Theirs was a precarious existence and one which was often determined by outside factors, beyond their control. Yet, the question remains: who was ultimately responsible for them when the Famine crisis commenced. Landlords, at the top of the economic pyramid or the small farmer class who had facilitated their existence?

In Cavan the poor are unemployed and starving. Inflammation of the stomach and diarrhoea are frequent, and attributable to the use of bad potatoes. Insufficiency of food is the cause of present disease, and fever will break out to a frightful extent, in the event of scarcity of food.¹

During what came to be known as ‘Black 47’, 1847, the worst year of the Great Irish Famine, those, like the cottier Catherine Brady near Cootehill, County Cavan were rather forthright in their assessment of the chances of surviving another winter, claiming that she would ‘inevitably starve’.² Brady’s claim was not unique and numbering more than three million people in the early 1840s, the ‘cottier’ class were amongst the first to succumb to the hunger and disease which the Famine

¹ Quoted in Sydney Morning Herald, 25 Jul. 1846.
² Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses & Estates, Maynooth University, Lucas-Clements Archive [LCA], ‘Petition of Catherine Brady, (1847)’.
brought. Naturally given their numbers and role in agriculture they were central to the Irish rural economy on the eve of the Famine. They were central also to much of the pre-Famine agitation which characterised rural Ireland as access to land was a recurring grievance across the country. These claims for land were all the more pronounced following the introduction of the Irish Poor Law Act of 1838 which made provision for, amongst other things, the creation of the workhouse system. It was the cottier class who were predominantly targeted for expulsion as landlords and their agents wished to remove poverty from sight, safe in the knowledge this numerous cottier population would find sanctuary in the workhouse. At Strokestown in County Roscommon, for example, the removal of cottiers was carried out in order to provide land for a proposed railway line, while for others it was the embellishment or creating of demesnes.

Despite such large numbers we know little of the individual experience of cottiers as they are absent from both the historiography and the social memory of the period. At the bottom of the social and economic pyramid, and entirely dependent on the potato as their stable diet, the cottier class remain hidden in the Famine narrative, mainly because of the supposed paucity of sources. Indeed, since most were deemed to have been illiterate or have received little education, they were unlikely in the first place to have left any written account of their lives behind. Moreover, largely because of the landholding system in nineteenth-century Ireland, with cottiers pitted at the bottom of the pyramid, they frequently do not appear in estate or public documents. Their ‘nomadic’ nature (houses were temporary structures and moved with the work) meant that the majority did not hold leases, pay rent or contribute to the landed estate in such ways, and so they remain the great ‘hidden’ class of nineteenth-century Ireland. As a result it is difficult to reconstruct their everyday lifestyle. Remaining on the ‘outside’, cottiers do not appear on land valuation surveys of the early nineteenth-century carried out by landlords, or indeed in the governments’ ‘Tithe Applotment Surveys’ of the 1820s and 1830s. In some instances they do not appear in parish registers (births, marriages or death records) thereby furthering alienating them from the historical record. And so the cottier class remains the largest body of people in nineteenth-century Ireland about whom we know the least.

This paper, then, attempts to reconstruct a cottier community in County Cavan during the Great Famine using a unique set of records (the Lucas-Clements archive) which were generated by the people themselves. In the main these papers which form part of the Lucas-Clements archive highlight how cottiers reacted to, and were helped, once the Famine commenced in the mid-1840s. Taking the

---

3 O’Danachair estimated that there were 768,000 cottier families in 1841, meaning almost 3.9 million people, or almost half the population of Ireland. See O’Danachair, 1980–81, 154.
4 Reilly, 2014a, 51.
6 Reilly, 2014b, 8.
barony of Tullygarvey as a case study, this paper identifies how landlords and relief committees attempted to provide assistance for this teeming population in the midst of crisis. Significantly, this cottier population comprised Catholics and Protestants, thereby challenging casual assumptions about rural poverty. This paper will also highlight the role played by cottier women and the varying attitudes towards them. In the pre-Famine decades cottiers had supplemented their incomes and indeed managed to survive mainly on the ‘cottage industries’ which were carried out in the home. In Cavan these industries included spinning, weaving, shoemaker, basket making, flax dressing, milling and dressmaking. Where in the pre-Famine decades women were prominent in the production of items which were sold outside the house, their role or value diminished with the downturn in the economy and the onset of Famine. In many cases the excess of women became somewhat of a burden on individual cottier families.

Part of the reason for the lack of understanding of the world of the cottier is the difficulty there is in trying to define the term, which even to cotemporaries was ‘imprecise’ and ‘often vague’. Moreover, the fact that the term was interchangeable with ‘landless labourer’ meant that it was easy to confuse these numerous sections of the community. When the British Government undertook a Poor Inquiry of Ireland in the 1830s they found that the term was ‘variously employed and understood’ throughout the country. Somewhat mistakenly however, the report found that the cottier system was largely ‘undergoing dissolution’ but that it still prevailed in counties Tyrone, Fermanagh, Monaghan, Wicklow, Queen's County, King's County and Kilkenny. And even within these counties there were regional variations and the term ‘cottier’ was used to describe holders of land from a quarter of an acre to five acres. Likewise, in the barony of Tullygarvey in County Cavan, the term cottier was variously used; indeed even the people themselves referred to each other as ‘cottars’ and ‘cottagers’.

The increased cottier population centred on the development of Irish agriculture following the boom period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when during the Napoleonic Wars Ireland was effectively the ‘granary’ of Britain. By 1800 most Irish farmers prospered because of the labour of the cottier class which enabled them to work larger tracts of land with this overabundance of cheap labour. By extension, the small farming class used these ‘bound’ labourers as a means of carrying out contract work on larger farms and other manual labour. As a means of countering the downturn in the economy and maximizing profit from the land, Irish agriculture also underwent a period of improvement from 1815 onwards, particularly in areas of drainage and land reclamation. Most of this manual and cumbersome work was carried out by the cottier. The earl of Charleville at Tullamore, King’s County, for example, reclaimed 5,000 acres in the 1830s which until that point

8 For the purposes of this study, I define a cottier as the holder of a quarter acre of land or less, and usually no land at all.
was not part of the estate map or survey. However, despite their central role in this ‘silent’ reclamation revolution, cottiers were at the bottom of the social and economic pyramid, living on marginal land and themselves often occupying the edges of bogs, mountain and undrained land. Eking out an existence on the tiny patch of ground, or ‘potato garden’ as it was commonly called, there was little effort placed in the construction of their cabins for cottiers moved with the work. Each cottier was provided with a small portion of land in front of the cabin to sow potatoes. In return for this ‘small holding’, the cottier repaid the farmer by work in kind, usually 200 days in the year. In doing so they were ‘bound’ by an unwritten contract, which could be terminated by either part at a moment’s notice and without recourse to the law. For this reason, as O’Tuathaigh argues, cottiers were ‘the most insecure class’.

What made the system so detestable was that farmers could charge as high a rent as they liked, demanding so many days labour in return, and in turn offered as little ‘potato ground’ as they liked. Naturally, such arrangements gave rise to dispute and fuelled much of the agrarian tension and crime. The nature of this ‘bound’ contract meant that the cottier rarely handled cash and so was perpetually in debt to the small farmer. Indeed, on the eve of the Famine the Devon Commission, which reported into the *State of Land and Occupation in Ireland* believed that want of capital for farmers to pay cottiers was a serious problem. The Devon Commission also suggested that landlords should take responsibility for the cottier labourers and ensure that they had a house and adequate ground to grow a crop. Failing this, the commissioners suggested that fines should be imposed on small farmers who neglect the needs of the cottier. This system of perpetual debt was criticised by the British M.P. and social commentator, Edward Wakefield, in 1812 when he wrote:

> The cotter tenant hires a cabin, the worst in the country, with a small patch of potato land, at a rent of thirty shillings per annum… At the same time he works for his landlord at the small wage of 5d per day; but when he comes to settle, he receives nothing, as the food of his few sheep is set off against what he charges per labour. In this manner the poor cotter must toil without end, while his family eats up the produce of the small spot of land he has hired. This is called by the lower classes of the Irish ‘working for a dead horse’, that is to say getting in debt.

Wakefield was not alone in condemning such practices and pre-Famine social commentators regularly made a point of this. So too did writers of fiction, from William Carleton to Canon Joseph Guinan and those who used the memory of the
Famine as the backdrop to their novels. The miserable condition of cottiers was also frequently noted by travel writers who toured Ireland on the eve of and during the Famine. In Galway, for example, the Scottish philosopher, Thomas Carlyle, unsympathetically remarked upon the cottiers’ dependence on begging:

poor cottier digging his little plot of them, three or four little children eagerly “gathering” for him: pathetic to look upon. From one cottage on the way side, issue two children naked to beg; boy about 13, girl about 12, ‘naked’ literally, some sash of rag round middle, oblique-sash over shoulder to support that, stark-naked would have been as decent (if you had to jump and run as these creatures did) and much cleanlier. Dramatic, I take it, or partly so, this form of begging: ‘strip for your parts, there is the car coming!’ Gave them nothing.

With the downturn in the Irish economy after 1815 and the collapse of cottage industries, cottiers became almost entirely dependent on the potato crop for their survival. A year of scarcity or the failure of the crop brought obvious hardships but the cottiers managed to overcome these short-term setbacks. This resilience had been honed over several generations; from 1700 to 1845 Ireland had experienced twenty-seven failures of the potato crop. However, each of these years was followed by a bountiful harvest allowing the cottier and his family to recover. Thus, the sustained failure of the potato crop (commonly referred to as phytophthora infestans) in the late 1840s and early 1850s in Ireland disproportionately affected cottiers. However, outside factors, often beyond their control, had hastened the demise of the cottier in the years preceding the Famine and had greatly diminished their resilience. For example, the ‘Night of the Big Wind’ in 1839, Ireland’s most violent recorded storm, wreaked havoc on the cottiers’ makeshift homes. Moreover, the failure of the harvests of 1840 to 1842 meant that an already impoverished community were on the brink of disaster.

In County Cavan cottiers formed a large body of the population, more than one-third in the county’s eight baronies. Located on the edge of Ulster, on the eve of the Famine the 2,500 acre Lucas-Clements estate at Tullyvin, near Cootehill had a significant number of cottiers. Indeed at the height of the Famine it was estimated that the Tullygarvey relief committee, which catered for the Lucas-Clements tenants, provided assistance to almost 2,000 cottiers who were given a pint of ‘good soup’ three times a week. Initially, with the coming of the potato blight in September 1845, there was little cause for concern in Tullygarvey and the cottier community, it was believed, had a store of potatoes to last winter. By the spring of 1846 however there was a realisation amongst the local gentry that alarm had

See for example, Carleton, 1847; Guinan, 1910.
Carlyle, 1882, 188.
In the barony of Castlerahan in County Cavan, for example, some 2,842 cottiers made up 37% of the population; in Crosserlough 2,617 cottiers amounted to 34% of the population, while in the small parish of Denn there were 365 cottiers, or 31% of the population.
LCA, ‘Minute book of the Rathkenny Relief Committee, 1847.’
turned to panic amongst the cottier community. In April 1846 it was reported that typhus was raging in Cootehill where most had gone in search of food and relief. According to a report:

> The potatoes are run out with many families and there is no means of procuring meal; each farmer being able do more than the work of his own farm, leaves no employment for the poor. Fever is raging to an alarming extent: it commences with the poor, but has extended its ravages to persons in more comfortable circumstances. I have buried a man on yesterday, on whose exertions fifteen or sixteen persons depended for support. His widow, with eleven of his family, may enter the poor-house soon as they are able, if admitted, for the Guardians are unwilling to admit persons rising out fever.18

Even at this early stage of the crisis it was the cottiers who were disproportionately affected by the Famine, reflected in the voluminous petitions for support, charity and relief which were sent to the relief committees. For example, the plight of families such as the Shevlins who were said to be ‘nearly starved to death’ and the Donnochos [sic] who were ‘almost starved to death’ were representative of this poverty. These were of course some of the fortunate ones who could pen or have a petition written on their behalf. By the end of the year a travel writer passing through County Cavan in early 1847 noted that ‘the county of Cavan I found very bad, almost every part, and little or no labour done the small farms, the Workhouses all full.19

The unavailability of work on the small farms naturally drove the cottier class to commit crime, a fact reflected by Philip Smyth, secretary of the Larah relief committee who lamented that the ‘Famine has made sad savages among its poor’.20 Now with starvation looming they turned to the public works for survival. Primarily aimed at men because of the nature of the work, the public works schemes also included women and children. An examination of these schemes provides a unique insight into the world of the cottier during the Famine years. Those put to work ranged from fifteen to seventy years, although the average age was forty-two. These ‘cottiers’ had little alternative than to apply to the relief works and an examination of their holdings suggested that they needed alternative employment for survival. For example, throughout County Cavan there were regional variations: in the parish of Drung the average holding of those engaged in relief works was 1.76 acres, whereas in Drumheriff it was 0.9 acres and even less (0.45 acres) in Cornakill. The willingness to engage in labour on the public works schemes distinguished them from their counterparts elsewhere where something of a culture of dependency on food relief had existed since the early 1830s.21

18 *Dublin Evening Post*, 18 Apr. 1846.
20 Dublin, National Archives of Ireland [NAI], RLFC 3/2/4/23. Philip Smyth, Secretary of the Larah Relief Committee to Lord Lieutenant, Dublin Castle, 23 Feb. 1847.
21 Reilly, 2014b, 27.
The Rathkenny relief committee were particularly adamant that those employed on the public works schemes were those who held less than three acres of land and possessed no cows or corn. In most cases the petitions seeking employment on the public works came from the ‘poor cottier class’. Indeed, it is interesting how within the cottier community there were varying ways of describing their own poverty with some claiming that they were ‘quite destitute’; ‘destitute of anything’ and ‘very destitute’. And there were numerous examples of this hardship. John Gulshannon, for example, petitioned for help as he had his mother, a woman aged eighty and confined to a bed, to support and two sisters who could not get work. Others like Michael Barlow of Lamgelton petitioned for help as he had ‘very little food’ and his ticket for the public works had been taken from him. The petitions also highlight another important aspect in the lives of the cottier class. The onset of Famine significantly altered the role of women and many were portrayed as being a burden on the family unit. Indeed, the number of women in a household was frequently used to highlight the plight of a family. Indeed, this problem of having too many girls was exactly what perturbed Ann and Mary Shalvey in 1847. Seeking work on the public works, the Shalveys noted that their circumstances were particularly acute because there was ‘five of them without a father’. The findings for the parishes of Rathkenny, Tullyvin East and Tullyvin West largely reflect other areas of the county, including the barony of Castlerahan where cottier families had an average of five people per household. However, there were individual circumstances where families were substantially bigger and it was not uncommon for some to have twelve or thirteen people. Where families of this size were predominantly female it caused serious concerns for survival. William Moore, for example, a poor cottier, informed the relief committee that he had ‘no food these many days only cabbage’ and as a father of ten children, four of whom were unable to work, he desperately sought assistance.

Poverty in Famine-time Cavan did not know religious bounds. Indeed, an examination of the cottier population in Tullygarvey would suggest that there were a significant number of Protestants, as opposed to other areas of the country where the cottier class were predominantly Catholic. While it is difficult to ascertain to what extent Catholic cottiers were members of their church, the evidence suggests that they were ‘outside’ their communities, and only further analysis of parish records would accurately determine this. However, the fact that there were very few petitions written on behalf of cottiers by priests, suggests perhaps that they did not turn to the clergy in a time of crisis. It was less so with members of the Church of Ireland who sought the help of the Revd. Beresford and others in penning petitions. By

---

24 LCA, ‘Petition of Michael Barlow to T. Lucas-Clements’, nd.
extension the cottier population benefited little from the relaxing of the penal laws and subsequent introduction of national school education in Ireland in the 1830s and remained very much outside the community of education. They possessed little education compared to the small farmer class, some of whom could read and/or write. This isolation within the community posed a number of problems for the cottier population when the Famine struck and merely identifying themselves proved to be one of the biggest challenges they faced.

The survival of the cottier community in the barony of Tullygarvey depended largely on the local relief committees which were formed. Playing an important role in these committees was Theophilus Lucas-Clements, a prominent member of the Grand Orange Lodge and resident landlord. Crucially for the success of the committees, Lucas-Clements worked closely throughout the 1830s and 1840s with resident gentry, clergy and others in providing relief. However, despite doing so much, even Clements and other landholders realised that the amount of relief granted was insufficient to ‘answer the calls of destitution’. In some parts of the barony relief was not enough to prevent large scale mortality and the decline in population was staggering. In Drung, for example the population declined by 36%; in Tullyvin West by 29%; in Tullyvin East by 36%, while in Rathkenny it declined by 18%. This latter figure might suggest greater relief measures close to Lucas-Clements’ demesne at Rathkenny, but nonetheless the task which the relief committees faced was significant. The scale of relief measures in the barony provides an insight into the level of destitution which prevailed. For example, during ‘Black 47’ the Rathkenny Relief Committee oversaw the distribution of more than 9,000 daily rations to a starving population.

On a practical level the relief committee was determined that its resources should stretch as far as possible and provide for the thousands of cottiers who inhabited the barony. In order to do so, tenders were issued for yellow meal and oatmeal, whereby merchants were asked to submit samples of the food before being offered the contract. This food was distributed at the outdoor relief station set up at Tullyvin parsonage. Rations were generally distributed in two groups: first, to those under nine years of age and secondly to those over nine. To safeguard against theft, the committee ensured that the boiler and the cooking materials were kept secure at all times. In most instances it was deemed advantageous to provide cooked food to the cottiers as they did not possess the means or the knowledge to cook. In late May 1847, conscious that their efforts were not enough to stem the tide of hunger, the committee decided to increase the rations given to the poor by supplying eight ounces of bread with the quart of ‘stirabout’ or soup.

Perhaps their greatest energies were spent entering and deciding on names to be included on the relief lists, an indication that not everyone claiming assistance

27 LCA, ‘Minute book of the Rathkenny Relief Committee, 1847’.
28 For example, the boiler was kept at the parsonage at Tullyvin under the care of John Maguire and Lewis Latimor. At Rathkenny, Bernard Lynch had his wages increased for his ‘correct and efficient manner’ of the boiler. See LCA, ‘Minute book of the Rathkenny Relief Committee, 1847’.
was deemed ‘deserving’. To counteract fraudulent claims those in receipt of relief were given a ticket in order to properly identify them, but in most cases it was difficult to identify cottiers such was their nomadic existence up until this point and many were simply unknown to the relief committee members. For this reason many chose not to describe themselves as cottiers when applying for relief. It was with this in mind that the relief committee imposed stricter measures for inclusion on the public works and also in the issuing of relief. Realising this cottiers soon scrambled to have character references written to vouch for their character or indeed simply to identify them as belonging to the district; indeed, one poor cottier described how his family were resident in the same area ‘since the wars of Ireland’ (meaning the 1689-91 wars).  

However, even where people were given character references there were still considerable problems with ascertaining the legitimacy of claims. Those like Patrick Donoho [sic] claimed that certain people were ‘men of large properties who can live very well without it’. To address such claims the relief committee appointed a number of men to visit and inspect the legitimacy of claims. For example, when Robert Bannon visited and examined the ‘capital’ of Edward Donoho, he was happy to declare that the latter was ‘destitute of food – he is in great distress’. However, other surveys such as at the townland of Cohaw in 1847 revealed that many of those in receipt of relief had cows and sacks of oats and corn, despite their claims of destitution.

Although the general assumption is that these were merely works which benefited the landlord or that the work was merely ‘roads going nowhere’, in Tullygarvey thousands depended on it for their survival. Certainly mortality would have been far greater were it not for the judicious management of the public work schemes. Importantly too, the public work scheme at Rathkenny also catered for cottier women, those, for example, like Margaret Dunn who looked to be included as with eight children she was in ‘great distress’, and Ann Martin who was willing to carry out any work in an effort to provide for her family. Not everyone, however, was enamoured by the public works overseers and predictably there were charges of dishonesty and fraud levelled against them. Of course tenants removed from the public works list felt particularly aggrieved and accusations of bias and sectarianism abounded. Thomas Little, for example, in particular took umbrage at the fact that several overseers were also employing their sons, paying themselves extensive wages while there were ‘many distressed creatures not employed’. Another outspoken critic of the public works was the Revd Peter Clarke, PP of Drung,

29 LCA, Peter & Pat Brady to T. Lucas-Clements, 11 Nov. 1846.
30 LCA, Patrick Donoho to T. Lucas-Clements, nd.
31 LCA, Robert Bannon to T. Lucas-Clements, nd.
32 See, e.g., LCA, Robert Graham to T. Lucas-Clements, 1 Dec. 1846.
33 LCA, William Anderson to T. Lucas-Clements, 25 Nov. 1846.
35 LCA, Thomas Little to T. Lucas-Clements, nd.
who although a member of the committee was critical of some of the measures implemented. There was also particular ire amongst the cottier population that the small farmer class were included on the public work schemes, arguing that they were not ‘the deserving poor’. Indeed, even Lucas-Clements agreed with this point, arguing that the destitute who had farms would be better served working on them as there was ‘little or no labour going on especially in the small farms’.\(^{36}\)

The relative success of the Rathkenny and Tullygarvey relief committees was commendable, helped by the fact that there was collective effort, both Catholic and Protestant, and little squabbling over religious and political issues which were a feature elsewhere.\(^{37}\) Earlier crises, such as in 1822 when the government initiated a public works scheme, meant that the relief committee understood what needed to be done, although they did not have the resources to prevent mortality everywhere. In providing relief, the committee relied heavily on local subscriptions which by the summer of 1847 were almost exhausted. From July a considerable number of people were struck off the relief lists and work schemes after it was found that they had been getting relief elsewhere. Ultimately, those that bore the brunt of these new stringent guidelines were the cottier population.\(^{38}\) By the end of December 1847 just over 300 men remained in employment on the Tullygarvey relief scheme, only a quarter of the number who had been active in the public works at the beginning of the year. Likewise, within the barony, the Rathkenny relief works had ceased and the Drumgoon relief committee disbanded in the same month. However, it was apparent to all that poverty and distress still prevailed to a large extent.\(^{39}\) Naturally, the cessation of works had a dramatic effect on this starving population. A family of five, for example, reported how they were left to support themselves on three pence worth of turnips. For others in a ‘deplorable state’ their prospects were bleak, ‘dying of dysentery accompanied with slow fever, faster than they can be buried’.\(^{40}\)

The cottier class in Cavan, and elsewhere, were obliterated by the Famine. As Thomas Carlyle noted in 1849 while touring Ireland ‘Moor, moor, brown heather, and peat-pots, here and there a speck reclaimed into bright green, - and the poor cottier oftenest gone’.\(^{41}\) For some contemporary commentators there was no lament for the removal of the cottier class who were blamed for many of the social ills of the country. It was probably this that the Parnellite MP, Justin McCarthy had in mind when he commented that ‘terrible as the immediate effects of the Famine are it is impossible for any friend of Ireland to say that, on the whole, it did not

\(^{36}\) LCA, T. Lucas-Clements to Robert Graham, 1 Jun. 1847.

\(^{37}\) Reilly, 2014a, 70–1.

\(^{38}\) The rules of the relief committee were straightforward about eligibility. According to the regulations laid out for the relief committees, gratuitous relief was only to be given to three groups: the destitute helpless; the destitute, able bodied and not holding land, and holders of small portions of land. In addition, the waged were not be given any relief and those that were, were means tested.

\(^{39}\) Dublin Evening Post, 23 Sept. 1847.

\(^{40}\) LCA, unsigned letter to T. Lucas-Clements, 17 Jan. 1848.

\(^{41}\) Carlyle, 1882, 197.
bring much good with it’.\textsuperscript{42} Somewhat more curtly, the County Kildare middleman, Charles Carey remarked that the removal of the cottier class in general would ‘weed the country of whores, pickpockets, robbers and murderers and make a complete hell in America’.\textsuperscript{43} Likewise, for Hugh Dorian and others, the removal of such large numbers of the poor gave ‘the remainder, though few, a chance of thinking for themselves’.\textsuperscript{44} For cottiers theirs was a precarious existence and one which was often determined by outside factors, beyond their control. In many ways the world of cottier remained ‘outside’ of religion, education, and the local community alienating them further when the Famine struck in the mid-1840s. Yet, the question remains: who was ultimately responsible for them when the Famine crisis commenced. Landlords, at the top of the economic pyramid or the small farmer class who had facilitated their existence?

\section*{References}

Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses & Estates, Maynooth University:
Lucas-Clements Archive

National Archives of Ireland:
Famine Relief Commission Papers (RLFC)

Public Records Office of Northern Ireland:
Charleville Papers

{	extit{Dublin Evening Post}}

{	extit{Northern Whig}}

{	extit{Sydney Morning Herald}}

“One of the Commissioners” 1836. \textit{Remarks on the Evidence taken in Poor Inquiry (Ireland), Contained in the Appendices D, E, F.} London: British Parliamentary Papers XXXIV.


[Devon Commission].


\textsuperscript{42} Quoted in Bew, 2007, 213.

\textsuperscript{43} Reilly, 2014c.

\textsuperscript{44} MacSuibhne & Dickson, 2000, 172–3.


“A Dreadful Pressure for Money”: the Bank Charter Act 1844 and Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845 in the Context of the Great Irish Famine

Declan Curran
DCU Business School, Dublin City University

The Bank Charter Act 1844, extended to Ireland via the Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845, established a highly restrictive monetary regime in Britain and Ireland, in which currency circulation was to be determined by a mechanistic rule-based approach rather than by bank discretion. This paper analyses the functioning of the Irish banking system during the Great Irish Famine (1845-1850) in the context of this rigid monetary regime, focusing in particular on the role of the government chartered bank, Bank of Ireland. The analysis is based on archival material from the Bank of Ireland Court of Directors, as well as quantitative data detailing note issue by Irish banks. This paper contends that while Bank of Ireland was focal point of the Irish banking system during the famine years, it perceived itself at this time primarily as a commercial bank operating within the prevailing monetary regime rather than as a central bank-type entity. Indeed, subsequent characterizations of Bank of Ireland as a “de facto” Irish central bank during the 1840s run the risk of overestimating the level of institutional agency possessed by Bank of Ireland within the wider monetary regime during the famine years.

Introduction

The Bank Charter Act 1844 is regarded as the most significant piece of British banking legislation of the nineteenth century. Its implementation in Britain in 1844, and extension to Ireland via the Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845, established a highly restrictive monetary regime in Britain and Ireland, in which currency circulation was to be determined by a mechanistic rule-based approach rather than bank
This restrictive monetary regime formed part of the Irish institutional and economic landscape on the eve of the Irish famine. While the regulations surrounding joint-stock banking and currency issue may have been far removed from everyday life of those hardest hit by the famine onslaught - those landless labourers and cottiers operating largely in a barter economy, in which rent for a plot of land to grow potatoes was paid in terms of days worked for the landowner - matters of banking and currency were not divorced from the economic and social distress of those hardest hit by the famine conditions. Indeed, this is illustrated by the difficulties encountered by public works initiatives in 1846 in maintaining an adequate supply of silver with which to pay wages to those dependent on these relief efforts for survival.

One forceful argument against the implementation of the Bank Charter Act 1844 was the unwieldiness of a restrictive monetary regime in a time of crisis. The crux of previous episodes of British financial distress, such as those experienced in 1825 and 1836, had been the strains placed on the specie reserves of the Bank of England, as gold outflows arising from unexpected bad harvests or speculative investment threatened the Bank’s ability to meet its obligation to ensure convertibility of bank notes to gold at a fixed price and engendered a lack of public confidence in the soundness of bank notes issued by banks other than the government chartered Bank of England. Indeed, the financial crisis of 1825 was only ameliorated by the Bank of England being authorized by the British Treasury to dramatically increase its discretion.

In order to regulate the issue of bank notes in Britain, the Bank Charter Act 1844 stipulated that the Bank of England was to be split in two, with an Issue Department which would circulate a fixed maximum of notes (£14 million) against securities and any further issue backed by bullion, and a Banking Department which would continue to operate as a commercial entity; no new banks of issue were to be allowed; and existing banks were to have their maximum issue fixed at their existing levels. When the Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845 extended this legislation to Ireland, the six Irish banks of issue were authorized to issue notes to an authorized limit with further notes issues required to be back by gold. Clapham, 1944, 179–183; Collins, 1988, 30; Barrow, 1975, 73.

See Read, 2016, for a discussion of this restrictive monetary regime in the context of Britain’s overarching macroeconomic policy approach of the 1840s, which sought to maintain: (i) a fixed convertible currency, with banknote supply restricted to a multiple of gold reserves; (ii) free capital and trade flows; and (iii) an independent monetary and fiscal policy. As Read notes, this policy approach inevitably encountered what economists Mundell and Fleming would later characterise as a “macro-economic policy trilemma”: these three policy objectives could not be pursued simultaneously in a time of financial pressure. The deterioration in 1846 of Britain’s terms of trade, as costly imports were required to offset the failed potato harvest, along with the end of the railway investment boom and ongoing government expenditure directed towards Irish famine relief led to a diminution of the Bank of England’s gold reserve and exerted pressure on the fixed exchange rate regime. Financial crises ensued in April and October 1847, culminating in a temporary suspension of the 1844 Bank Charter Act on 25 October 1847. Dornbusch & Frenkel, 1984, 236; Fleming, 1962, 369–379; Mundell, 1963, 475–485; Read, 2016, 411–434.

Regional and social differences in pre-famine agricultural commercialisation are detailed by Ó Gráda, who points firstly to the west of the country as undertaking less commercial farming, due to farm sizes being smallest and dependence on the potato as a subsistence crop being greatest, and secondly to smallholders and labourers nationwide undertaking less commercial farming, partly because they consumed the subsistence potato crop produced on their plot of land and paid their rent mostly in labour. Ó Gráda, 1988, 51.

Hall, 1949, 218.

See, e.g., Bankers’ Magazine, Jul. 1844, 224.

level of note issue in order to assuage panic amongst the general public. The Bank Charter Act 1844 would remove the discretion of the Bank of England to increase the amount of currency in circulation in times of economic stress – a limitation which the deficient potato harvest of 1845 would place under severe scrutiny, as it necessitated an importation of grain which would trigger an unanticipated outflow of gold from the British financial system. The extension of the Bank Charter Act to Ireland in 1845 had far-reaching implications for the Irish banking system: it removed the Bank of Ireland’s monopoly over the issuing of notes with a 50 mile radius of Dublin; the right of note issue was to operate on the same basis across the six existing Irish banks of issue; the Act prohibited the entry of new note-issuing banks into the Irish banking system; it placed an upper limit on the note issue of Irish banks that could be backed by government securities; it fundamentally altered the position of Ireland’s government chartered bank, Bank of Ireland, within the Irish banking system; and it furthered an ongoing process which saw the Irish banking system increasingly subsumed into a wider banking system, centred around the Bank of England.

The onset of famine resulted in very different consequences for Irish banking than it did for the wider Bank of England-centred system. As anticipated by the Bankers’ Magazine, the worsening British trade imbalance and the substantial diminution of Bank of England gold reserves triggered by the famine conditions would inevitably reveal the impolicy of rigid monetary policy in the face of harvest failure:

We repeat, however, for the twentieth time at least, that the most competent judges are decidedly of the opinion, that when a drain of specie reaches that point [where insufficient gold was at hand to support the issuing of currency in excess of the £14 million securities-backed note circulation permitted by the Bank Charter Act 1844], Sir Robert Peel’s banking law will never work in practice, and that its temporary suspension must be the inevitable result.

The problem facing Irish banking, however, was entirely different: rather than the monetary asphyxiation thrust upon the Bank of England, Ireland was afflicted by a debilitating economic marasmus. The currency circulating in Ireland contracted from £7,404,366 to £3,833,072 from January 1846 to August 1849, an unprecedented diminution of circulating medium which, as the Dublin University Magazine lamented, was not due to monetary or commercial crisis but rather the stagnation of all Irish enterprise and industry in the face of famine conditions: “it is because there is nothing to sell, and nobody to buy, that the wants of Ireland,

8 Bankers’ Magazine, Oct. 1847, 484.
9 Bankers’ Magazine, Feb. 1847, 265.
10 Anon., 1849, 374.
in respect to currency, and therefore our supply of currency have diminished one-
half."\(^{11}\)

In the early months of the famine banks did not encounter financial distress,
as corn prices remained high and public works projects supported currency
circulation and transactions.\(^{12}\) However, as noted by W.N Hancock, Professor of
Political Economy in Dublin University (now Trinity College Dublin), the deficient
potato harvest devastated the rural barter economy and led to a scramble for notes
of small denomination and silver coin:

In consequence of the potatoe [sic] failure, the system of barter which had previously
prevailed in Ireland became no longer possible, and a currency was wanted to supply
its place; as the transactions which had thus been previously carried on by barter were
of small amount, and as the only legal currency for small payments in Ireland is silver,
a demand was immediately created for silver coin.\(^{13}\)

The process by which silver coin was drained from circulation was succinctly
captured by the *Dublin University Magazine*:

this silver coin has been extorted from the industrious classes by the severest pressure.
[..] The £400,000 in silver coin, which has forced its way into the banks, and now lies
there a dead and unprofitable weight, is withdrawn from the circulation of the country.
[..] Thus it was that the silver coin, which had been, in more prosperous times, kept in
circulation in the country was forced upon the banks.\(^ {14}\)

Despite their opposition to the monetary regime enshrined in the Bank Charter Act
1844 and Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845, Hancock and the Dublin University Magazine
acknowledged that the Irish economic malaise did not arise from inflexible monetary
rules:

There is not a bank of issue in Ireland at this moment which could not issue, with
perfect safety and profit, double the amount of its present issue, if they could only
find in the country customers whose legitimate transactions could accept it. [..] The
diminishing amount of money in circulation in Ireland is, therefore, quite independent of
any effect produced by the laws under which our currency system is now regulated.\(^ {15}\)

It is in this context that this paper analyses the functioning of the Irish banking
system during the Great Irish Famine (1845-1850), through the lens of the
government chartered bank, Bank of Ireland.

\(^{11}\) Anon., 1849, 373.
\(^{12}\) See footnote 71, below.
\(^ {13}\) *Bankers’ Magazine*, Aug. 1847, 345.
\(^ {14}\) Anon., 1849, 380.
\(^ {15}\) Anon., 1849, 374.
Based on an analysis of archival Bank of Ireland Court of Directors’ Minutes from 1844-1854, as well as bank-level note issue statistics published in the Bankers’ Magazine from January 1846 onwards, two findings emerge that offer insights into the nature of Bank of Ireland’s role within the Irish Banking system: (i) while fulfilling public duties as and when they arose was a prerequisite to it receiving its government charter, correspondence between the Bank’s directors and the British Treasury prior to the implementation of the Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845 indicate that the Bank of Ireland perceived itself at this time primarily as a commercial bank operating within the prevailing monetary regime rather than as a central bank-type entity; and (ii) while Bank of Ireland assumed a number of responsibilities commonly associated with Central Banks, such as lender of last resort in times of bank failures, Bank of Ireland’s systemic initiatives were primarily ones which aimed to facilitate transactions between itself and other Irish commercial banks.

To illustrate the partial nature of Bank of Ireland’s systemic involvement in the Irish banking system, this paper points to Bank of Ireland’s policy towards note issue during the famine years. Once it adjusted to the requirements of Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845, Bank of Ireland’s note issue did not approach the limit authorized by the Act until economic activity recovered in the years after the famine. In this regard, Bank of Ireland’s monetary stance was in keeping with that of the other Irish commercial banks during the famine-era: its note issue responded to the level of Irish commercial activity and the availability of profitable opportunities to extend credit. Indeed, it could be argued that by preventing a Bank of Ireland monopoly of note issue, the 1845 Act ultimately stymied any future metamorphosis of Bank of Ireland into a fully-fledged central bank.

Taken as a whole, this paper argues that modern-day characterizations of Bank of Ireland as a “de facto” central bank during the famine years run the risk of overstating the influence of Bank of Ireland within the monetary regime as a whole and of overestimating the level of institutional agency that Bank of Ireland possessed in terms of Irish famine-era monetary and economic policy.

Bank of Ireland and the Irish Banking System in the Advent of Bank Charter Act

Established through legislative charter in 1783, Bank of Ireland fulfilled the role of banker to the government: it administered the lodgement of all public monies, received all revenue payments, managed the national debt, and provided short-term advances to the Irish exchequer.16 The legislation establishing Bank of Ireland stipulated that no other body exceeding six persons could issue bills or notes payable, thereby granting Bank of Ireland an unrivalled position of strength in the Irish banking system. Bank of Ireland’s capital arrangements also afforded it a level

of government support unavailable to other commercial banks: it has legislative approval to raise capital of £600,000 which it then advanced to the government as a loan with interest to be paid by an annuity of £24,000. In what was a precursor to the 1826 Banking Co-partnership Act’s curtailment of Bank of England privileges, legislation introduced in 1821 permitted the formation of banks with more than six partners beyond a radius of fifty (Irish) miles of Dublin. The Irish Banking Act of 1824 repealed earlier legislation which had required the names of all partners to appear on bank notes and had debarred any banker from engaging in import or export trade.

These legislative changes ushered in an era of Irish joint-stock banking, as evidenced by the founding of Hibernia Bank (1824), Northern Bank (1825), Provincial Bank of Ireland (1825), The Belfast Banking Company (1827), National Commercial Bank of Ireland (1834), the short-lived Agricultural and Commercial Bank (1834), and The Royal Bank of Ireland (1836). The spread of branch banking nationwide ensued, as the newly formed joint stock banks established 173 branches between them between 1824 and 1845. By 1845 the Irish banking system comprised of 10 Irish joint stock banks and two independent branches of the National Bank (Carrick-On-Suir and Clonmel), and only four private banks (compared to 22 private banks in 1820).

This rapid expansion of the Irish banking system ground to a halt with the 1845 Bankers’ Act (Ireland), which extended the 1844 Bank Charter Act to Ireland. Once the 1844 Act was introduced in Britain, it was not possible to allow Bank of Ireland to have discretion over note issue within the same monetary system. The 1845 Act removed the Bank of Ireland’s Dublin-centred note issuing privileges, with all joint stock banks existing at that time now allowed to issue notes within the Dublin region. Note issue in Ireland was now limited to a fiduciary issue based on the existing circulation of the Joint Stock banks, with any additional issue required to be backed by bullion. In this regard, the note issue of Bank of Ireland was now subject to the same criteria as the other Irish banks of issue. The legislation also...

17 Barrow, 1975, 3.
18 Barrow, 1975, 64.
19 Barrow, 1975, 220.
20 Collins, 1988, 52–53, Table 2.4; savings banks, targeting small savers, and loan fund banks, which provision of small investment loans, typically of a few pounds, to traders, crafts people, and smallholders, also formed part of the pre-famine Irish banking system. As Ó Gráda notes, both were hit hard by the famine: total balances in Ireland’s savings banks fell from £2.92 million in 1845 to £1.33 million in 1848, while the aggregate value of loan funds fell from £1.87 million in 1845 to £0.72 in 1848. Ó Gráda, 1999, 149–156. See also: McLaughlin, 2014, 569–591; Ó Gráda, 2009, 21–36.
21 As the Chancellor of Exchequer noted in a letter to the Bank of Ireland in April 1845: “it was not judged advisable to subject banks in Scotland or Ireland to a different scale from that applied to Banks in England”; Bank of Ireland [BOI], Minutes of the Court of Directors [MCD], 23 Apr. 1845.
23 Letter from the Chancellor of Exchequer to the Bank of Ireland on 22 April 1845: “in the amendment which it is proposed to make to the law affecting banking in Ireland, it is not intended to make any distinction to the regulations that are applicable to the circulation of the Bank of Ireland and which will apply to that of the other banks in Ireland”. BOI, MCD, 23 Apr. 1845.
deterred the entry of new joint stock companies into the Irish banking system, as note issue was only permitted by those joint stock banks already in existence when the legislation was introduced in 1845.  

McGowan argues that these legislative changes weakened the position of the Bank of Ireland as an emerging Irish central bank while strengthening the central position of the Bank of England over the monetary system as a whole. On the other hand, Hall, official biographer of Bank of Ireland, and MacDonagh both contend that that the 1845 Act extended Bank of Ireland’s functioning as a central banking institution, as Bank of Ireland’s leadership role amongst Irish joint stock banks became more formal and specific. McDonagh cites, by way of example, Bank of Ireland’ development of a clearing house for note exchange between Irish banks; its allocation of stock of coin to each of the provincial capitals with local agents given discretion in advancing specie for short periods to other banks; and, newly freed from interest rate restrictions, the expansion of its role as “bankers’ bank”.  

Bank of Ireland had already established itself as a lender of last resort, albeit a reluctant one, in exceptional circumstances. Munn traces Bank of Ireland’s activity in this regard to the crisis of 1814, when three Dublin bankers (Robert Shaw and Co., Alexander and Co., and Ball and Co.) were provided with special drawing facilities on the understanding that further assistance would not be forthcoming. However, Bank of Ireland was required to take on the mantel of lender of last resort once again in 1820, when rising agricultural prices eroded public confidence in Irish banks. The Bank provided assistance to all Dublin banks and a number of country banks, though it could not prevent the wave of country bank closures which ensued. Further instances of Bank of Ireland’s preparedness to grant accommodation to all other Irish banks can be seen in 1833 (co-operation with Provincial bank), 1836 (Provincial, Agricultural and Commercial, Ulster, Hibernian, Belfast, and National banks), and 1839 (Provincial, National, and Royal Irish banks).  

The banking architecture that had emerged in the United Kingdom by the nineteenth century comprised of three distinct banking systems – in England and Wales, in Scotland, and in Ireland – with separate institutional and legal developments. However, as Collins notes, “commercial ties between the three countries in the form of inter-bank agencies and accounts in London helped provide important institutional links across money markets”, and Barrow points to market operations undertaken by Bank of Ireland, such as discounting London commercial bills and keeping surplus specie reserves on deposit with the Bank of

---

24 McGowan, 1990, 35.
25 McDonagh, 1983, 34.
27 Ó Gráda, 1995, 56.
28 Within a two week period in May-June 1820, seven of the fourteen banks servicing the southern counties of Ireland had folded. Barrow, 1975, 17–9; Collins, 1988, 12.
England, as facilitating close links between the English and Irish money supply.30
The 1800 Act of Union, in transferring the Irish seat of Government from Dublin to London, led to a shift in the financial centre of power for the Irish banking system. The amalgamation of Irish and British exchequers and public debt in 1817, and of Irish and British currencies in 1826, bound Irish banking tightly to a wider British banking framework in which the Bank of England was the central actor.31 Indeed, McDonagh paints a particularly stark picture of this evolving banking landscape: “Bank of England now dominated the combined national finances, and Ireland was reduced to a branch office of the British treasury”.32

Notwithstanding this amalgamation of both exchequers and currencies, Bank of Ireland has been characterized by Munn as having emerged in the early decades of the nineteenth century as the de facto Irish central bank.33 Munn points to three aspects of Bank of Ireland’s role within the Irish banking system as being indicative of what he considers to be de facto central bank status: (i) Bank of Ireland’s fulfilment of a lender of last resort function for other Irish banks when the need arose; (ii) its role as the “bankers’ bank” within the Irish system, a role which despite initial reluctance it assumed to a greater extent after the introduction of the 1845 Act;34 and (iii) its role as “government bank”, which stemmed from its government charter. Ó Gráda characterizes Bank of Ireland’s role in the Irish nineteenth century banking system as being that of a quasi-central bank, rather than de facto central bank, based on the fact that while Bank of Ireland was the acknowledged lender of last resort for Irish banks, it was also their commercial rival. This characterization arguably better reflects both the partial nature of Bank of Ireland’s central banking functions and the fact that Bank of Ireland faced potential conflicts of interest between its public duties and commercial interests.35 Elsewhere, Ó Gráda also refers to Bank of Ireland in the early nineteenth century as a proto-central Bank, due to its emergence of as lender of last resort within the system.36 However, the 1845 Act can be seen to stymie any future metamorphosis of Bank of Ireland into a fully-fledged central bank, as its prospects of attaining a monopoly over note issue were effectively extinguished. As Hall notes, while the the English Act was designed so that the issue of notes in England and Wales would ultimately pass

32 McDonagh, 1983, 31.
33 Munn, 1983, 19–32.
34 Munn notes that Bank of Ireland’s reluctance to lend to other banks can, in part, be attributed to the fact that prior to 1845 it was bound its charter to adhere to a maximum interest rate of 5%. Other factors cited are the relative smallness of the Dublin money market, and Bank of Ireland’s view that in the normal course of business banks should depend upon their own resources; Munn, 1983, 27–8.
36 Ó Gráda, 1995, 145.
into the hands of the Bank of England, Bank of Ireland note-issuing operations were regulated on the same basis as the other Irish banks of issue.  

**Bank of Ireland and the Imminent Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845**

The minutes of the Bank of Ireland Court of Directors meetings in the months preceding the introduction of the Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845 provide a unique insight into the bank’s perception of both its own role in the Irish banking system and its concerns regarding the imminent legislation. Analysis of Court of Directors’ minutes reveals that the kernel of the bank’s argument against the Bankers (Ireland) Act was that of defence of its commercial interests against competitive forces. The consequences of the imminent banking regulations for the Irish economy or monetary system as a whole are alluded to but do not feature prominently in the discussions and correspondence of the directors. The Court of Directors’ minutes of this period also reveal that Bank of Ireland perceived itself first and foremost as a commercial entity. As discussed below, Bank of Ireland characterised the distinction between itself and the other commercial banks in terms of its sound management of government funds and substantial capital base, rather than in terms of any claim that it provided central banking functions for the other Irish commercial banks or for the Irish monetary system as a whole.

The drafting of the Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845 coincided with discussions regarding the renewal of Bank of Ireland’s government charter. These discussions had been initiated in February 1844 when a Bank of Ireland deputation travelled to London to meet the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Further meetings ensued in April 1845 when Bank of Ireland representatives travelled to London at the behest of the Prime Minister, Robert Peel. On the issue of renewing the bank’s government charter, it became clear that this renewal would involve a curtailment of the note issue monopoly within a 50 mile radius of Dublin that the bank had enjoyed since 1821. On April 21st 1845, Bank of Ireland governor, Thomas Crosswaithe reported back to his fellow directors that Peel was “quite decidedly against the continuance of our privileged distance”. The meeting also served as a first briefing by Peel to Bank of Ireland regarding his intended Bankers (Ireland) Act.

---

37 Hall, 1949, 211.
38 BOI, MCD, 30 Apr. 1844; Hall, 1949, 201.
39 BOI, MCD, 23 Apr. 1845.
40 BOI, MCD, 30 Apr. 1845.
41 The proposed legislation and removal of Bank of Ireland privileges were further detailed in a letter from the Chancellor of Exchequer to Bank of Ireland dated 22 April 1845; in which the Chancellor provided assurances to the bank that “the withdrawal of this privilege shall in no degree affect the relations between the Bank of Ireland to the Government. We propose that the Bank of Ireland should still continue as at present the banker of the State”; BOI, MCD, 23 Apr. 1845.
Bank of Ireland reluctantly assented to curtailment of its privileges as part of the renewal of its government charter, with Crosswaithe appealing to his fellow directors to “[forward] any objections which they deem advisable”, before adding “we can only add that we do not think better terms can be obtained”. His fellow directors also appeared to recognise the political expediency of accepting Peel’s terms: “we do not consider it necessary to trouble you or our friends with any further, than that we are satisfied that you have done as much for our establishment as could be expected”. However, as the Bankers (Ireland) Act was still at a formative stage, Bank of Ireland was invited to outline its concerns regarding the prospective legislation. The Court of Directors’ minutes from May-June 1845 document these concerns and offer insights into Bank of Ireland’s perception of its role within the Irish banking system.

Bank of Ireland’s initial response to the proposed reforms reflected the bank’s focal position in the Irish system and indicated the bank’s recognition that stability of the banking sector as a whole was a prerequisite for its own wellbeing. The minutes of the Court of Directors record the bank’s initial concerns regarding the proposed reforms, as stated in a letter dated 24 April 1845 from the London deputation (Thomas Crosswaithe; Thomas Wilson; and George Carr) to the Chancellor (Henry Goulbourne). The deputation state that they “are of the opinion that sufficient checks not provided against the dangers of over issue in the country”, arguing that if banks were permitted to issue a proposed legalized circulation of £6,272,000 not backed by gold, and as those banks also held gold in the region of £1,700,000, total Irish note issue could reach £8,000,000 without those banks being required to obtain any additional specie. Bank of Ireland viewed this proportion of gold to note issue as being too low and “liable to abuse, and may give rise to serious consequences”. This issue of ease of note creation among Irish banks is also alluded to in a letter of 23rd May 1845 by George Carr to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, calling for more stringent rules to be put in place.

Systemic banking sector concerns are also evident in a letter dated May 10th 1845 from the Governor to Carr in London, which was written in anticipation of draft of the Bankers (Ireland) Act, instructing him to consult with the banks legal advisor [Mr. Fairfields] “and lose no time in making any remarks which occur to you or him”. The letter ends with one guiding principle for Carr in his inspection of the imminent draft legislation: “at all events no increase in the number of banks of issue

42 BOI, MCD, 23 Apr. 1845.
43 BOI, MCD, 23 Apr. 1845.
44 BOI, MCD, 30 Apr. 1845. (Letter from Chancellor of the Exchequer to Bank of Ireland).
45 BOI, MCD, 30 Apr. 1845.
46 BOI, MCD, 30 Apr. 1845.
47 BOI, MCD, 30 Apr. 1845.
48 BOI, MCD, 19 Jun. 1845.
49 BOI, MCD, 10 May 1845.
will be sanctioned”. This instruction appears to set out in no uncertain terms the position of Bank of Ireland with respect to reform of the Irish banking system, and is suggestive of commercial rather than public considerations.\(^{50}\)

While issues regarding the soundness of note circulation and the prudence of competitor banks arguably pertain to both commercial and public domains, the bank’s additional objections to the proposed legislation resided very much within the commercial realm. One such issue revolved around the publication of accounts. Bank of Ireland strongly objected to proposals that the Act require it to publish financial information of a similar level of detail as that required from the Bank of England, arguing that as it “no longer has any peculiar control over note issue”, it should only be required to publish the same information as other banks of issue.\(^{51}\)

A further commercial concern which arose during the 1845 Act’s passage through parliament was that of mortgage lending. Bank of Ireland’s original charter prohibited the bank lending on the security of land. At the second reading of the bill on 12 June 1845, a motion was tabled by Dundalk MP Thomas Redington proposing that Bank of Ireland should be allowed to lend on mortgage in a similar manner to other commercial banks. However, the Chancellor of the Exchequer strongly opposed this motion, arguing that a government chartered bank should not be exposed to the financial risk that could arise from this type of lending.\(^{52}\) In a subsequent letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Carr appears to concede the argument regarding mortgage lending (“we reluctantly yield to your judgment on this point”), while continuing to protest against the proposals regarding the publication of financial information.\(^{53}\)

Bank of Ireland also moved to protect its existing arrangements regarding interest income arising from its management of government funds, objecting to a clause in the legislation which appeared to allow for the interest rate receivable to be reduced.\(^{54}\) This issue of management of public monies came to the fore again in June 1845. A letter dated 13th June 1845 from Carr to the Chancellor of the Exchequer sees Carr remonstrating against a proposal made by the Chancellor to allow banks other than Bank of Ireland receive public monies.\(^{55}\)

Carr’s protestation against any diminution of Bank of Ireland’s responsibilities in terms of managing public funds provides an insight into how Bank of Ireland perceived its role within the Irish banking system. Carr describes Bank of Ireland as “the great chartered bank of the country with a large paid up capital placed in the hands of the Government”. In emphasising the bank’s ability to “secure[s] the

\(^{50}\) BOI, MCD, 10 May 1845.

\(^{51}\) BOI, MCD, 30 Apr. 1845.

\(^{52}\) Hansard, 12 Jun. 1845, cc. 437–9; Hall, 1949, 206.

\(^{53}\) BOI, MCD, 10 Jun. 1845. In 1864 Bank of Ireland was eventually granted the power to extend credit secured by mortgage. McGowan, 1990, 15.

\(^{54}\) BOI, MCD, 17, 24 May 1845.

\(^{55}\) BOI, MCD, 14 Jun. 1845.
payment of those deposits beyond the possibility of loss from adverse times or mismanagement”, Carr’s argument contrasts the strength of Bank of Ireland as a commercial entity to weaknesses inherent in other Irish banks: “the small paid up capital of the other banks, all retained in their own hands; very limited amount of government or other immediately available securities compared with the extent of their circulation and deposit liabilities”. Notable here is Carr’s characterization of Bank of Ireland as the sole government approved commercial bank, rather than as an institution of systemic importance to the banking system as a whole. Carr’s defence of Bank of Ireland’s position was met with approval by Crosswaithe, who conveyed “the satisfaction of the court with the prompt and very efficient manner in which you resisted the proposal to remove any of the public business from the Bank of Ireland.”

**Bank of Ireland Functions during the Famine Years**

This section explores the extent of Bank of Ireland’s central banking functions during the famine years, by contrasting its inter-bank endeavors in this period with its activities in the sphere of note issue. While the former lend themselves to the idea that Bank of Ireland had emerged as a central bank of sorts, the latter appear to be primarily concerned with facilitating smooth inter-bank transactions rather than an on-going macro-level involvement in monetary policy.

The Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845 received royal assent on 21st July 1845 and came into force on 6th December 1845. In anticipation of the implementation of the Act, Bank of Ireland sought to ensure that additional supplies of gold and silver coin would be provided by the Bank of England and the Royal Mint. Bank of Ireland initiated this process on 31st July 1845 via a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with correspondence continuing throughout the following months. While Hall characterizes this process as one where “the Directors decided that the silver coinage should be considerably augmented”, this appears to overstate the influence of Bank of Ireland in this instance. The correspondence between the two parties depicts the situation as one where Bank of Ireland briefed the Chancellor regarding “the necessity which will exist on and after the 6th December next for a very considerable augmentation to the amount of silver coin in circulation in this country to meet the want of the public consequent on the withdrawal of all bank notes for fractional parts of a pound”, with the Chancellor responding that he “had anticipated an increased demand for silver in Ireland and that the Mint

---

56 BOI, MCD, 14 Jun. 1845.
57 BOI, MCD, 14 Jun. 1845.
59 BOI, MCD, 31 Jul. 1845.
was employed in an extensive coinage of silver, with a view to meet it".\textsuperscript{60} The onus was then on Bank of Ireland to ensure that their request for additional coinage was met in a timely manner: “As the period is fast approaching when that supply will be required, our Court have requested me to beg you will be kind enough to give me some idea of the probable period when its delivery in this country may be expected.”\textsuperscript{61}

On September 23\textsuperscript{rd}, Bank of Ireland estimated that, in addition to the £125,000 it had imported in the preceding months for its own needs, a further £300,000 would be required to meet the want of silver in Irish circulation. The Bank’s justification for this exigency acknowledges the impact of legislative change on Irish demand for silver coin but otherwise appears to be somewhat ambiguous, given the unfolding events surrounding the deficient potato crop: “there are complaints of a want of silver in Ireland consequent it is supposed on the full employment of the working classes, and there will be a considerable sum required on the withdrawal of all bank notes containing fractional parts of pound”.\textsuperscript{62}

On 28\textsuperscript{th} October, Bank of Ireland requested an additional £125,000 in silver coin (“The suppression of the notes for the fractional part of one pound renders it necessary to provide a considerable quantity of silver”), as well as £200,000 in gold.\textsuperscript{63} The latter request was made in the context of adjustment to the imminent legislative changes: “Although at present we anticipate no difficulty in the working of the Banking Bill in Ireland, yet at the period when the act comes into operation is fast approaching, we should like [...] to make such arrangements with your bank as might [facilitate] the obtaining gold, if under any unforeseen emergency such should be required.”\textsuperscript{64} The Governor of the Bank of England stated his willingness to accommodate the Bank of Ireland in these requests, with the seamless introduction of the legislation appearing to be paramount: “it is scarcely necessary for me to state that every facility which the Bank of England can legitimately grant to the Bank of Ireland in carrying out the new Irish Bank Bill, will be readily afforded.”\textsuperscript{65} On 24\textsuperscript{th} November Bank of Ireland requested that a further £200,000 of gold be made available, with their correspondence suggesting that deteriorating local conditions, rather than contingency in the face of legislative change, were coming to the fore: “we had hoped we were sufficiently provided with specie to meet the operation of [the] Banking act, but the demands on us for our notes, from a variety of causes, are such that I feel we shall be obliged to import a further amount of Gold to the extent at present of £200,000. [...] One of the causes I allude to is the existence at

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{60} BOI, MCD, 17 Sep. 1845.
\item \textsuperscript{61} BOI, MCD, 17 Sep. 1845.
\item \textsuperscript{62} BOI, MCD, 23 Sep. 1845.
\item \textsuperscript{63} BOI, MCD, 28 Oct. 1845.
\item \textsuperscript{64} BOI, MCD, 28 Oct. 1845.
\item \textsuperscript{65} BOI, MCD, 31 Oct. 1845
\end{itemize}
present of a run on the savings banks here, which may continue and extend.”  

The Bank also refers to the tendency of the public to “hoard our notes.”

Despite this indication of financial stress in November 1845, Irish commercial banks did not encounter significant difficulties in 1845 or 1846. In testimony before the Committee on Commercial Distress on 27th June 1848, Robert Murray, General Manager of Provincial Bank, notes that it was not until the 1846 potato crop failed that “very great apprehensions were entertained”, with “the demand for money for the supply of food [becoming] very large during the months of November and December 1846”. Murray attributed the banks’ vigour despite the deteriorating conditions in large part to government expenditure on public relief works:

The issue of the banks in Ireland was kept up in 1846 almost entirely by the Government expenditure; there was less produce, the growth of Ireland, to sell in 1846 than in 1847, but yet the issue kept up, both of bank notes and of silver in the hands of the lower orders, and in 1847 it was very much diminished in amount by reason of the discontinuance of that expenditure, and the country was thrown upon its own resources.

In its capacity of banker to the state, Bank of Ireland was designated by the British Treasury as agent for the Board of Public Works in the handling of relief funds. The minutes of the Court of Directors record a letter from Charles Trevelyan dated 4th September 1846, in which the Treasury consigning £80,000 in silver coins to Ireland via the steamship Comet “in order to enable the Bank of Ireland to continue to afford to the Board of Public Works in Ireland the assistance which has hitherto been given by that establishment in the payment of the men employed up on relief works”. In November 1846 Bank of Ireland advised the Treasury that demand for silver coin “on account of the Board of Public works have been so great as nearly to exhaust that supply in some and greatly exceed it at others of the various places at which it was deposited and also a very large sum of the ordinary supply kept by the bank at other locations for the general wants of the country […] I am now advised by the Board of Works that an immediate supply of £50,000 is required and a further supply of £50,000 will most probably be also required”. By the month of January 1847, a total sum of £1,000,000 had been sent from London with the need for further funds anticipated. Bank of Ireland for its part was anxious to ensure that it would not be charged commission by the Bank of England for this non-commercial transfer of funds, and its representations to the Bank of

66 BOI, MCD, 24 Nov. 1845.
67 BOI, MCD, 24 Nov. 1845.
68 Committee on Commercial Distress, 1848, qq. 6669, 6672.
69 Committee on Commercial Distress, 1848, q. 6669.
70 BOI, MCD, 4 Sep. 1846.
71 BOI, MCD, 17 Nov. 1846.
72 BOI, MCD, 23 Jan. 1847.
England on the matter in January 1847 the bank was keen to downplay its role in the process:

That as a Government operation originating in England from Public Revenue lodged in the Bank [of England] there, the transmission of these monies as a matter of account between the two Banks may be looked on rather as a transaction of the Bank of England than of the Bank of Ireland.\textsuperscript{73}

Bank of Ireland undertook two further initiatives in the wake of the 1845 Act which were of significance for the Irish banking system as a whole. Firstly, the establishment of a note clearing system in November 1845 saw Bank of Ireland place on formal footing the note exchange facilities that it had previously been providing for other Irish joint-stock banks.\textsuperscript{74} Secondly, Bank of Ireland extended its role as “bankers’ bank” to the Irish joint-stock banks.\textsuperscript{75} The two Dublin-based non-issuing joint stock Banks (Hibernian Bank and Royal Bank), who had agreed to issue Bank of Ireland notes exclusively, were afforded overdraft facilities at 2 per cent below the usual overdraft rate.\textsuperscript{76} The three joint stock banks of issue whose head offices were situated in the North of Ireland (the Northern, Belfast and Ulster Banks) were also accommodated with overdraft facilities up to a limit of £150,000 on the deposit of bills or other securities, at the current rate charged by the Bank of England.\textsuperscript{77}

Munn characterizes these Bank of Ireland initiatives as the adoption of a cooperative response to the curtailment of its monopoly position under new legislation.\textsuperscript{78} Both Hall and McGowan refer to these initiatives as indications of Bank of Ireland’s leadership amongst the Irish joint-stock banks, with the former noting the changing relationship between the Irish joint stock banks subsequent to the 1845 Act: “its [Bank of Ireland] leadership of the Irish banks became more formal and specific”.\textsuperscript{79} These commentators tend to discuss the Bank’s growing dominance among Irish joint-stock banks in terms of an extension of its role as a central bank. While Bank of Ireland was in a position to exert its influence over the other Irish joint-stock banks, it is also important to recognize the limit of the Bank’s focal role within the Irish banking system. Given the fact that the Irish currency resided within a wider monetary union, as well as the restrictive nature of the Bank Charter and Bankers (Ireland) Acts, the constraints on Bank of Ireland’s systemic influence are

\textsuperscript{73} BOI, MCD, 23 Jan. 1847.
\textsuperscript{74} BOI, MCD, 5 Nov. 1845. For details regarding the workings of the exchange, see McDonagh, 1983, 36. Munn notes that Irish note clearing arrangements were based on the Scottish model and were twenty years ahead of a similar initiative in England. Munn, 1983, 31.
\textsuperscript{75} The 1845 Act abolished the 5% ceiling on the interest rate that Bank of Ireland could charge on loans. McGowan, 1990, 15.
\textsuperscript{76} Hall, 1949, 212–4; McDonagh, 1983, 36.
\textsuperscript{77} Hall, 1949, 212–4; McDonagh, 1983, 36.
\textsuperscript{78} Munn, 1983, 31.
\textsuperscript{79} McDonagh, 1983, 36.
discernable in relation to note issue during the famine years. As outlined below, the Bank’s approach to note issue appears to adhere to a commercial banking rationale rather than that of a macro-level central banking entity.

Irish banking activity and currency circulation remained robust in 1845 and 1846 despite the onset of famine conditions, as temporary public relief measures and high grain prices supported ongoing commercial activity. As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 below, total Irish note issue remained above the limit (£6,354,494) authorized by the Bankers (Ireland) Act until May 1847. The circulating medium then contracted rapidly: by September 1849 it had diminished by over one third, and note issue levels did not approach the authorized limit again until 1853. In his testimony before the Committee on Commercial Distress, Robert Murry (Provincial Bank) attributed the currency contraction to the debilitating effects of harvest failure on trade and commercial activities:

The greater portion of the produce of Ireland is provisions, and there was, comparatively speaking, none to sell; that which produced circulation in Ireland had almost ceased to exist for such a purpose; the provisions grown in the country during the year 1846 and during the last year were altogether wanted for the sustentation of the people of the country; they were not to be exported; the people consumed the whole, and they had nothing to sell; they could not both eat and sell it; therefore, that which had produced circulation before had disappeared, and could not be brought to market.

Further insight into famine-era changes in both the note issue and specie holdings of Irish banks can be seen in Figures 3 and 4. While note issue remained above the authorized limit in 1845 and 1846, banks were required to back this excess note issue with gold holdings. However, once note issue began to diminish in 1847, banks reduced their gold holdings. The pattern of notes issued under £5 is also indicative of the diminution of trade related to agriculture, as notes of small denominations were of particular importance in agricultural trade. The increase of silver holdings among the Irish banks illustrates a phenomenon alluded to earlier: as failure of the potato crop impeded the workings of the rural barter economy, silver coin was “abstracted out of the hands of the lower orders, with whom silver circulates to a large extent; in consequence of the severe and continued pressure

80 Hall, 1949, 218.
81 As Murry noted in his evidence before the Committee: “the price of corn and produce of every kind not only ranged high in 1845 and 1846, but the issue during those years, particularly in the months of November, December, January and February, got considerably in excess of the permitted issue, consequently the banks were called upon to keep an excess of gold at the head offices over the permitted circulation”. Committee on Commercial Distress, 1848, q. 6691.
82 Gilbart sets out what he considered to have been the key features of Irish currency circulation at the time. According to Gilbart, the annual changes in the Irish circulation were governed chiefly by the quality of the harvest and the prices of agricultural products. Circulation was traditionally at its lowest point in August and September prior to the harvest, and then rose rapidly until January, after which point it gradually declined. Notes of the smallest denomination experienced the most significant increase, as these were extensively used in the purchase and sale of agricultural produce; Gilbart, 1852, 307–326.
upon them, it was wrung out of their little hoards and keeping places, and placed in the hands of the banks.\textsuperscript{83}

The rationale of commercial banks for contracting their note issue was, in Murray's view, one of lack of profitable opportunities. When asked if the diminution in the amount of money employed in discounts had arisen from a diminution of the demand for it, or as a result of the diminution of the credit of individuals, Murray's response indicated that by 1847 Irish commercial activity had ground to a halt:

Both causes operated; where parties failed, your business was merely to wind up their accounts as soon as you could; and there was also a want of commodities upon which to advance money; there were not the commodities to buy and sell in Ireland, which gave illegitimate rise to commercial transactions, and consequently there was a great decrease of commercial bills from the commencement of the year 1847 to the present date [June 1848]; that has existed and still continues.\textsuperscript{84}

When Bank of Ireland’s note issue is examined during the famine years, as well as pre- and post-famine, it is seen to behave in a manner very similar to that of the note issuing Irish joint stock banks. Table 1 summarizes the correlation coefficients of monthly note issue growth rates between Bank of Ireland and the other Irish note-issuing banks from April 1843 to December 1854. Bank of Ireland monthly note issue growth appears to be highly correlated with that of the other banks in question [0.48-0.83], particularly with that of Provincial Bank [0.83]. Bank of Ireland does not appear to lead other Irish banks, aside from the three northern Irish banks that it accommodated with overdraft facilities. As illustrated by Provincial Bank’s 1-month lead correlation coefficient [0.28], the note issue growth of other Irish banks for a given month is not highly correlated with Bank of Ireland note issue growth of the previous month. If anything, there is an indication that Bank of Ireland’s note issue growth tended to lag one month behind that of its competitor, Provincial Bank [0.54].\textsuperscript{85} Indeed, Gilbart notes that the note-issuing joint-stock banks whose branches were chiefly located in agricultural districts tended to expand circulation more rapidly in response to the harvest season than Bank of Ireland, whose branch network was predominantly located in large towns.\textsuperscript{86}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{83} Committee on Commercial Distress, 1848, q. 6607.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Committee on Commercial Distress, 1848, q. 6761.
\item \textsuperscript{85} Gilbart, 1852, 308.
\item \textsuperscript{86} By 1845, Provincial Bank had opened 38 branches nationwide (including head offices), with 25 branches located in towns recorded in 1841 census as have population of less than 10,000). Bank of Ireland, in comparison, had established 24 branches nationwide by 1845, of which seven were in towns of population less than 10,000. See Barrow, 1975, 215–219 (App. 3).
\end{itemize}
A further insight into the mindset of commercial banks in the initial years of the famine is provided by Murray’s description of Provincial Bank’s discount rate policy. Provincial bank feared exposure to the risks inherent in grain speculation and sought to limit this activity by reducing discounting facilities and increasing discount rates:

> There was a strong impression, from the large supplies of food that must be imported into Ireland, in consequence of the failure of the potato crop, money must become scarce, and that therefore it was necessary to increase the value of it, in order to prevent over-speculation in food; and it was deemed necessary, in the months of November and December, to look very cautiously to all transactions, and, upon particular transactions, to increase the rate of discount, though there was no increased rate of interest generally, till the 26th of January, 1847.\(^87\)

Bank of Ireland’s discount rate for Irish bills can be seen to have moved in a similar fashion: the rate was initially increased to 5% on 5\(^{th}\) November 1845, at which it stayed until 27\(^{th}\) January 1847 when it was raised to the same level of the Provincial rate (5\(\frac{1}{2}\)%). The banks continued to raise their interest rates in tandem throughout 1847, reaching a peak of 8% in October 1847 at the height of the British financial crisis.\(^88\)

Although succinct relative to that of Robert Murray, the testimony of Bank of Ireland governor John McDonnell before the Committee on Commercial Distress provides insight into bank’s views regarding circulation during the famine years. When asked if he was aware of any want of circulation in Ireland, McDonnell’s response (“I think not, I am not aware of any complaint of that sort”\(^89\)) is supportive of the view set out in greater detail by Robert Murray (above) that circulation levels were a reflection of the diminished level of trade undertaken in Ireland during the famine years. Indeed, when Murray was asked if during the commercial distress of 1847 he felt a want of circulation, his answer was a terse “None”.\(^90\)

---

\(^87\) Committee on Commercial Distress, 1848, q. 6672.

\(^88\) Bank of Ireland discount rate changes from Jan.-Oct. 1847: 27 Jan. (5\(\frac{1}{2}\)%); 12 Apr. (6%); 6 May (7%); 14 Jul. (6\(\frac{1}{2}\)%); 27 Oct. (8%); Provincial Bank discount rate changes from Jan.-Oct. 1847: 26 Jan. (5\(\frac{1}{2}\)%); 23 Mar. (6%); 5 May (6\(\frac{1}{2}\)%); 15 May (7%); 14 Jul. (6\(\frac{1}{2}\)%); 27 Oct. (8%).

\(^89\) Committee on Commercial Distress, 1848, q. 6616.

\(^90\) Committee on Commercial Distress, 1848, q. 6698.
More generally, on the impact of the Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845 on Bank of Ireland, McDonnell did acknowledge a role for Bank of Ireland in influencing Irish currency circulation, but argued that this role had been diminished by the removal of the bank’s monopoly on note issue within the 50-mile radius of Dublin; “under the former state of things the Bank had the power, if too full a circulation took place, in some degree of checking it; that power was taken from them, and I think in that way it [the Act of 1845] operated injuriously”.91 While appealing to a circumscribed ability to discharge public duty may have had a strategic dimension in this instance, it nonetheless serves as a reminder that while a number of Bank of Ireland’s systemic functions within the Irish context expanded in the aftermath of the 1845 Act, the Act crucially did not envisage Bank of Ireland developing a note-issue monopoly along the lines of that envisaged for the Bank of England.

Despite this, McDonnell was firmly of the view that the 1845 Act did not inhibit the practical workings of Bank of Ireland during the famine years: “The Act of 1845 regulated the Irish banks and the Scotch banks; I think it had very little effect in Ireland, and no injurious effect I should say. […] My impression is that it afforded greater protection to the general credit of the country, and prevented much of the misery and ruin which would have resulted if banking had been ad libitum, as it was before.”92 The prohibition on the new banks of issue entering the Irish banking system appears to have been a particularly welcome development for Bank of Ireland: “Banking before that time had not been, I think, managed with the care, or based on the capital, that ought to form the basis of banking, and banks were formed that never ought to have been permitted to issue paper; the Acts of 1844 and 1845 put a stop to that.”93

Conclusion

The difficulty in assessing the functioning of central banks in former times stems from the heterogeneity of their origins and development. As the Bank of International Settlements (BIS) have noted in a recent study, the earliest progenitor central banks were the dominant commercial issuers of banknotes and bankers to the government – with the former, frequently bestowed via government privilege, providing these banks with sufficient scale to support government banking requirements.94 While monetary stability was crucial to these banks, this was motivated by their desire to ensure their own liquidity rather than by wider macroeconomic concerns.95 The development of lender of last resort functions and informal banking supervision

91 Committee on Commercial Distress, 1848, q. 6618.
92 Committee on Commercial Distress, 1848, qq. 6612, 6644.
93 Committee on Commercial Distress, 1848, q. 6613.
95 BIS, 2009, 19.
were also driven by commercial self-interest rather than by a public-good objective. As long as mechanical standards of convertibility, such as the gold standard, remained in place, central bank discretion in terms of monetary policy and currency management was greatly circumscribed.

While modern-day definitions of central bank functions encompass a wide range of monetary policy and regulatory functions, central banking in the mid-nineteenth century was still at a formative stage.\(^\text{96}\) Indeed, the Bank Charter Act 1844 and the mechanistic monetary regime which it implemented represented a legislative initiative to fundamentally alter the early development of one of the most influential central banks of that time, the Bank of England. The \emph{ad hoc} development of central banks from commercial entities to public institutions is neatly captured by Andreadēs in his biography of the Bank of England: “in 1844 people were very far from anticipating [...] that the Bank would cease to be a bank of discount and would become the guardian of the cash reserve for the commercial world.”\(^\text{97}\)

This institutional ambiguity also applied to nineteenth century Bank of Ireland within the Irish banking system, and was complicated yet further by the gravitational pull exerted on the bank by the Bank of England and British Treasury. As discussed above, the government-sponsored Bank of Ireland was called upon to both fulfil routine public duties, such as the collection of public monies, and to execute exceptional interventions on behalf of the government, such as facilitating the introduction of the new banking legislation, the transmission of relief funds, and alleviation of banking crises. Bank of Ireland was also keen to maintain its dominant position among the Irish joint-stock banks, and indeed when the Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845 altered the Irish banking landscape, Bank of Ireland moved to extend and make more formal the exchange and overdraft facilities it afforded to the other Irish joint-stock banks.

This chapter argues however, that while Bank of Ireland fulfilled a leadership role amongst other Irish joint-stock banks, it is important to appreciate the limits of Bank of Ireland’s influence within a monetary system that by the mid-nineteenth century has become increasingly centered around the Bank of England. Given the fact that the Irish currency formed part of a wider monetary union, as well as the restrictive nature of the Bank Charter and Bankers (Ireland) Acts, the constraints on Bank of Ireland’s systemic influence are discernable in relation to note issue during the famine years. With the Bank Charter Act 1844 envisaging a monetary system in which currency circulation would regulated in a mechanistic fashion via the Bank of England, it was inevitable that Bank of Ireland’s discretion in relation to note issue would be greatly circumscribed. As mentioned earlier, the Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845 may have ultimately stymied any future metamorphosis of Bank of Ireland into a fully-fledged central bank by preventing a Bank of Ireland monopoly of note issue and holding all Irish note-issuing joint stock banks to the same criteria regarding

\(^{96}\) Archer & Moser-Boehm, 2014, 7–8.

\(^{97}\) Andreadēs, 1924, 246.
authorized note issue and gold-back note issue beyond the authorized limit. In any event, Bank of Ireland does not appear to have played an active ongoing macro-level role in monitoring or directing monetary conditions in Ireland in the years after 1845. Bank of Ireland’s monetary stance appears to have been in keeping with that of the other Irish commercial banks during the famine-era: its note issue responded to the level of Irish commercial activity and the availability of profitable opportunities to extend credit.

As this chapter shows, fundamentally Bank of Ireland perceived itself at this time primarily as a commercial bank operating within the prevailing monetary regime rather than as a central bank-type entity. Correspondence between the bank’s directors and the British Treasury prior to the implementation of the Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845 sees the bank define itself in terms of its performance in handling government monies and its substantial capital base rather than in terms of its systemic import within the Irish banking system. Fulfilling public duties as and when they arose was a prerequisite to it receiving its government charter, and the inter-bank initiatives it undertook from 1845 onwards were primarily focused on facilitating smoother transactions between Irish joint stock banks as well as enhancing its own dominant position among these joint stock banks.

Understanding the role of Bank of Ireland within the Irish banking system on the eve of the famine is significant as it provides an insight into the Irish institutional landscape at this critical juncture in Irish history. The onset of the famine had deleterious effects on Irish economic and commercial activity, as evidenced by the dramatic contraction of Irish currency circulation from 1847 until the early 1850s. Rather than subscribing to a broad brush depiction of Bank of Ireland as a central banking entity at this time, a more detailed exploration of its role and functions during the famine years indicates that it was not endowed with the institutional agency required to assume an active role in directing Irish monetary affairs at this time. Indeed, it may be that the strength of its inter-bank leadership within the Irish context at that time obscures our view of Bank of Ireland's limited ability to exert influence across a wider monetary system centered around the Bank of England.

The author wishes to thank Bank of Ireland for granting access to their archives of the proceedings of nineteenth century Court of Directors' Meetings. The author is also very grateful for research assistance provided by Chitra Raghu.

References

Dublin, Bank of Ireland: Minutes of the Court of Directors

Bankers’ Magazine
Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates.
Reports from the Select Committee on Commercial Distress 1847-8 (395) VIII


Figure 1: Average monthly note issue (Bank of Ireland and total Irish), April 1843–Dec 1854

Source: *Bankers’ Magazine*, various issues.
Figure 2: Average monthly note issue by Irish joint-stock banks, April 1843–Dec 1854

Source: Bankers’ Magazine, various issues.

Figure 3: Average monthly Irish note issue by note type, Jan 1846–May 1848

Source: Second Report of the Committee on Commercial Distress 1848, Q. 6691.
Figure 4: Average monthly gold and silver holding of Irish banks, January 1846–May 1848

Source: Second Report of the Committee on Commercial Distress 1848, Q. 6691.
The Question of Moral Economy and Famine Relief in the Russian Baltic Provinces of Estland and Livland, 1841–69*

Kersti Lust
Estonian Institute for Population Studies

Russian rulers recognized the principle that 'good government' nourishes its people in bad years. The paper addresses the question how the principle of paternalist 'moral economy' was translated into practice or more specifically, what the Russian central government did and ordered the others--manorial lords, communities--to do in this respect. It appears that throughout the period under study, the Russian rulers as well as the Baltic German nobilities made efforts to place the responsibility for the peasants' maintenance on the shoulders of communities (i.e. local peasants). The paper discusses the results of such policy. Through references to famine experiences in Russia Proper it looks at the adequacy of official relief efforts from the point of whether these kept people from dying and starving, or failed to do so. In different socioeconomic contexts, the same policy gave different results when measured in terms of the demographic response to short-term crisis.

In 1841–47 and 1868–69, Estland and Livland were hit twice by major famines which developed from repeated harvest failures. In the 1840s all three Baltic provinces (Fig. 1) experienced famine, but the death-toll was significantly higher in Livland than in Estland. Crude death rate in the worst years, 1845–46, was in Livland 48 and 45.2 and in rural Estland 35.3 and 32.2 per thousand, respectively.¹

In the northern part of Livland (present-day southern Estonia and Ösel) it rose to 54.2 and 49.9 per thousand in 1845 and 1846, respectively. In Kurland, famine

---

¹ For the lack of demographic research into Estonian famines we can hereby rely on the Governors' reports that provide us with rough figures. Their reliability is yet to be determined. The figures should be taken as providing information on magnitude rather than precise statistics. Annual Reports of the Governor, 1845-46 (National Archives of Estonia, subsequently RA, EAA), f. 296, n. 4, s. 1179; Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs (subsequently, LVVA), 1. f., 4. apr., 317. I, ff 102-210. Data on Estland includes urban population and it is taken from Vahtre, 1973, 262.
was regionally uneven and in 1845–46 the overall population growth rate was positive.\(^2\) Thus, at the provincial level, the demographic consequences in Kurland remained rather negligible. The crisis of 1868–69 affected Estland and the isle of Ösel and a few regions in the south. In fact, 1869 saw the greatest demographic setback in Estland in the whole century. According to official statistics, the number of deaths was 14,324 compared to the average of 8,120 from 1859–63 (Table 2). Death rate was 45 per thousand and the number of births fell by almost a quarter which resulted in a negative population growth of minus 16.7 per thousand. Both hunger crises coincided with devastating famines in European Russia. In 1839–42 and 1848–49 subsistence crises hit several regions over Russia (incl. Central Black Earth Region) and in 1844–46 Smolensk, Vitebsk, Minsk, Pskov and other western areas.\(^3\) In late 1860s, famine raged in the northern (Arkhangelsk, Grand Duchy of Finland) and western areas of the Russian Empire stretching from St. Petersburg to Kiev.\(^4\)

Protecting its subjects from starvation and extreme want has for centuries been one of the primary functions of government and one of the principal public expectations of the state.\(^5\) Some researchers attribute the government’s relief efforts to the governing elite’s fear of moral and social collapse, civil unrest, the loss of labour force and the spread of infection,\(^6\) while others point to the principle of paternalist ‘moral economy’, which called for provision for the needy in emergencies.\(^7\) In the following, this concept is used for expressing the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. In order to maintain social order, rulers had to accept, to a certain extent, peasant communities’ expectations that the powerful take action when their minimal subsistence needs were threatened.\(^8\) If that happened, they desired that the authorities provide for the availability of food, and set the prices of subsistence commodities. This expectation has often passed unfulfilled, but it has seldom been emphatically denied by government.\(^9\) It has also been suggested that the Chinese government, for example, took its role as an ultimate provider of food in times of dearth more seriously than its western European counterparts.\(^10\) Western poor relief systems were not designed to take care of large groups of people in temporary need during years of high food prices, but only the small fraction in permanent need of assistance. Therefore, the increasing numbers of landless poor, who comprised

---

3 Ermolov, 1909, i, 55–6.
4 Lust, 2015, 18.
5 Arnold, 1988, 96.
7 Scott, 1979; Bohstedt, 2010.
8 Thompson, 1971, 76–136. For a recent analysis see Götz, 2015, 147–62.
10 Bengtsson, 2004a, 140; Lee et al. 2004, 86; Fuller, 2015, 148–50.
one-third to half of Western rural communities remained outside most Western systems of poor relief until the arrival of the ‘new’ poor laws from the middle of the nineteenth century onward.¹¹

The principle that ‘good government’ nourishes its people in bad years was recognized also by Russian rulers. In most of Europe, in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century strict regulation increasingly gave way to pragmatic reliance on markets.¹² The Russian antifamine system combined administrative regulation as well as reliance on freedom of the grain trade and public works.¹³ Little is known about the prevailing ideologies among elite Russian politicians and bureaucratic elite during the famine years under review. The article addresses the question whether the principle of paternalist ‘moral economy’ was translated into practice, or more specifically, what the Russian central government did and ordered the others--manorial lords, communities--to do in this respect. The Russian imperial government as well as local Baltic German nobilities in Estland and Livland agreed that peasants should be safeguarded against hunger through appropriate policies and institutions in both good and bad years, but in reality, however, it meant that throughout the period under study, they made efforts to place that responsibility for the peasants’ maintenance and social guarantees on the shoulders of local peasants. The results of such policy will be discussed in the light of empirical evidence on mortality. The share of relief borne by local resources and the central administration are seen as important research topics in European historiography.¹⁴ Through references to famine experiences in Russia Proper (subsequently, Russia) this chapter looks at the adequacy of official relief efforts from the point, whether these kept people from dying and starving, or failed to do so. Mortality, of course, does not capture the full demographic impact of famine.

The first two sections examine the relief system and demographic response to crises. The last discusses the successes and failures of government relief policy in Estland and Livland.

**Relief System**

Being part of Russian Empire, three Baltic provinces, nevertheless, enjoyed so-called ‘Baltic special order’ status (*status provincialis*), which was based on the recognition of the Baltic-German nobilities’¹⁵ rights in local affairs and provided a very firm shield of their privileges even up to the early 1880s. Although famine relief systems differed in some aspects, hunger relief policy was not a question in

---

¹¹ Lee et al., 2004, 91.
¹² Ó Gráda, 2009, 139.
¹⁴ Daly, 2007, 64–65, 75; Vanhaute, 2011, 50.
¹⁵ *The Ritterschaft* was the corporate body representing the interests of the landowning Baltic German nobility.
which the special status of the Baltic provinces mattered and the state government regulated it. In this section the system in the Baltics will be briefly summarized as it has been already discussed extensively elsewhere.\textsuperscript{16}

As long as the serfdom prevailed, estate owners were officially seen as caretakers of their serf peasants in difficult times. For that purpose, the nobilities of Livland and Estland agreed in 1763 that every landlord had to keep a grain stock for his peasants up to next harvest.\textsuperscript{17} Since the estate owners saw this obligation as unfavourable to them, it was enacted by the Russian Senate on November 29, 1799 that in the Russian empire communal granaries under the watchful eye of government's agents or noble officials (in the Baltics) had to be set up at every noble and crown estate.\textsuperscript{18} Serfs were obliged to contribute a certain amount of corn to these granaries until they contained a fixed amount of grain. General poverty and several crop failures did not allow peasant farmers to make the necessary

\textsuperscript{16} The following outline is based on Lust, 2015, 15-37; Lust, 2014, 81–106.
\textsuperscript{17} Decree of the guberniia administration (RA, EAA, f. 279, n. 1, s. 585).
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov} (=PSZ) I, Vol. XXV, No. 19203.
contributions to the storehouses and the grain reserves were collected at such a slow pace (yearly portion was set at four litres of winter grain and 1.6 litres spring grain per each 'soul', i.e. the number of males of all ages) that the stores would have reached the fixed level only after decades. The slow collection meant that estate owners often lent the deficient corn to the communal granary.

The Baltic serf emancipation laws of 1816–19 declared that henceforth peasants would lose their right to demand advance loans from manorial lords, and the responsibility for the peasants' maintenance and social guarantees was placed on the shoulders of their communities. Every peasant farmer was to contribute grain to a communal granary until it contained a stock of c. 229 kg of grain in Livland and c. 441 kg of rye and 78.6 litres of barley in Estland. In 1828, this rate was lowered in Estland to 220 kg of rye and 61 kg of barley. According to the Rural Township Law of 1866, the amount of stock was unified at c. 210 kg per each male 'soul'.

Also the Russian famine relief statute stipulated that communal granaries were to hold similar amount of grain for each male 'soul'. In addition to their supplies of stored food, rural communities (municipalities; in Russia peasant communes) were entitled to possess monetary funds. In case of need, community members could borrow grain for consumption and planting. The fixed amount of grain stock was sufficient to provide very meagre subsistence. In reality the landlords still helped out in times of distress when community granaries could not provide the needy with sufficient assistance in the form of loans. In the 1840s, provincial authorities in Estland and Livland explicitly obliged the manorial lords to grant subsistence loans to needy peasants.

Unlike in Russia, capital funds at the gubernia (i.e. provincial) and central level did not back up local reserves in the Baltics. As in Russia, provincial food supply commissions were set up in Livland and Estland in the 1820s, but the latter ceased to exist already in the 1830s. The provincial food-supply commission under the chairmanship of the Governor managed cash and grain reserves for the purpose of famine relief and coordinated relief efforts, gathered and mediated information, discussed and made most of the important decisions concerning the amount of hunger relief, means of helping the needy, and so on, but its own money and grain reserves were very scanty or absent (in the 1860s). The food supply commission and Governor could apply to the central government for further aid. In Russia, the provincial commissions were abolished in 1866, and the management of food

19 PSZ I, Vol. XXXIII (1816), No. 26 277; Vol. XXXIV (1817), No. 27 024; Vol. XXXVI (1819), No. 27 735.
20 Makoggukonna Seadus Baltia-merre kubermannudele Ria-, Tallinna- ja Kura-male (Riia, n.p., 1866).
22 The three-tiered system (commune-gubernia-state) in Russia was built up step by step. For more see Robbins, 1975, 16–30.
23 The Estland food supply commission was initially re-established as a temporary body in September 1868 and put on a firm legal footing in spring the next year.
supply operations was turned over to the local self-government (zemstvos). In the Baltics, zemstvos were absent and provincial food supply commissions continued their work. All gubernii could rely on the state treasury. The Baltic provinces were entitled to request grants from the Imperial capital fund (established in 1866) only in very exceptional cases as they did not contribute to it. Requests for such aid were presented to the Minister of Internal Affairs. Loans of more than 50,000 roubles were decided only by the Committee of Ministers and required imperial sanction.

In the event of a large-scale food supply crisis during which local and provincial reserves were inadequate, the imperial government authorized extraordinary measures. Russian antifamine measures included direct aid in the form of loans, public works, tax relief (postponements, exemptions), and interference in markets (price regulation, tariff reductions, export bans). In the Baltics, the government used direct grants of money and grain and tariff reductions with some effect in coping the crises. The government relief loan assigned to Livland in 1845–47 amounted to c. 1.2 million roubles, and Estland received 100,000 roubles in 1845.24 Kurland received a 0.5 million rouble government loan. All in all, 11 million roubles were assigned to the starving people statewide in 1844–46.25 In 1868–69, unlike during the 1840s, the central government gave interest-free loans. The Committee of Ministers assigned to Ösel a loan of 150,000 roubles and to Livland mainland districts 50,000 roubles. Estland received from the state treasury 210,000 roubles. Grain prices had doubled in the meantime.

The major deficiencies of the relief arrangement in the Baltics concerned the distribution of, rather than collecting of, the reserves. In Russia, the failure of the grain storage system meant that the central treasury often became the main source of relief in times of famine.26 Even in the best years the peasants were too poor to fill the granaries and peasant distrust towards the state-imposed granary-system remained widespread. There are no scholarly analyses of the real level of storage in Estonian granaries in the period under consideration but the peasants were chronically indebted to communal granaries in the first decades after their establishment. Afterwards, unlike in Russia, the decline of the granary stores in the Baltics did not pave the way for future difficulties. Communal reserves fell far short of need when a series of unfortunate events accumulated over a period of several years, even though the storehouses had been full prior to the crisis, as happened in late 1860s. Manorial economy commanded resources that could have been used for feeding the population, but the Baltic provinces, however, were not self-

24 Lust, 2015, 23.
25 Ermolov, 1909, i, 56.
26 Robbins, 1975, 18; Lust, 2015, 21; Kahan, 1989, 136; Suvorin, 2015, 17–8; Rogozhina, 2013, 21. According to some authors grain stocks as a hunger relief measure in early modern era were in principle ineffective, irrespective of the country: Collet, 2010, 248.
27 Kahk has considered a few regions of Läänemaa, poor and rather infertile areas in Estonia, in the 1810s–1820s and his results can be applied neither for other regions nor later time periods: Kahk, 1969, 170–2.
sufficient in the sense that food shortages could have been totally averted without any imports of food. The Baltic ports, however, were centres of the (transit) grain trade, with constant export grain flows and the grain could have been easily bought up for relief by government. The drop of purchasing power of most peasants vis-à-vis an increase of grain prices made such direct aid necessary. In normal years, Baltic agricultural output not only covered domestic demand but also provided grain and potatoes for its well-developed distilling industry.

Several deficiencies related to distribution of aid can be observed. On their own initiative, the communal authorities were free to give out only a portion of the reserves. A three-tier system of supervision over the use of communal reserves -- manorial administration (until 1866), parish magistrate (in Livland) and county magistrate (in Estland), and Governor -- not only significantly slowed the aid to the needy but also made it dependent on the will and expertise of these officials. Each level in this system tried to keep local granary loans as well as relief loans from public funds to a minimum and so did the imperial government, who did not fully grant the governors’ requests for further aid. Institutional responses were shaped by the belief that every able-bodied person had to provide for oneself, which was hardly possible due to the loss of jobs, unavailability of public works employment and the legal restrictions on out-migration from the community (in the 1840s) and the province (in the 1860s). The 1866 administrative reform liberated the rural self-government from the local landlord’s control, but gave to it free disposal over only a quarter of its reserves; giving out the remaining three-quarters required authorization from the parish magistrate.

Not only ‘external’ institutions were reluctant to give aid to the needy. Local community authorities which were empowered to grant granary loans and decide who should receive poor relief refused their help. Furthermore, the community authorities would apply for a government hunger relief loan and decide over its disbursal. Since the elders, jurymen and half of the council members (after 1866) were peasant farmers, application for and distribution of relief supplies were dominated by the village elite. The community was collectively responsible for the repayment of the loan at the next harvest, which made it very reluctant to grant assistance to the landless. Official regulations, correspondence of various officials and pastors, reports and supplications reveal that communities concealed information about the real situation and denied the need for aid or understated the severity of the situation, did not ask for sufficient government relief loans, frequently denied granary loans to cottagers and other landless, did not purchase grain for their monetary reserves, and left the landless to starve.28 On the other hand, granary loans to peasant farmers were not held back. Communal land ownership as well as periodical re-allocation of land according to the number of ‘souls’ were unknown in the Baltics. The lines between landed peasants and expanding groups of landless in the village were increasingly clear-cut.

28 For the discussion, see Lust, 2015, 15–37; Lust, 2014, 81–106.
Not only were different-level authorities reluctant to give famine aid, but also the fixed norms -- normally one pound per person -- were very low.

Demographic Effects

In Estland and Livland, famine conditions led to sudden rise in mortality, decline in fertility, and social dislocation. Excess mortality, or at least the threat of excess mortality, is a defining feature of famine. Regardless of the ‘disease versus hunger’ debate surrounding the bulk of research into famine mortality, the close connection between harvest failures, malnutrition, increased exposure to disease and mortality increase has long been observed. Most famine victims succumbed to infectious disease rather than famine proper. In Estland and Livland, hunger-related diseases were dysentery and typhus or ‘typhus-like’ diseases.

The extent of famine-related mortality has not been addressed in our historiography. Preliminary figures on Estonia are displayed in two tables and figure 2. Pre-famine ‘normal ratios’ are complicated to determine since in some areas the years 1841–47 saw an enduring crisis with short breaks and there were crop failures and rises in mortality also in the mid-1830s (most notably in 1835). Conversion to the Russian Orthodox Church in Livland in 1845–47 further complicates the issue since the data on vital events provided by the Lutheran clergymen do not cover a great number of people any more. Russian Orthodox Church records have been very little used to study population figures. Statistical data provided by the police to the Governor is unreliable.

Various methods have been suggested for identifying mortality crises. One simple method is to detect pairs of succeeding years in which the number of deaths was at least 25 per cent above the average since the previous crisis.

By studying recent famines, Paul Howe and Stephen Devereux suggested moving from a binary conception of ‘famine / no famine’ to a graduated, multi-level definition, and disaggregate the dimensions of intensity and magnitude. Regardless of rather approximate data at our disposal, we may well suppose that crises in the Estonian part of Livland in 1845–46 and in Ösel in 1868–69 can be classified as ‘level 3’ crises according to intensity (CMR >=1 but< 5/10,000/day). In the Estonian case, this method, however, would be more appropriate to use when

---

29 About the meaning of social dislocation Voutilainen, 2015, 124–44.
33 Bengtsson & Bröstrom, 2011, 124.
knowing the daily death rates and not dividing the annual figure by 365 to find the average daily rate.

Different interpretations of famine’s time-span lead to different numbers of surplus mortality. Famines are products of historical, social, political and economic processes and rarely have clear-cut beginnings or endings. Furthermore, the seriousness of the crisis varied regionally (Table 1, Figure 2). Our comparison refers to average rates in 1837–39. Migration was restricted and thus it has only negligible impact on district- and province-level data on the number of deaths. In the early forties mortality response was noticeable only in the districts of Võrumaa (Kreis Werro) and Lääneemaa (Kreis Wiek). Mortality rose steeply in 1845 (Table 1, Fig. 1). Famine struck hardest in the southeast and south. In 1845–46, the average yearly number of deaths in Tartumaa (Kreis Dorpat) and Võrumaa exceeded more than 100 percent its prefamine norm (1837–39). In Tartumaa, the number of births dropped by 27.3 per cent. The districts of Pärnumaa (Kreis Pernau) and Ösel were hit much less. From 1845–47, in rural Estland excess deaths were c. 5,700 from a population of c. 258,000 (2.2%). We lack similar data on southern Estonia in the ‘decade of misery’ but it would probably not be incorrect to estimate that in the three districts in southern Estonia, total excess mortality in 1845–46 relative to earlier years (1837–39) may have been as much as c. 14,000 deaths (Fig. 2). Death and birth figures returned to normal values gradually in 1846 and in 1847. 1848 was infamous cholera year. In late 1860s, hunger crisis peaked in winter 1868 and spring 1869. In Estland, death figures in 1869 were 76.4% higher than in 1859-63 (Table 2). In Ösel, in 1868–69 the average number of deaths per year rose over 100% compared to average from 1859–63.

Table 1. Average yearly number of deaths in Estland and three districts of southern Estonia, 1837–1846

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1837-39</th>
<th>1841-42</th>
<th>1845</th>
<th>1846</th>
<th>Change in % compared to 1837–39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1841-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tartumaa*</td>
<td>2882</td>
<td>3424</td>
<td>7793</td>
<td>5090</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viljandimaa</td>
<td>2097</td>
<td>2255</td>
<td>5109</td>
<td>2474</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Võrumaa</td>
<td>1812</td>
<td>2195</td>
<td>3501</td>
<td>3780</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Järvamaa</td>
<td>1201</td>
<td>1245</td>
<td>1648</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Läänemaa</td>
<td>1772</td>
<td>2147</td>
<td>2608</td>
<td>2792</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harjumaa</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2796</td>
<td>2451</td>
<td>-2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virumaa</td>
<td>2084</td>
<td>2163</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>2406</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data on Orthodox population is missing in the case of Võru and Viljandimaa but is available on Tartumaa.

35 Voutilainen, 2016, 24, 325.
37 The total number of rural population in southern Estonia is unknown. Death figures (in fact, number of burials) are taken from church records and include only rural people.
38 The data on the number of deaths is taken from the annual reports of Lutheran pastors: RA. EAA, f. 1207, n. 1, s. 128, 129; EAA, f. 1205, n. 1, s. 107; Laarmaa, 2009, 165; Vahtre, 1973, 256–8.

54
Table 2: Average no of deaths in Estland and Ōsel, 1859–1863, 1866–1869

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1859-63</th>
<th>1866-67</th>
<th>1868</th>
<th>1869</th>
<th>Change in % compared to 1859–1863</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1866-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estland (incl. towns)</td>
<td>8120</td>
<td>7769</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>14324</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ōsel (Saaremaa)</td>
<td>1056</td>
<td>1075</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>2546</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Annual number of deaths in the parishes of Võrumaa, 1837–1846 (Lutheran population)*

* Data on Karula and Hargla in 1846 are not given since a significant part of the population converted to the Russian Orthodox Church in 1845–47.

39 Jordan, 1867, i, 21; Jung-Stilling, 1866, 26, 30. Governor’s annual reports for the years 1866–69, 1866, 1867, 1869 (RA, EAA, f. 29, n. 3, s. 4360; RA, EAA, f. 29, n. 2, s. 4742; 4759); RA, EAA, f. 296, n. 1, s. 47; RA, EAA, f. 296, n. 4, s. 2364. Unfortunately we lack district level data about Estland. The data on 1866–67 derives from the annual reports of the governors and must be taken with caution.
The questions about social differences in mortality and to what extent mortality in the past was determined by economic factors are lively debated issues.\footnote{Bengtsson, 2004b, 19–20; Bengtsson & Dribe, 2011, 389–400.} During famine, mortality in Finland and Ireland was strongly dependent on social background.\footnote{Häkkinen & Forsberg, 2015, 106; Voutilainen, 2016, 23; Vanhaute et al., 2007, 26.} Narrative sources lend support to the claim that the rural poor suffered from hunger the most also in Estonia, at least in the late 1860s when the corvée had been banned.\footnote{Empirical evidence to support this claim has been provided in two articles; see ref. no 16.}

With regard to social gradient in mortality, the case of Russia Proper would deserve special interest. Most scholars agree that during the period under review, Russian agriculture was relatively backward and cultivation methods were simple which in combination with adverse climatic and weather conditions made vast tracts of the country prone to harvest failures. Normal mortality rates were high\footnote{See, for example, Mironov, 2010, 478; Dennison & Nafziger, 2013, 433.} and the significant under-registration of stillbirths and neonatal deaths further complicates the issue. Famine studies, demographic studies and studies of the living standard in Russia, however, have produced different and even contradicting results on the question of famine-related mortality.\footnote{Authors who believe that subsistence crises affected mortality and hunger and death threatened Russian peasants include: Dyatchkov, 2002, 27; Kahan, 1989, 135; Moon, 1999, 296-7; Nefedov, 2005, 198–252. Kanishchev (Kanishchev, 2011, 167–74), relying on numerous church books, does not deny the role of famines in the decrease of births and increase of mortality but seems to favour, however, Hoch’s interpretations from 1998 (see below).} Great caution is required when making generalizations given Russia’s immense size and diversity.\footnote{See for example Moon, 2006, ii, 386–8, 391.}

Steven Hoch in his often-cited book ‘Serfdom and Social Control in Russia’ (1986) has claimed, in line with common narrative, that the inability of Russian society to eliminate subsistence crises was one of the major features separating the eastern and western Europe of the nineteenth century.\footnote{Hoch, 1986, 56; Hoch, 1998, 357–68.} In an article published in 1998 he makes ‘a rigorous attempt’ to assess the nature of demographic crises in the parish of Borshevka from 1830–1912 and arrives to the conclusion that nutrition had minor effect on mortality which was determined rather by non-nutritional factors such as demographic factors, familial norms, and climatic constraints. Borshevka is located in the guberniia of Tambov, a rather poor region in European Russia. Hoch argues that crisis years when the actual number of deaths exceeded the moving average by more than 50 per cent occurred seven times from 1830–1912. On average, a crisis resulted in an 84 per cent increase over the normal series of deaths. Furthermore, the data reveal no association between the changes in mortality and fluctuations in prices regardless of the lag employed – zero, one, or two years. The peaks of mortality in Borshevka appear to be wholly independent of food availability as measured by prices and mortality crises occurred rather in
summer or autumn. Grain prices were allegedly less volatile than in western Europe. Tracy Dennison and Steven Nafziger likewise challenge the traditional narrative of impoverished peasant agriculture. They find that peasants at the Sheremetyev family’s Voshchazhnikovo estate in Yaroslavl guberniia do not appear to have suffered subsistence crises. There are no references to increased mortality, even during those years when harvests in this region were recorded as ‘poor’.47 In both cases, the scale of research is by far too limited.

Sergei Kashchenko has criticized Hoch’s findings. Since Hoch uses guberniia level grain price data instead of local data to determine grain availability, his calculations are incorrect. In contrast of his findings, local prices were volatile.48 Fluctuation of grain prices has been confirmed also by Suvorin.49 In Kashchenko’s opinion temporary migration was an important coping mechanism against hunger.

Some authors have argued that crown peasants exhibited lower mortality levels than noble peasants in times of distress.50 Noble peasants were subjected to greater degrees of exploitation by their landowners than their peers at crown estates. Second, crown peasants were better entitled to public relief.51

The leading social historian in Russia, Boris Mironov, hardly considers the issue of famine in his recent books on living standard.52 He measures the height and weight of recruits, grain yields, wages, mortality and fertility rates, and discusses the diet in long-term perspective and finds no basis for the assumption of deteriorating living standards in Russia. Such an ‘optimistic’ view, especially with regard to the late Tsarist period, is shared by many Russian and international scholars, but has also been challenged by some others.53 Famine in Russia Proper in the period under review is a vast, almost unexplored terrain awaiting further research and inclusion in international famine studies.

Long-term dynamics and secular changes do not inform us on demographic response to short-term stress. Most probably, however, there is little evidence of social gradient in famine mortality since the social divisions among Russian peasants were not distinct and poverty was rather equally divided between different segments of country folk. Demographic studies of pre-industrial Europe have shown that the effect of fluctuations in yields and grain prices on mortality rates was clearly apparent in the case of the landless and day-labourers who were most vulnerable and were most likely to fall victim to the food crisis.54 Destitution and even food shortages are not sufficient to cause famines; famine mortality is

---

47 Dennison & Nafziger, 2013, 429–32.
48 Kashchenko, 1999, 30–44. Unfortunately, their (public) debate has not continued since then.
49 Suvorin, 2015, 14–15.
50 Kanishchev, 2011, 163–70.
51 Suvorin, 2015, 17–18.
52 Mironov, 2010, Mironov, 2015, ch. 11.
largely a function of ‘social vulnerability’ caused not so much by lack of food but by lack of entitlement to resources. In Arnold’s description, ‘the term “entitlement” is used to signify legally sanctioned and economically operative rights of access to resources that give control over food or can be exchanged for it’. This access could be obtained through production, trade, labour, property rights and inheritance, or welfare provisions.

**Excess Deaths and Starvation: Inadequacy of Government Relief Efforts?**

The seriousness of the crisis varied significantly within the provinces. Such regional differences can be explained by the local crop failures, the availability of local resources and the pace of socioeconomic development. Economically better-off regions recovered more quickly and the crisis was shorter, whereas in the forties in Võrumaa and Läänemaa it lasted for several years with short breaks. In the crisis years, the market failed to move sufficient amounts of cereals into famine-stricken areas, since the need for food there was not translated into effective demand because of lack of market-based entitlement and a shortage of purchasing power. During both crises in Estland and Livland, the grain prices escalated beyond the reach of the poor. Price level convergence and similar price dynamics in different regions in the period 1840–1900 give evidence of significant market integration in Estland and Livland. The coefficient of variation was rather insignificant and did not change over the decades under consideration, and the districts had similar price trends for rye and oats. Only recovery from sharp changes in supply and demand in times of famines did not proceed in the same way. During both famines, state authorities avoided actions to limit exports and refused to ban distillation, which both would have significantly increased the domestic food availability. Their main anti-crisis initiative was to distribute advance loans to the needy. The grain was bought up from merchants and the local lords of the manors and paid for by state resources. In the 1840s as well as in the late 1860s the leading noble politicians actively fought against any price regulation by the government and in the mid-forties they bargained with the state authorities about the price of grain bought up for government loan until the latter agreed to pay them the price set high. Thus, the manorial lords could excessively drive the food prices and worsen the situation. Not only non-landed groups suffered. Crop failures turned subsistence farmers into ‘deficit producers’ who were forced to resort to market purchases or assistance loans to meet the subsistence needs of their households. In the mid-

---

56 Arnold, 1988, 43.  
57 For the data and discussion see Lust, 2013, 217–45.  
58 Lust, 2013, 235–37.
forties, the government, however, also imported substantial amounts of grain from near-by Russian areas.

The factors that produce regional or local variations in crises do not necessarily explain the occurrence of famine in general. According to Eric Vanhaute, famines triggered by harvest failures only took place when societal institutions failed and the moral economy ceased to function. High death rates and drop in births in times of famines in Estland and Livland give evidence of the insufficiency of aid and the (non-)functioning of the (local) food distribution. The government's role in food policy was manifold. Drèze and Sen distinguish between two aspects of social security, that which provides protection and that which promotes security. The former is concerned with preventing a decline in living standards whereas the latter refers to the enhancement of general living standards and to the expansion of basic capabilities of the population. In the Baltics, slow but powerful avenues of action were the reform laws: serf emancipation in 1816–19, the reforms of crown peasants in the 1840–60s, and the peasant laws of 1849/60 (Livland), 1856 (Estland), 1863 (Kurland), and 1865 (Ösel). Being different in content, they, however, liberated peasant households step-by-step from manorial oppression and established peasants' individual rights in land as private property. These initiatives, as it turned out, were of particular importance in averting the recurrence of subsistence crises. The Baltic provinces escaped the danger of hunger crises after the 1860s. Dilatory process of legislation and slow changes in the socioeconomic relationships and agricultural production could not prevent the occurrence of famine in Estland and Ösel in 1868-69. Ösel was the only Livonian district out of nine to suffer seriously and its closeness to Riga from which it could be reached easily by sea should have made large quantities of grain available. Excess mortality is also an indication of the non-functioning of the food distribution and lack of responsibility at every level in society. It is also typical of the last famine in the Baltics, that the need for aid was the greatest in marginal areas like the islands of Ösel, Hiiumaa (Dagö), Vormsi (Worms), Kihnu (Kühno), the Nuckö peninsula, the fishing villages near Lake Peipus, Ilūkste (in Kurland), etc.

The protection measures employed by the government varied in their effectiveness. Imperial government kept legislation and supervision in its hands and decrees were issued with imperial sanction. The government recognized the state's interest in the sphere of food supply and, in case of emergency, direct state action in the area of relief. The government ordered and supervised the build-up of local stocks. Relief infrastructure was integrated into existing governing structures. In order to guarantee the provision of food, it was considered essential to apply coercion and sanctions, but these methods were used much more eagerly and effectively for horizontal redistribution of local resources within the peasant communities than for the reallocation of food and funds from institutions and groups

59 Vanhaute, 2011, 60.
60 Dreze & Sen, 1989, 16.
with material capacity to the needy. In Estland and Livland, state-financed relief was too little and often also too late. Relief loan distribution was further hindered by a slow and bureaucratic system. By the 1840s, the state government had become reluctant to grant assistance loans.

The official relief system entrusted a very significant role to its lowest level -- the local peasant community, but Baltic community authorities, as shown above, were unwilling to provide for the landless and cottagers. There is little support for the belief that government, while designing the system, intentionally sought the community authorities (i.e. the better-off) to keep assistance loans to a minimum. Communities in Russia, by contrast, were known for 'over-generous' loans to their members irrespective of their needs which worried different-level government officials. The government apparently wanted peasant communities (communes in Russia) to become as self-sufficient as possible and also protect their individual members against natural calamities. In Russia it is likely, as Hoch has suggested, that communes really afforded protection from hunger more than any improvement in the level of economic well-being. It was so due to the specific socio-economic arrangements, namely the household patterns and redistribution of communally governed peasant land. The Baltic village, by contrast, was marked by social polarization and such socio-economic arrangements were unknown here. Over half of the peasants were landless and their households had no right to land allotment. They did not contribute to the granaries and farmer peasants did not want to repay their assistance loans and face indebtedness due to extra loans. However, we have to bear in mind that there were also private credit relations between the local peasants and we cannot judge the scope of the relief solely by the institutionalized famine aid.

One major defect of the Baltic local grain stock system was the inability to force communities that were better off to transfer their reserves to less fortunate ones since granary and monetary reserves were the property of the community. For example, by the time crisis began in 1868, 564 Couronian communities owned food supply capitals amounting to almost one million roubles, but in August the Governor had to petition the Minister of Internal Affairs for 95,000 roubles, which request the Imperial government satisfied in December only partly, assigning upon the Tsar's approval from the state treasury a loan of 70,000 roubles. In Russia, too, the government did not dare to force one commune to lend their reserves to another, but there were also provincial monetary funds established. Such two-tier system would have enabled to reallocate the resources within a province also

61 For a similar phenomenon in Finland, see Häkkinen, 1992, 149–65.
64 Governor of Kurland to Baltic Governor-General, 9 March 1869 (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv, f. 1287, op. 4, d. 527, ff. 117–35).
65 Matsuzato, 1995, 189.
in the Baltics. In Russia, however, it was of little help, since the resources at the guberniia level were too small to be really useful in times of distress.66

The role of landlords in famine relief is largely overlooked in Russia. In the Baltic provinces, their role was based on their obligation to provide assistance and relief as serf owners in earlier times (‘path-dependence’) as well as on their predominance in rural economy. Although serfdom in Russia persisted until 1861, many authors assume that during the period under review provision for the Russian peasantry was left almost solely to communal and public institutions.67 Landlords’ assistance is seldom mentioned.68 In the Baltic provinces, the manorial sector was larger, but also in European Russia c. one-fourth of grain was produced on manors. In Estland and Livland, estate owners contributed to the famine relief even in the late 1860s, when they, on their own initiative, credited jobs, bought up grain stocks for sale, and gave assistance loans to individual households as well as to communities.

The effectiveness of the measures taken by the manorial lords in the famine relief has been recently questioned by Swedish authors who studied the empirical evidence on Sweden from 1749 to 1859. Dribe, Olsson and Svensson used the impact of grain prices on demographic outcomes as a measure of the efficiency of the manorial system in protecting its inhabitants against economic stress. The researchers concluded that ‘the manorial estate seems to have been able to insure its inhabitants against risks of economic stress, but the protective effect was imperfect and only short term’.69 Regardless of different methods and sources, in principle my results are in accordance with their findings. However, the mortality figures should be also considered differentiated by socioeconomic status (landed and non-landed groups) and then it might occur that the manor could insure the tenants (farmers) against extreme events and only this was their aim. In the Estonian case, the line of division between tenants and farmhands, however, would be somewhat artificial since as long as the corvée persisted (1850-60s), the tenants owed labour duties to the manor and thus both the manorial lords and the tenants most probably were interested in the subsistence of their labour force too. Secondly, infectious diseases were no respecters of class boundaries in the village. Living arrangements on Baltic farmsteads often did not provide separation for the members of farming families from their live-in servants,70 whereas the cottagers often had separate buildings. The situation might differ in the countries where the residences and the household economies of the tenants, cottagers and servants were separated.

67 See Kahan, 1989, 135.
68 For references see Moon, 1999, 94–5.
70 Plakans, 1975, 635.
The Russian government strongly favoured food-for-work schemes. In 1833, the State Council examined a project of relief statute. It thought that Russian peasants expect famine relief for free from the government as well as from the estate owners. The State Council suggested, in an attempt to eradicate this idea, public works as the most appropriate relief means. The landlords were also asked to credit jobs instead of providing loans in money and grain. It laid down general guidelines for relief, which in reality worked out only partially.

Last, but not least, the role of ‘intermediaries’ between the central authorities and the communities (communes) should be considered. The defects of the bureaucratic structure have been long seen as a major factor behind the inadequate relief in Russia. Stocks were entrusted to the village commune under the supervision of the local gentry officials and zemstva. In the Baltic provinces, Baltic German landlords retained their control and tutelage over hunger relief since the institutions and offices which conducted detailed inspections of the granary reserves, oversaw the distribution of famine relief, and solved the complaints filed against landlords and communities that did not perform their duties in relation to needy peasants were all manned by noblemen.

Conclusion

Famines in which death rates doubled for two years were rare in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe. During the period under consideration, two districts in southern Estonia in 1845–46 had mortality upswings close to that level. In 1868–69, Estland and the island (district) of Ösel stand out with their high mortality figures. In 1868–69, in Ösel the average number of deaths per year rose over 100 per cent compared to average from 1859–63. Thus, official relief efforts obviously failed to keep people from starving and dying.

Different-level institutions did not have a ‘proper’ or ‘adequate’ share in the redistribution of resources within the society, since the government food supply policy left too much responsibility for the peasants’ provision on the shoulders of local communities. It was not problematic only because peasants were poor. Whereas in Russia this policy resulted in the ‘over-eager’ use of local resources by the communes, in a different socio-economic and institutional context, in the Baltics, it resulted in insufficient provision of landless and cottagers who accounted for over half of peasants. Whereas in Russia, some authors complained of inadequate administrative control over the collection and distribution of monetary funds and grain stocks, in the Baltics the system of supervision and monitoring functioned well in the sense that granaries were, in most places, carefully managed and quite properly filled, but in times of distress, different level officials and institutions

72 Ermolov, 1909, i, 56–8.
in charge of famine relief tried to keep assistance to the minimum. As is often emphasized in international famine research, societal power relations and the variety of coping options instead of ‘quantitative amounts of grain per capita’ largely determined the length and depth of crises. The functioning and efficiency of a famine relief system were strongly influenced by patterns of land ownership and the concrete political and social configuration of a society.

Capitalist transformation has been one of the routes by which recurrent famine has been evaded or overcome. The Baltic example illustrates the case. The famines disappeared after 1860s, although the official relief system did not go through many changes after the early 1820s. Manorial lords’ role, however, declined. Market economy, rapidly advancing since the 1850s and 1860s, rather than the traditional moral economy saved people from famine in rural class societies where the agricultural populations were divided into farmers, cottagers, day labourers, and servants and where socioeconomic status and group affiliation were of considerable importance. In Russia, the ‘effective’ redistribution of communal resources could safeguard peasants from the worst for some time, but since the majority of the population endured a poor standard of living in the nineteenth century, it could not be – and, in reality it was not – a sustainable solution to the ‘famine question’.

References

Rahvusarhiivi Tartu osakond (RA, EAA) – National Archives of Estonia, Tartu.
Annual reports of the Governor
Annual reports of Lutheran pastors
Decrees of the Guberniia administration

Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs (LVVA) – Latvian State Historical Archives, Riga.
Annual reports of the Governors

Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arhiv (RGIA) – Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg.
Governor of Kurland to Baltic Governor-General, 9 March 1869

Published Sources


73 Häkkinen & Forsberg, 2015, 105.
74 Arnold, 1988, 58.
75 For an overview, see Kahk & Tarvel, 80–102; Plakans, 2011, 190–8, 215–21.


Marriage and Household Structure in Rural Pre-Famine Finland, 1845–65

Miikka Voutilainen

Department of History & Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä

On the basis of recent findings, independent rural households formed a safeguard against the excess mortality during the Finnish 1860s famine. In this article, an analysis of deanery level longitudinal panel data shows that an increase in the number of unmarried adults reduced the number of households. This suggests that the ability to marry not only had a role in determining the household structure but also by increasing the within-household inequality it facilitated the economic hardships in the pre-famine rural Finland.

Introduction

It has been widely held that pre-industrial societies were poor and unequal in terms of distribution of economic assets and agricultural land. This adversity has typically been perceived as an important source for the persistent vulnerability to economic shocks that occasionally manifested in food deprivation and in famines.¹ The mediating mechanisms and causal pathways are, however, still rather obscure.² According to recent findings, the prevalence of independent households buffered against the excess mortality experienced during the Finnish famine of the 1860s, suggesting that a household provided a safeguard against the livelihood threatening crop failures and the socioeconomic stress induced by the emerging famine conditions.³

Crude marriage rates and the extent of marital coverage declined substantially in several regions in pre-famine Finland.⁴ Covering the two pre-famine decades, this article reviews whether the famine mortality had its roots in the pre-famine

¹ Ó Gráda, 2008; Campbell & Ó Gráda, 2011. On pre-industrial yields and agricultural productivity, see e.g. Broadberry, Campbell, Klein, Overton & van Leeuwen, 2015; Olsson & Svensson, 2010.
² See e.g. Adger, 1999; Kelly & Ó Gráda, 2014; Bengtsson & Broström, 2011.
³ Voutilainen, 2015a; Voutilainen, 2016.
⁴ Voutilainen, 2016.
household formation; did the marriage-restraining preventive check increase the vulnerability to harvest failures in the 1860s by limiting the formation of independent households.

The structure of the study is as follows: the next section reviews the literature concerning the European marital pattern, preventive check and their macro-economic outcomes. The third section presents evidence for the existence of West European marital system in Finland, the fourth section scrutinizes the question formally with statistical rigour, leaving it for the last section to present conclusions.

**European Marital Pattern and Economic Development**

According to popular generalization, societies that exhibited pre-industrial population dynamics governed by births rather than deaths were economically more advanced and may have even experienced transition to modern economic growth earlier.\(^5\) The population mechanism that entailed the reaction of births to alteration of economic conditions is widely known in its Malthusian by-name, the preventive check. The preventive check has been considered playing the eminent role in creating the so-called (West) European marital pattern (EMP) that is characterized by high average age at marriage, high share of population never marrying and family system dominated by nuclear families.\(^6\) As births out of wedlock were rather scarce in the pre-1800s societies, marriages constituted the governing variable in the population dynamics in this kind of a system.\(^7\) The East European marital pattern, influentially considered by Hajnal to prevail east of a line that ranged from St. Petersburg to Trieste, exhibited a social pattern vice versa: large extended households and marrying at younger ages.\(^8\)

The EMP system has been considered precipitating economic development through three channels. First of all, it has been considered that the EMP entailed relatively good socioeconomic position for women in the society. This surfaced in high labour force participation, widow empowerment and spousal equality.\(^9\) Secondly, it has been suggested that the EMP increased human capital

---

5 E.g. Galloway, 1988; De Moor & Van Zanden, 2010; Carmichael, De Pleijt, van Zanden & De Moor, 2015.

6 Hajnal, 1965; Berkner & Mendels, 1978, 209. Carmichael et al consider that age at marriage is not sufficient to designate the EMP pattern. See Carmichael, De Pleijt, van Zanden & De Moor, 2015. The postponing of marriage is still evident in modern world in response to diminishing economic prospects, see e.g. Ermisch, 1999.

7 Partially the low share of births out of wedlock is spurious reflection of the pressure placed on the parents of the illegitimate child to marry prior to the birth. For general review see e.g. Voutilainen, 2015b.

8 Szoltysek has argued that that the existing models of household systems in preindustrial Europe are far too rigid to capture the actual diversity of family patterns of the Eastern Europe. See especially Szoltysek, 2008.

9 De Moor & Van Zanden, 2010, 4–7; Dennison & Ogilvie, 2014, 672.
investment. Through its coevolution with (or causal effect on) the labour markets, the late marriage and nuclear households may have led to more schooling, apprenticeship, servant training, and gender participation in education. Greif has also suggested that the European nuclear family fostered corporative institutions such as guilds, cities, and universities, which created and diffused knowledge. The third mechanism through which the EMP allegedly functioned was the effect it had on the population growth via the preventive check: restriction of marriage to those who could establish an independent household hindered population growth and ensured long-term per capita capital accumulation. According to the widely-adopted narrative, this property of the preventive check alleviated pressure imposed by excessive population growth on scarce resources and thereby aided avoiding famines and other subsistence crises.

This third feature is what appears to constitute a paradox vis-à-vis the Finnish famine history. While the recent empirical findings quite clearly suggest that Finnish demographic regime was preventive check dominated, famines of some magnitude happened reasonably often during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thereby it would appear that the preventive check alone was not a sufficient safeguard. Moring has actually shown that the Finnish family structure approached the West European system in the 1800s due to impoverishment and compulsory prolonging of marital formation. Concurrent with this, Dennison and Ogilvie have recently placed considerable scepticism on the positive implications of the EMP. According to them, the West European marital pattern was in no observable clear-cut relationship with female autonomy, increased human capital investment, or enhanced demographic responsiveness to economic conditions.

The idea that nuclear household could actually have been a vulnerable form of habitation is not novel. Previous literature has emphasized its inherent vulnerability to a loss of individual adult members (esp. father and/or mother). Another important factor increasing the precarity of nuclear household dominated socioeconomic system is captured with the nuclear hardship hypothesis, according to which, the more widespread the nuclear family, and the more strictly the neo-local rules of marrying and leaving parental household were applied, the more important collective institutions were for the security of the individual in an event of...

10 Foreman-Peck, 2011.
12 Greif, 2006, 308–12.
13 Voutilainen, 2015b. Apart from war-related mortality surges in 1788–90 and in 1808–1809, after the 1740s peak mortality associated with harvest failures was experienced in 1763, 1833, 1835, 1856 and in the 1860s.
14 Moring, 1996; Moring, 1999. Prior to the general emergence of the EMP in Western Europe, the nuclear family behaviour was typical among the poor – and remained so throughout the pre-industrial era. See, inter alia: De Moor & Van Zanden, 2014, 11; Arkell, 1987.
15 Dennison & Ogilvie, 2014; Dennison & Ogilvie, 2016.
economic stress. This means that in order to counter fluctuations in the aggregate economy, the existence of the EMP necessitated the establishment of a collective social support system as an alternative to local kin networks. Extensive social security was, however, widely absent on a macro level or scattered in its coverage in early modern world. This implies that nuclear household structure coupled with the neo-local tradition had the inherent risk of increasing the number of individuals who didn't marry and who subsequently had little entitlement to economic support. If Finland grew poorer during the 1800s, as has been implied in several context, and if the EMP was an institutional arrangement adopted in the century or so after the Black Death in an environment of rapidly expanding employment opportunities and relatively high remuneration, it is reasonable to ask what kind of welfare outcomes the EMP entailed in a stagnant or even contracting economy.

Two different factors might have been at play, however: over the short term the nuclear household structure and neo-locality may have increased vulnerability to economic shocks. But over the long-term, when the economy had time to adjust, it is quite likely that the transforming family system stipulated a decrease in the population growth alleviating this emerging social inequality. The durance of the macro-economic problems was thereby essential for the nuclear hardships to manifest in full force on societal scale. One-off harvest failures were conventionally repelled with the short-term aid routinely implemented in the pre-industrial societies, whereas long-term downturns eventually started to affect population composition due to declining population growth. Somewhere in between laid a region where a perfect storm was allowed to brew, just like the one in Finland, which still loomed in the distance in the early 1860s.

The Economic Base of the Finnish Household System

EMP has been traditionally connected with the labour markets. Actually, De Moor and van Zanden proposed the Black Death-induced labour market shock as one of the leading candidates explaining the initial emergence of the EMP. The neo-locality was likewise connected to the functioning of the labour markets and a

17 A person had to leave the parental household to form a new one after marrying, see e.g. Laslett, 1988, 153. For Finnish interpretations see, inter alia: Ylikangas, 1968; Kaukiainen, 1973.
18 See e.g. Jütte, 1996.
19 For a review see Voutilainen, 2016, 120.
20 De Moor & Van Zanden, 2014, 3.
21 Ó Gráda, (1995, 162–8) and Voutilainen (2016, 113–5) argue that when interpreting the long-term determinants of famine escalation, the exogeneity of the pre-famine decline needs to be assessed. See also Geary & Stark, 2004. Rangasami (1985a, 1985b) makes a compelling case for understanding outbreaks of famine mortality as culminations of long social, political and economic processes.
22 De Moor & Van Zanden, 2014, 2. Labour market participation after the Black Death is covered in Broadberry, Campbell, Klein, Overton & van Leeuwen, 2015.
typical convention postulated that young men and women engaged in so-called life cycle service; they left their parental household to work as farm hands with annual contracts.  

According to recent Finnish findings, however, the ability to obtain an annual worker post may have been hampered by various factors; freeholder peasants and crofters appear to have preferred their own sons over extra-household labour, decreasing chances of members of lower social classes to obtain labour contracts.  

Probably even more importantly, the rural labour demand was sensitive to farmer incomes and thus to harvest fluctuations. As it was typical that Finnish servants with annual contracts were hired in late summer / early autumn, the success of harvest largely dictated whether farmers could afford to hire this relatively costly form of labour.  

The existence of the nuclear family ideal and simultaneous assumption of the neo-locality could have given rise to substantial within-household inequality in the event that leaving the parental households was prolonged, either because of limited employment possibilities, or because marriage opportunities diminished. In this kind of environment the ideal of neo-locality may have been turned into a compulsory co-habitation. Distribution of socioeconomic power and access to resources in all likelihood skewed with the increased mean household size. The prolonged co-habitation may have worsened the socioeconomic position of those individuals that normally would have been assumed moving out of the parental household.  

There were substantial spatial differences in the Finnish mean household sizes that persisted well into the 1900s. The crucial factor considered explaining the large households in Eastern Finland compared with the western parts of the country was the wide adoption of slash-and-burn cultivation in the East. Slash-and-burn cultivation can be expected to increase mean household sizes as the poorest of agricultural population could scarcely obtain forest plots required and acquire sufficient labour force needed to undertake the labour intensive slash-and-burn cultivation. Cultivation of eastern and northern wildernesses induced population expansion in the early modern period, effectively mitigating the increase of the landless rural underclass in Eastern Finland. Diminution of suitable forest reserves

---

23 Laslett, 1983, suggested that life-cycle labour may have provided a quasi-remedy to economic problems on the household level.  
and development of legislation concerning the property rights of the woodlands eventually erased this safety valve.26

The east-west disparity in household sizes has led to wide consensus that Finland was delineated into two distinct family systems. Sirén, who has provided the most vocal evidence for the distinction between the Western and Eastern Finnish family systems, has considered that as would be expected on the basis of the East European family model, the marriage was not a crucial factor determining the household formation in Eastern Finland. She therefore asserts that not only did not the Malthusian preventive check operate in the eastern parts of the country but that it did not constitute a significant factor in the formation of the family structure.27

Nevertheless, it is easy to emphasize the dominant role of cultural traits and social conventions in the household formation, for example Berkner and Mendels have pointed out that it “would be a major error to view the peasant as a helpless creature forced to blindly follow the dictates of an inheritance system”.28 Voutilainen has provided interesting evidence: the Eastern Finnish pattern of the large mean household size tended to co-exist with low between-household economic inequality and with general absence of low-income households. This means that the poverty that was manifest in the extensive number of small low-income households in the Western Finland remained “trapped” within the households in the East. This furthermore implies that there existed an inherent trade-off in the inequality structure: small mean household size meant the existence of between-household inequality, large mean household size placed the inequality within the households.29

The adversity fell on those people who remained living-ins and provided labour for the household but simultaneously retained vulnerability to shocks that affected the households’ economic status and its labour demand. If the economic situation turned severe enough, it is likely that those members of the household that were considered “external” to the core-family were the first to be evicted. In the Finnish context this is clearly visible in the excess presentation of young adults (especially men) among the temporary migrants during the famine of the 1860s.30

26 Luttinen, 2012; Korhonen, 2003, 406–407. According to the traditional common law practice the clearance for slash-and-burn cultivation determined property right to the field (Luttinen, 2012, 92, 98, 117. During the late-1700s, the co-called isojako land reform effectively restricted lower social classes’ legal right to establish slash-and-burn cultivations, see e.g. Korhonen, 2003, 407–8. Jutikkala, 2003, observes that isojako abolished the prospect of upward social movement for landless population through slash-and-burn cultivation, which had existed prior to the reform. According to Pulma, (1994, 24), the slash-and-burn of the landless was often first and foremost tolerated, but not exactly endorsed during the 1600s. Jutikkala (1957, 202) considers that able-bodied landless with free prospecting rights to slash-and-burn may have been economically better off than the poorest of the freeholders. Heikkinen (1988, 76) argues, however, that at least in the early 1800s a rural workman could participate in a so-called “slash-and-burn cooperative” and obtain this way, through labour, the right to sow to these fields. See also: Pulma, 1994, 27; Luttinen, 2012, 98.

27 Sirén, 1999, 142–3. On the basis of the local evidence, and in line with the Hajnalian divide, the marital age seemed to have been lower in the eastern than in the western parts of Finland. See: Sirén, 1999, 115–6; Moring, 2003, 84–7.


29 Voutilainen, 2015a; Voutilainen, 2016.

The situation in the Finnish rural labour markets was made worse by the existing restrictions on free movement. The need to emigrate in search of employment and prospective marital partners has been stressed in importance especially when inheritance system and land partitioning disallowed access to land for the younger siblings. According to the Finnish poor relief laws it was however possible for the target parishes to deny the entrance of the migrants if it was suspected that the migrants were going to rely on the parish poor relief for subsistence. This kind of situation could easily arise if a person from an outside parish was planning to settle in without family or kinship that could provide support and was unable to find employment.

Analysing household formation in connection to the intra-household inequality may yield important clues concerning the distribution and production of welfare in pre-industrial era. As household and farming, even at the smallest scale, were key contributors to individual livelihood entitlements and social connections to the community the socioeconomic rules that dictated individual access to them most likely proved important especially during crises. This puts the household formation to the fore of interest, determinants of which are scrutinized in the following section.

### Determinants of the Finnish Pre-Famine Household Formation

The analysis of household structure faces immediately the debate over the definition of a household. Arguably the most influential and widely-adopted definition and classification is provided by Laslett, who considers that household is particularly defined through shared location, kinship and activity, incorporating individuals within the households, considering servants as household members but not drawing a parallel between a family and a household. De Moor and van Zanden define a household loosely as “a cooperative economic unit aimed at the fulfilment of the physical and emotional needs of its members” and interestingly is “characterized by certain inequalities … between generations and sexes”. Moring has emphasized, however, that static household classification system has “no place” in historical societies: the household had no beginning or end but was under

---

31 Berkner & Mendels, 1978, 209. As has been shown in several occasions throughout the medieval and early modern Europe, the high fertility resulted in downward social circulation due to the tendency of avoiding partitioning of freeholder land, constituting the key mechanism through which the land inequality developed, see e.g. Bekar & Reed, 2013; Dribe & Svensson, 2008; Clark & Hamilton, 2006; Moring, 1999.
32 Markkola, 2007, 212–3; Uotila, 2015, 49.
34 De Moor & Van Zanden, 2014, 3.
a constant turmoil. Only when a house or land was divided can we actually observe births of new units.  

Mean household size is not a straightforward measure of the household complexity, even though it is tempting to draw parallels between large households and existence of social extensions. As was generally the rule in Northern and Western Europe, the Finnish freehold farms usually consisted of 5 to 10 people: the peasant farmer and his wife, their children, a farm-hand and/or maid, and sometimes members of the older generation. In his early analytical work, Burch considered that under nuclear and stem family systems, households never exceeded an average of ten, and while theoretical averages in the extended family system exceeded 20, figures this high are seldom, if ever observed in reality. It thus appears reasonable to assume that household size could scarcely exceed ten without some form of social extensions. Concurrent with these, Moring has observed the mean sizes of the extended Finnish peasant households in the southeast corner of the country varied between 8.1 and 10.0 from the late-1810s to the mid-1870s.

The standard source providing information concerning pre-industrial Finnish social structure are the population tables that were compiled by the Lutheran priests. Under the national legislation, parish priests had to complete two separate statistical forms, the so-called population (census) and population change tables. A thorough population census listing e.g. population age structure and social class divisions was originally compiled every three years and from 1775 on information was gathered every five years. Annually compiled population change tables provide cause of death statistics, monthly number of vital events (births, deaths and marriages), and some breakdowns of these by social or marital statuses.

The data concerning the mean household size and the size distribution of households is obtainable on a spatial level from these registers. The data available in these tables is with all likelihood based on the communion books that listed households and their members. The deanery (n=40 per year) population tables present a breakdown by household size: 2 or smaller, 3 to 5, 6 to 10, 11 to 15 and above 15.

The deanery data does not allow for qualitative considerations, per se. While the data is easy to operationalize, it leaves open source critical questions, such as whether we can reliably draw an inference based on the contemporary size

35 Moring, 1999, 181. See also (Wall, 1972, 159), who warns researchers that “the attempt to trace the history of [household] is fraught with considerable dangers…”
37 Burch, 1970.
40 See e.g. Uotila, 2014, 49–51. Various other documents such as the poll tax registers have been the standard source in spatially delineated studies, e.g. Moring, 1996; Moring, 1999; Sirén, 1999; Waris, 1999. For comparison of sources, see e.g. Voutilainen, 2016, 125–6.
distributions without knowing the exact basis for the size classification. Then again, the classification reflects contemporary perceptions concerning the household structure, not “artificial” later compilations – in addition, in this work we merely drop the categorization used in previous works (i.e. nuclear household, extended household etc.) and focus on the sheer number of households.

The household data provided in the population tables is highly useful in geographical analysis. While a representative spatial collection of age at marriage (a standard measure of the West European marital pattern) is an impossible task within this study, a proxy measure can easily be obtained on a macro level: the number of people married.\(^{41}\) As the focus of this article is on those whose marital aspirations were either postponed or even cancelled, we focus on the un-married adult population. If the Finnish family structure followed the West European pattern, we ought to observe negative association between the number of un-married adults and number of households; i.e. the fewer adult married the less households were correspondingly formed.

To study this effect, we use the deanery level longitudinal panel covering years 1845, 1855 and 1865.\(^{42}\) The dependent variable inspected is the number of household at year \(t\), in a deanery \(i\). The choice of count variable implies usage of appropriate regression models and due to over-dispersion, negative binomial regression was selected. The models were run in zero-truncated form as no deanery had zero number of households.\(^{43}\) The size of the adult population (15 years and older) was used as an exposure variable, denoting the theoretical maximum number of households (i.e. how many times the dependent event could have happened). Time and place specific fixed factors are taken into account through the introduction of year and deanery specific dummy variables. This allows controlling for various heterogeneities that would severely obscure any cross-sectional analysis based on data from any singular year.

The main interest is in the coefficient between unmarried adults and households, but additional control variables were also introduced. First of all, the number of farm workers is used. Deanery tables designate both young adults with annual labour contracts and unmarried sons and daughters of farmers to the same class of “farm workers”. It is reasonable to assume that it should exhibit negative association with the number of households – as long as these people remained as farm hands (whether through a contract or through family connection), they generally remained outside of marital markets and needed not establish their own households.

\(^{41}\) Palm, 2000, 64–6, similarly uses the marital coverage to consider that Sweden displayed characteristics of the East European marital system in the 1620s, with the share of married (including widows) at 76.5 % of over 15 year olds. According to Pitkänen (1981, 278), 33.8% of women aged between 20 and 24 were married in rural Finland in 1880, while for men it was 17.1%. The relation switched after the mid-30s though - among 35 to 39 year olds, 81.7% of all men and 76.9% of all women were married.


\(^{43}\) See e.g. Greene, 2000, 880–7; Osgood, 2000; Voutilainen, 2015a, 135–6.
Secondly we introduce the number of adults living on poor relief and those part of the lowest social classes. The relationship between the households and the number adults receiving public poor relief and the number of adults belonging to the lower social classes (e.g. lodgers and cottiers) is ambiguous and depends on the effect dominance. Entitlement to public poor relief was conditional on the unavailability of other sources (esp. family) of support and hence the recipients quite likely constituted distinct households by definition. The people of the lower social class tended to have some form of shanty dwelling (cottiers, mäkitupalaiset) but especially the lodgers abundant in the Eastern Finland often lived unsettled life among the farmer population. The latter group may have been variably recorded in the population tables. As long as this convention remained unaltered within the deanery throughout the timeframe of analysis, the fixed effects introduced here take these sources of heterogeneity into account. Based on these considerations,

Table 1. Zero-truncated negative binomial regression models of the number of households in rural Finnish deaneries, 1845–1865

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent variable:</td>
<td>Number of</td>
<td>Number of</td>
<td>Number of</td>
<td>Number of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>households</td>
<td>households</td>
<td>households</td>
<td>households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm workers</td>
<td>-0.0000104</td>
<td>-0.0000126</td>
<td>-0.00000112</td>
<td>0.00000688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.023)**</td>
<td>(0.006)**</td>
<td>(0.880)</td>
<td>(0.353)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor relief</td>
<td>0.0000303</td>
<td>0.0000581</td>
<td>0.0000504</td>
<td>0.0000504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recipients</td>
<td>(0.031)**</td>
<td>(0.001)***</td>
<td>(0.004)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried adults</td>
<td>-0.0000167</td>
<td>-0.0000347</td>
<td>0.0000395</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.020)**</td>
<td>(&lt;0.001)***</td>
<td>(0.023)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower social class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0000474</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.056)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croft farmers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0000475</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.062)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0000475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.062)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.107 (&lt;0.001)***</td>
<td>-1.118 (&lt;0.001)***</td>
<td>-1.070 (&lt;0.001)***</td>
<td>-1.078 (&lt;0.001)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed effects</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-value for likelihood ratio test, ( \beta_i = 0, \forall i )</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-value for likelihood ratio test, ( \alpha = 0 )</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo ( R^2 )</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Time and deanery level fixed effects modelled using dummy variables. The size of the adult population (15 years and older) was used as an exposure variable.
it is likely that both the poor relieved and the lowest social groups tended to live in independent households.\textsuperscript{44}

Thirdly we introduce the number of freeholder and croft farms, which, quite apparently, ought to show a positive relationship to the number of households.

The results for the regression models are presented in Table 1. The diagnostics appear to be in order. Rejection of the dispersion restriction $\alpha=0$ ($p<0.001$) implies that data exhibits over-dispersion and the Poisson model would be unsuitable.

The coefficient of main interest, that between unmarried adults and the number of households, is indeed negative and in the fourth model with the most elaborated structure highly significant. This means that the increased number of unmarried adults translated into fewer households. The large eastern households appear to coexist with low marital coverage, a feature in line with neo-local household rule.\textsuperscript{45} This coexistence of large households and low marital coverage is not without West European counterparts – the pattern was most evident in the post-famine Ireland in the latter half of the 1800s.\textsuperscript{46}

The coefficient for the farm workers is negative, but loses the significance after the introduction of the number of unmarried adults. This means that the farm workers tend to be without own households, but the effect apparently stems from their marital status.

The poor relief recipients appear to have formed independent households. The finding is interesting, but due to reasons pointed out earlier, not particularly surprising. In order to get public aid one had to be without other forms of aid, including from close family and kin, and thus it can be stated that the positive coefficient is (partially) a product of selection bias – you had to have an independent household in order to be eligible for the poor relief.

The same applies, at least partially, to the lower social classes, cottiers and lodgers. Their small household sizes have been recently detected in Finnish literature, adding to the routine finding that lower social classes tended to occupy their own small households.

Freeholders and crofters, as expected, increase the number of households. Farming livelihoods captured by these two variables were not however up for grabs for everyone. Access to freeholder and croft farms was greatly dictated by land partitioning legislation and inheritance agreements. As was the case in restricted

\textsuperscript{44} "Independence" refers here to the household structure. Until 1865 (and in a certain form until the 1880s), the Finnish labour and movement legislation was marked by system of so-called legal guardianship, which (i) hampered free movement of labour and (ii) tied segments of the adult landless population (over-15s) under those with 'legal' occupations (e.g., farmers, traders, industrialists etc.), for a review see Frigren, 2016, 78–82.

\textsuperscript{45} See also Voutilainen, 2016, 127–128.

\textsuperscript{46} Guinnane, 1997; Curran, 2015, 37. It is worthwhile highlighting that Guinnane perceives the decline in marital coverage in Ireland greatly a voluntary process – increasing unwillingness to accept the burdens of marriage and a family because it was less important to satisfying the economic goals that marriage had once served.
movement of labour, here too the legislative environment influenced how an individual could obtain a secure livelihood.

How large an effect did remaining unmarried have on the number of households? At face value the coefficients appear tiny. This is merely an illusion: the response is in logarithms. Because of this non-linearity, no straightforward calculation (e.g. as in slope) can be done to illustrate the actual significance of the effect. As an example, a coefficient of -0.0000347 means that given a population of 26000, with 5300 households and 7800 unmarried adults (corresponding e.g. to the deanery of Länsi-Raasepori in Southern Finland in 1865), a decline in the number of unmarried to 7500 results to an increase in the number of households to 5428.6 and results to a decline in the mean household size from 4.91 to 4.79, ceteris paribus. So, a decrease of 3.8% in the number of unmarried resulted in a decrease of 2.4% in the mean household size, corresponding to point-elasticity of c. 0.63, an estimate which is not only statistically significant but also economically important.

Conclusion

This article inspected whether remaining unmarried had an effect on the Finnish household structure. Previous studies have shown that Finland experienced the marriage reducing reaction to economic decline in the mid-1800s. This is congruent with the macro-level findings which have shown that crude marriage rates displayed a positive connection to fluctuation in real wages; i.e. the preventive check.

Recent literature has suggested that availability of households, either through access to cultivation or through social ties to the community they provided, decreased spatial famine mortality during the 1860s. This implies that the preventive check may actually have increased the risk of large-scale population crisis in the mid-1800s Finland due to increase in the intra-household inequality.

This study shows that household formation and preventive check were connected and inability to marry was associated with fewer households. Thereby it provides tentative evidence that the preventive check may actually have increased rural precarity in the pre-famine decades.

The regression results also show that land partitioning and rental farming had an expected positive effect on the household formation. This highlights that the legal restrictions that were in place during the era severely affected the peoples' abilities to obtain livelihood security. Social conventions and legal environment shaped the inequality that ultimately manifested as the famine in the 1860s after a string of crop failures provided an external shock large enough to disintegrate the social and economic structures that were able to buffer against livelihood threats in normal harvest years.
References

Jyväskylä Provincial Archives.
Deanery population tables.


A Lack of Resources, Information and Will: Political Aspects of the Finnish Crisis of 1867–68

Heidi Reese

Department of Economic & Social History, University of Helsinki

In 1867 Finland was faced with a serious crop failure. An insufficient amount of food was imported and when the winter came, there was not enough grain to feed the hungry. Traditionally this event in Finnish history has been explained as a crisis of outdated agriculture and an inescapable natural and economic catastrophe. When examining the political aspects of the crisis, it is noticeable that the failure to import a sufficient amount of food was based not only on a lack of resources, but also on inefficient transfer and use of information and, indeed, a lack of will to help the hungry.

In the 1860s the Grand Duchy of Finland was a part of the Russian Empire. Finland formed a separate financial state from the Russian Empire that had to take care of its own financial operations. The department for financial affairs of the Senate of Finland, and its head, Johan Vilhelm Snellman, were responsible for finances and poor relief in Finland. The harvest reports, letters and telegrams of governors as well as the reports of the rapidly-developing local press provided Snellman with the possibility of staying informed on the food stocks and crop forecasts. Snellman’s political views are visible in his public writings and letters to the governors. All of the above are used as central source material in this article.

The Finnish Famine of 1867–8 has been cited as the last peacetime famine in Europe.1 Certainly, the crisis – that took the lives of over 100,000 Finns – is exceptional in both Finnish and European history. In Finland a peacetime demographic catastrophe of this scale had not taken place since the seventeenth century, although crop failures had occurred quite regularly.2 In Europe the previous corresponding demographic catastrophe in terms of percentage mortality occurred in Ireland in the 1840s. In

---

1 Häkkinen, Ikonen, Pitkänen & Soikkanen, 1989, 9. The Finnish famine of the 1860s was the last peacetime famine in Europe, if not taking into account the Soviet bloc. See Weiss, 2000, 175; Devereux, 2000, 3.
1867 the crop failures extended over large areas of Sweden and the Russian Empire including the Baltic Provinces, but a large-scale mortality crisis was encountered only in the territory of Finland. Earlier research has shown conclusively that due to a lack of stocks in granaries and the poor harvest of 1867 there was a serious lack of food in Finland in the autumn of 1867. The only viable option to meet this deficit would have been grain imports from abroad. In 1862 and 1865 poor harvests had been balanced with increased imports of grain, but in 1867 the amount of food imports was smaller than in the previous years. Why was a sufficient amount of grain not imported to Finland in the autumn of 1867?

Research on the 1860s crisis has emphasized the poor economic situation of Finland and inadequate information on crop forecasts during the summer of 1867 as an explanation for the insufficient grain imports. Economic life in 1860s Finland was in a crisis and the economic possibilities of the merchants to carry out grain imports without loans from the state were slim. David Arnold has noted that the state’s response to a famine is affected not only by economic resources and administrative capabilities, but also by the pre-existing conventions and ideology. The historical understanding of famines requires alertness to its structural causes and its social and cultural parameters. Holger Weiss has emphasized that aid is dependent on the will and interests of the rulers. Aid is a political act and politics defines who receives aid and who does not. Since the ecological and economical reasons behind the food shortage of 1867 are well explained in earlier research, this paper focuses on the role of politics behind the inadequate food imports in 1867. It also examines the crop forecast data that the decision makers had at hand during the summer of 1867.

In terms of theoretical background, the paper utilizes the famine research of late 20th and early 21st century. Development economist Stephen Devereux notes that failures of public action should be incorporated into the causal analysis of all famines. Although most pre-twentieth century famines were triggered by natural catastrophes, the natural triggers operated in contexts where local economies were weak and the political will or logistical capacity of the state to intervene was lacking. Devereux’s idea that the failure to prevent famines can be explained by inadequate information, bureaucratic inertia, lack of capacity to act efficiently as well as lack of political will offers an interesting framework for the Finnish case.

---

3 Turpeinen, 1986, 237. See also the contributions of Ludvigsson and Lust in this volume.
5 Soininen, 1974, 404.
7 Voutilainen, 2015, 124–44.
8 Arnold, 1988, 8.
9 Weiss, 2000, 121, 169.
10 Devereux, 2000, 13, 27.
Economist Amartya Sen has claimed that famines are easy to prevent, if only the government tries to prevent them. According to Sen famines do not occur in democracies because elections and free media offer strong incentives to undertake famine prevention.\textsuperscript{11} A free press can adduce information from distant areas and even bring out information that might be embarrassing to the government. Free press and active political opposition constitute the best early-warning system for famines.\textsuperscript{12} Finland in the 1860s was far from a democracy, and the press was subject to censorship, but the seeds of political and cultural liberalism were sprouting at this time and interesting comparative perspectives with more modern famines can be seen in the Finnish case. When keeping in mind the historical context, theories and examples from more recent famine research offer fruitful views into the politics behind the Finnish food crisis.

**Economic and Political Decision Making in Finland in the 1860s**

During the 1860s Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire. The Russian Tsar (ie. the Grand Duke of Finland), had the decisive power, but Finland was autonomous in the sense that it had to finance and execute its own financial operations. Finnish central government during the period of autonomy was dualistic, and incorporated the Senate in Finland as well as Minister Secretary of State and a Committee for Finnish Affairs in St. Petersburg. In addition to the Senate and governance in Russia, a separate power was the Governor-General who represented the Russian Tsar in Finland. As Häkkinen and Forsberg have observed, the Finnish Senate, under the control of the Governor General, “managed Finland’s economic and legal matters, and if Finland did not make any financial claims on the Russian imperial Treasury, it was not in the Tsar’s interests to limit this autonomy”.\textsuperscript{13} By the 1860s the Senate had taken de facto control of Finland’s internal affairs, including foreign trade and economic policy.

In 1809 when Finland, had shifted from Swedish rule and become a Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire, Tsar Alexander I of the Russian Empire, had convened the four Estates of Finland to the Diet of Porvoo. In principle the Diet had power over legislation under the ultimate authority of the Tsar. In practice the Diet was not convened between 1809 and 1863, because the Russian government had not wanted any meetings of the Estates in the Empire. This further emphasized the shift of practical power to the civil servants, working under the Senate’s control.

\textsuperscript{11} Sen, 1999, 51–2.
\textsuperscript{12} Sen, 1999, 181.
\textsuperscript{13} Häkkinen & Forsberg, 2015, 100.
The Senate could technically manage the economy and rule the citizens without the Diet, but the postponement of new legislation and tax reforms stalled the society.\textsuperscript{14} In the 1860s Finland consisted of eight provinces, each with their own provincial administration. The Finnish provincial governments were subordinate both to the Senate and to the Governor-General. The governors of the provinces had to balance the expectations of both the Senate and the Governor-General, which often proved challenging.\textsuperscript{15} The standing of the governors was dualistic also in the sense that they were representatives of the central government in the provinces, but also representatives of the people to the central government. In the early nineteenth century in particular, the governors had an important role in passing information from the provinces to the central administration. In the 1860s, due to new channels of information, this aspect of the governors’ role diminished in importance. Their role in adjusting the expectations of the government in Helsinki with the needs of the provinces became stronger.\textsuperscript{16}

In the event of a crop failure the Senate’s head of financial affairs was ultimately responsible for taking care of the consequences.\textsuperscript{17} The Finnish philosopher, journalist and Fennoman Johan Vilhelm Snellman became a senator as well as the Senate’s head of financial affairs in July 1863 and maintained his position until the spring of 1868.\textsuperscript{18} In addition to Snellman, the Governor-General Nikolai Adlerberg and the provincial governors of the provinces also bore responsibility for relief actions in the summer and autumn of 1867.\textsuperscript{19} Snellman’s importance was emphasized by the fact that Adlerberg was on a leave of absence for three months in the autumn of 1867 and came back to office in mid-October.\textsuperscript{20} After his return Adlerberg took more responsibility over the famine prevention and Snellman stepped aside.\textsuperscript{21} Snellman’s career as a senator and head of financial affairs of the senate ended in the spring of 1868 at the request of Adlerberg.\textsuperscript{22} Although the official reason for Snellman’s resignation were differences of opinion related to the building of a railway between Helsinki and St. Petersburg, earlier research has

\textsuperscript{14} Tiihonen & Tiihonen, 1983, 270; Kuusterä & Tarkka, 2011, 180; Tiihonen, 2012, 51; Newby & Myllyntaus, 2015, 146.
\textsuperscript{15} Westerlund, 1996, 351.
\textsuperscript{17} Turpeinen 1986, 148; Savolainen 1989, 21, 61–2; Savolainen, 2005b, 16.
\textsuperscript{18} Heikkinen & Tiihonen, 2009, 370–1; Snellman’s public writings [\textit{Samlade Arbeten}] and his correspondence with governors and other officials during the famine years have been edited and published as a series of books, which have been used as source material for this article [hereafter \textit{Snellman SA}].
\textsuperscript{19} Häkkinen, 1991a, 130–1.
\textsuperscript{21} Turpeinen, 1991, 55.
\textsuperscript{22} Savolainen, 1989, 63.
suggested that disagreements in relation to handling the food crises were the real reason behind his departure.\textsuperscript{23}

The breakthrough of economic and political liberalism in Finland during the 1850s and 1860s also set the context for political decision-making at the time. Trade freedom, convening of the Diet and freedom of press were advocated. The two main political movements of the time – the Fennomans and the Liberals – were on opposite sides in the debates around language politics and relations with Russia and Sweden, but in matters concerning political and economic freedom they both advocated a reform. New newspapers were established and they became an arena for economic policy discussions. These events in Finland were connected to general European developments, marked by the emergence of economic and political liberalism.\textsuperscript{24} Democratization of the society has usually been seen as a factor that prevents famines, yet the Finnish crisis arose at a time when such changes were just beginning.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{Snellman’s Economic and Aid Policy}

Snellman’s standing as the head of financial affairs of the Senate gave him an opportunity to realise aid politics that he had been proposing in his writings since the 1840s.\textsuperscript{26} His primary objective as the head of financial affairs was to balance the economy of Finland.\textsuperscript{27} Again to quote Häkkinen and Forsberg: “Snellman believed that economic independence was [essential for] political state independence, and accordingly his policies during the famine can be seen as prioritizing the longer-term development of the nation before individuals or regions”.\textsuperscript{28} For years Snellman had been criticizing the old model of aid politics, where the crown would take a loan and then lend money to merchants for grain imports, which they would then sell to the common people with credit. For example in 1862 a loan that was originally meant for a monetary reform in Finland was used for this purpose. There was even need for an additional loan from Bank of Finland and from bankers in St. Petersburg to finance grain imports in 1862.\textsuperscript{29}

Snellman claimed that the involvement of the state in the grain trade had caused the traders to import large amounts of grain that was then passed out to the people with no worries of payback. Snellman had decided to abandon this structure, the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{24} Heikkinen & Kuusterä, 2007, 30; Heikkinen & Tiihonen, 2009, 349.
\textsuperscript{25} See, e.g.: Sen 1999; Ó Gráda, 1999.
\textsuperscript{26} Savolainen, 1989, 21.
\textsuperscript{27} Kuusterä, 1989, 97.
\textsuperscript{28} Häkkinen & Forsberg, 2015, 107. See also Heikkinen, Heinonen, Kuusterä & Pekkarinen, 2000, 81.
\textsuperscript{29} Heikkinen & Tiihonen, 2009, 439–41.
\end{flushleft}
The state could take no more loans and the damaging system had to end.\textsuperscript{30} Until the end of the summer 1867 the Senate refrained from taking foreign debt and from lending money to merchants for grain imports.\textsuperscript{31} When efforts for a state loan to finance grain imports began in September, a failure of crops had already been experienced not only in Finland but also large areas of the Russian Empire as well as Sweden. The import of grain was made difficult by high prices as well as lack of supply.\textsuperscript{32}

Central to Snellman’s policy was also the idea of refraining from gratuitous aid. Self-sufficiency and frugality were encouraged, as outlined by Snellman in two unpublished writings in 1866. In these writings, Snellman criticized the way in which people in large swathes of the country still believed that the crown would help them when in need. This mindset, Snellman believed, was destructive and had made the common people unable to help themselves through hard work and saving. Snellman even criticized meetings that were held in the municipalities to find out how much help was needed. The common people needed to understand that the crown had no more money and that they therefore needed to work harder, save more and take better care of their personal economy – and keep in mind that God would help by blessing honest endeavours to help oneself and others. Aid that was given too early made the people slow to help themselves. Snellman also accused the common people of having lavish spending habits, specifically that they bought large amounts of foreign fabrics, coffee, cigarettes and sugar and also drank most of the spirits.\textsuperscript{33} Referring to the inability of the people to save, Snellman wrote: “It is harsh to say this, but those many bad years are largely the people’s own fault”.\textsuperscript{34}

Snellman was certainly not alone in holding these opinions. The conception that the personal features of the poor people were to blame for their poverty was rather prominent in Finnish public discussion in the mid-nineteenth century. Helping a person would just sustain the bad features that had created poverty.\textsuperscript{35} The idea that generous help would destroy the morality of the people and postpone the destruction into the future was also common in Great Britain during the Irish Famine of the 1840s.\textsuperscript{36} Assistant Secretary to the Treasury of the United Kingdom Charles Edward Trevelyan did not see problems with the economic policy he led, but pointed to Irish customs as part of the explanation for the famine.\textsuperscript{37}

Since gratuitous aid was not an option, relief needed to be obtained through work. According to Snellman the experience of all countries had shown that

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{30} Savolainen, 2005a, 22.
\item\textsuperscript{31} Häkkinen, 1992, 153; Häkkinen, 1999, 114–5.
\item\textsuperscript{33} SA XI.2, 1194–8, 1201–5.
\item\textsuperscript{34} SA XI.2, 1197. Author’s own translation.
\item\textsuperscript{35} Pulma, 1994, 58.
\item\textsuperscript{36} Ó Gráda 1999, 6.
\item\textsuperscript{37} Sen 1999, 174–5.
\end{itemize}
aid without compensation was a wasted effort.\textsuperscript{38} The employment policy would support the economy of Finland, build the people's morality and prevent begging.\textsuperscript{39} This emphasis on hard work was visible in Snellman's enthusiasm for supporting small-scale home industries, such as weaving simple fabrics. In his letter to the governors in July 1867 Snellman noted that since agriculture did not offer work for the people for the entire year, forms of home industries would provide employment and income for the people during the winter. Snellman was hoping that the Finnish merchants would take responsibility over the export of these products, in addition to the material and production costs, so that the producers would get monetary reward towards the finished products.\textsuperscript{40} If sincere, Snellman's expectations were certainly unrealistic, and too much responsibility was given to merchants who were generally, understandably, unwilling to take big financial risks in the prevailing situation. Although it became clear during the summer and autumn of 1867 that there would be no market for these products, this activity was continued until the end of 1867.\textsuperscript{41}

Another form of aid that gained a lot of publicity was spreading information on emergency or surrogate foods. Emergency food – such as bark bread – was not unknown to the Finnish people even before the crisis of the 1860s. In northern Finland in particular, people had to resort to bark bread quite regularly.\textsuperscript{42} In July 1867, Snellman advised the governors to spread information on emergency food such as mushroom and moss.\textsuperscript{43} The governors seem to have reacted to this form of aid rather positively and provided Snellman with information on developments with the emergency food education in their provinces during summer 1867.\textsuperscript{44} Even the press seems to have taken a positive attitude towards this form of aid. The press published information on emergency food actively and presented it as an alternative for grain: “Nobody will need to die of hunger under the threat of failure of crops this year – as far as we know – as long as we make a quarrel against our entrenched idleness and inefficiency and begin to collect all the food that the nature abundantly offers.”\textsuperscript{45}

Snellman's writings during the famine years have been seen as an attempt to prevent passivity in the Finnish population. Rumours of a loan for grain imports could have made the people passive, so the rules had to be set straight. In this

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{38} SA VIII, 75. \\
\textsuperscript{39} Häkkinen, Ikonen, Pitkänen & Soikkanen, 1989, 44; SA VIII, 67–76; SA XI.2,1201. \\
\textsuperscript{40} SA XI.2, 1260–2; SA XI.1, 310–2. \\
\textsuperscript{41} Häkkinen, Ikonen, Pitkänen & Soikkanen, 1989, 44. \\
\textsuperscript{42} Häkkinen, 1991b, 99; Ikonen, 1991, 82. \\
\textsuperscript{43} National Archives of Finland [KA], Ministry of Finance Archive [VVA], DA117: Communication to the Governors of Vaasa, Oulu, Hämeenlinna, Mikkeli, and the acting governor of Kuopio, relating to the use of mushrooms and other substitute foodstuffs. 31 Jul. 1867. \\
\textsuperscript{44} SA XI.2, 1263–7, 1287–9; 1295–7. \\
\textsuperscript{45} Oulun Wiikko-Sanomia, 17 Aug. 1867. Author's own translation.}
sense the publicity has been seen as advancing common goals in fighting famine.\footnote{46} This kind of interpretation seems to be based on the ruler’s conception that the people and their laziness were at the core of the problem. Snellman’s writings could also be seen as use of power and an attempt to calm the people in the face of a threatening crisis. Especially when considering that efforts for a foreign loan only began in September 1867, and not much was done during the summer.

It is interesting to note that although similarities can be found in Snellman’s writings and the ideas behind the British politics during the Irish famine, the historiography of these two famines is very different. Finnish historians have until very recently been rather understanding towards the decision makers of the time whereas British officials have been condemned more harshly in the historiography of the Irish famine. The status of Finland as a part of Russia creates an interesting question in this aspect. In the earlier half on the 19\textsuperscript{th} century Finns had received aid from the Tsar, at least when it was in the empire’s strategic interests.\footnote{47} In the 1860s Finland already had its own economic policy and Finnish officials were responsible for the aid policy. Bureaucratic inertia between the different echelons of power as well as the willingness to please superiors and foster the economic power and independence of Finland could explain some of the actions. The Russian officials were generally pleased if Finland did not cause economic strain.\footnote{48}

Because the Finnish decision makers were responsible for the aid politics it is quite understandable that the crisis has a very different meaning in the Finnish historical narrative than the Irish history writing of the 1840s.\footnote{49} It is interesting to ponder in what measure the apolitical historiography of the Finnish famine is actually a consequence of deliberante national identity construction of the Fennoman politicians and historians of the late nineteenth century. Henrik Forsberg has rather aptly pointed how the process to naturalize the famine began in Finnish public discussion soon after the crisis. Both the Finnish and Swedish speaking elites of Finland shared the idea that the famine had been an unfortunate outcome of poor weather. The naturalization and depoliticization of the 1860s Finnish Famine (i.e. emphasising the frost as a main reason) suited the Finnish elite very well. Frost was politically neutral and did not challenge the political elite or the power relations in the society. It was also equally feared by all members of rural communities and thus bridged rural class differences. Concentrating on the frost also suited nationalist ideas by creating a link between contemporary events and the nation’s mythical forefathers’ struggles in the hard climate. In the national historiographies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the question of culpability was often left unaddressed. If anyone was to be blamed, it was those who had become too accustomed to a comfortable lifestyle and who had not learned to adjust their

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Turpeinen, 1986, 161; Savolainen, 1989, 34.
\item Turpeinen, 1991, 30, 57.
\item Kuusterä, 1992, 71.
\item Newby & Myllyntaus, 2015, 148–9.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
spending accordingly. As unfortunate as the famine was, it was also a reminder that one should not rely on handouts from the Tsar.\footnote{Forsberg, 2017.}

**Information on Crop Forecasts**

In the 1860s Finnish people got most of their nutrition from grain. The two most important grains in Finland were barley and rye.\footnote{Ikonen, 1991, 81} According to estimates made in the 1860s the annual requirement of grain per person was about two barrels.\footnote{SVT II:1, 4; SVT II:2, 8. N.B. 1 barrel = 1,6489 hectolitres (SVT II:1, 24).} The population of Finland in the 1860s was about 1.8 million, so according to this rather rough estimation about 3.6 million barrels of grain would have been sufficient to feed the population of Finland.

Figures 1. and 2. show the rye and barley crops in barrels in Finland’s eight provinces in a three year period from 1865 to 1867. The combined yearly crop of rye and barley in Finland was roughly 2.5 million barrels in 1865, 3 million barrels in 1866 and only 1.7 million barrels in 1867.\footnote{SVT II:1, Litt. B. & SVT II:2, Litt B.} It is noticeable that the rye crop of 1867 was considerably smaller than the previous year in most provinces. According to the rough estimate presented above, the crop of 1867 would have been enough to feed only half of Finland’s population. The situation was worsened by the fact that the crops of previous years were insufficient as well.\footnote{Voutilainen, 2015, 124–44.}

![Figure 1. Rye crop in Finland 1865–1867, 1 000 of barrels](image)

\textit{SVT II:1, Litt. B.; SVT II:2, Litt B.}
Since grain had such an important place in the nutrition of Finns, the information on crop expectations during the summer months was crucial. Because of Finland’s poor infrastructure, imports for the winter needed to be agreed early so that they could be carried out before the ports iced over at the end of the year. Earlier research has noted that the information on crop forecasts during the summer and autumn of 1867 was insufficient.\(^5\) It has been said that the Senate did not waver in its efforts to begin grain imports, once it was clear that night frosts in early September had ruined the crop in large parts of the country.\(^6\) This claim can be questioned by the fact that early September is a perfectly normal time for night frosts to occur in large parts of Finland. The cold spring and summer of 1867 meant that sowing was done later than usual which meant later harvest – and higher risk of night frost during the period of growth.\(^7\)

During the 1860s the governors were still a very important source of information for the Senate. Governors provided Snellman with information on crop expectations through their private letters as well as official reports and telegrams. In the 1860s governors sent three official reports on crop expectations to the Senate’s finance department during the growth season.\(^8\) The second report, sent in August, was particularly important, since it gave a somewhat reliable forecast of the yearly crop expectations, yet left some time for organizing grain imports before the winter, if needed. I have collected the data on barley and rye crop expectations from the second reports of the governors from all of Finland’s eight provinces from a

---

57 Hirvonen, 2013, 70; Hääkkinen & Forsberg, 2015, 106–7; Newby & Myllyntaus, 2015, 151.
58 Johanson, 1924, 58.
three-year period 1865–1867. From this data I have calculated the median for crop expectations for each province (Figures 3. and 4.). The information from the province of Viipuri is unfortunately missing from 1865 and 1866.\(^{59}\)

In August 1867 the governors’ reports estimated either an average or below average rye crop. Although some individual districts were expecting a failure of crops, the median of each province is either below average or average. Compared to the previous year, 1866, the expectations were slightly lower in all other provinces except Turku-Pori. The estimates were reasonably accurate, although the actual crop of 1867 was below 1866 in all of the provinces. In comparison with 1865, most provinces were expecting a similar or a smaller crop. Two provinces, Kuopio and Mikkeli, were expecting a slightly better rye crop in 1867 than in 1865. In Mikkeli the crop of 1867, although quite poor, was actually slightly better than in 1865, but in Kuopio the rye crop of 1867 was below 1865. As a summary of the rye crop expectations in 1867 it can be said that although the expectations were slightly too positive in some provinces, they did not give hope for a good crop.\(^{60}\)

---

59 For more detailed information see Hirvonen, 2013, attachment 4.
60 See figures 1 & 3.
In a quick glance the governors’ official reports on barley crop expectations would seem to give reason to expect an average crop corresponding to previous years. When looking into the actual crop harvested, it is clear that the crop of 1867 was much below previous years. The barley crop was especially poor in the three northernmost provinces – Oulu, Vaasa and Kuopio – where it also had significant importance as a crop. When evaluating the information of the governors’ reports, it is important to note that several governors reminded Snellman in their reports of the threat that a possible frost caused to the barley crop. If frost would not ruin the crop, only then was an average yield expected. The threat of frost was also mentioned in the governors’ private letters to Snellman, as well as in the newspapers, and can very well be seen as general knowledge at the time. Unfortunately the governors’ fears were realised as a night frost in early September 1867 ruined the barley crop in large parts of Finland. Night frosts at this time of year were rather typical in many parts of Finland, but because of the unusually cold spring of 1867 the crop did not have enough time to mature during the summer of 1867 making it more vulnerable to a night frost in September. It has also been noted that unlike in Ireland where the phytophthora infestans had been previously unknown – the main reason for the crop failure in Finland, the frost, was

---

61 See figure 4.
62 See figures 2. and 4.
63 Suomalainen Wirallinen Lehti, 30 Jul, 2 Aug. 1867. KA, VVA: Valtiovarainjohto: kirjediaari KD51/183 (1867); Senaatin talousosaston kirjediaari KD45/158 (1867); Valtiovarainjohto: kirjediaari KD32/134 (1867).
64 SA XI.2, 1248; Meurman, 1892, 32–3; Helsingfors Dagblad, 24 Aug. 1867.
a common phenomenon. Although Snellman may have acted rapidly once he heard about the damage caused by the frost, it is impossible to claim that the frost – and the crop failure that followed – should have been a surprise to anyone.

The importance of official reports is somewhat diminished by the fact that Snellman as well as others had questioned the reliability of these reports. The route of official reports from the local officers in the different districts of each province to the governors and finally to the senate could take weeks. Thus it is clear that the official reports did not always contain the most up-to-date information. In the 1860s the telegram network that had been developed since the 1850s offered possibilities for quicker exchange of information between the senate and provincial offices as well as grain merchants. In early August 1862, during a previous crop failure, Senator Axel Ludvig Born used the telegram system to inquire about the grain expectations from the governors. In mid August, after receiving information from the provinces, Born started organizing grain imports by asking the governors to contact local merchants. A few days later some merchants were informed that the Senate had decided to offer them a loan for nine months without interest. Even J.V. Snellman commented on the government’s efficient use of this new technology in an article published in 1862: “One must acknowledge that the quick actions of the government have been possible because of the telegram.” In 1867 similar telegrams between Snellman and the governors can be found only after the night frosts of early September. The possibilities for receiving more up-to-date information through the telegram were available also in 1867, but it seems that this technology was not used to its fullest.

Snellman also claimed that the governors’ reports were unreliable, since the local officers had a tendency to underestimate the crop expectations. In his letter to Snellman, the governor of Turku-Pori, C.M. Creuz, tried to defend the estimations of local officers of his province to Snellman. It was not easy to forecast likely crop yields and the governor was assured that most of the local officers were doing their best to fulfil their reporting duties. From the governors’ letters it is obvious that Snellman did not spare criticism if he felt that the governors were too lenient with the aid policy. Governors had to explain to Snellman that they had not in any way encouraged requests for aid. In August 1867, Creutz described his worries to Snellman:

65 Häkkinen & Forsberg, 2015, 106–7; Newby & Mylyntaus, 2015, 151.
66 Kuujo, 1948, 19–20; SA XI.1, 9; Uusi Suometar, 17 Aug. 1877.
68 KA, VVA: Hl 1 (List of the measures undertaken by the Royal Senate from the start of July 1862).
69 SA XI.1, 7. Author’s own translation.
70 SA XI.2, 1203, 1268.
71 SA XI.2, 1268–9.
72 SA XI.2, 952–3, 1267–8, 1304–5.
-- I have never been one of them, who accepts the patronage under which the government has kept the Finnish people for decades and which has created the reluctance and inability in the people to take care of their own affairs. Instead I have criticized it, and nobody could be happier than me that the system has been changed. Still, it should be noted that all sudden changes from a system to its opposite are dangerous and this change is taking place at a time when there has been many difficult years in a row, and I can only hope, that the change would be gradual and that the support from the state would not stop completely at once.\textsuperscript{73}

There were also some personal differences between the governors in their communications with Snellman, which gives reason to question their ability to present the best interest of the people of the provinces. In the autumn of 1867 the governors of the provinces of Kuopio and of Turku and Pori seemed genuinely worried in their letters to Snellman whereas Theodor Sebastian Thilén, the governor of the province of Mikkeli demonstrated an exceptional lack of empathy towards the people in his letter to Snellman: “I hope that the harsh starvation will teach many things. And if it will not, it does not matter if a few dozen slackers die of hunger.”\textsuperscript{74}

In addition to the governors, the local press provided information on the crop expectations and threatening food crisis. In the 1860s the press was still rather constricted. Although the distribution of newspapers was growing, the group of people that read newspapers was still socially very restricted.\textsuperscript{75} During the autonomy the Finnish press was also restricted by Russian censorship laws.\textsuperscript{76} The Diet of 1865 implemented the act on freedom of the press in Finland, but since the Russian officials believed that the freedom of the press in Finland could not differ from the rest of the Empire, censorship was introduced again in May 1867.\textsuperscript{77} Despite these restrictions the newspapers had already for several years reported on the unfortunate situation of Finland. In the summer of 1867 several newspapers referred directly to the threat of famine.\textsuperscript{78} Although the press did report on the poor food supply in the country, it did not directly hold the government responsible or express requests for aid from the government.\textsuperscript{79}

Snellman was very critical towards the reports of the press on the famine. He constantly criticized the press for its complaints and inadequate information.\textsuperscript{80} In his published writings from 1866 and 1867 Snellman even tried to calm the people rather than allowing the press to stoke fears of famine. Snellman praised the local

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{73} SA XI.2, 1268. Author’s own translation.
\textsuperscript{74} SA XI.2, 1301. Author’s own translation.
\textsuperscript{75} Häkkinen, 1991b, 105.
\textsuperscript{76} Tommila, 1982, 7; Nieminen, 2006, 100.
\textsuperscript{77} Heikkinen & Tiihonen, 2009, 356.
\textsuperscript{78} Helsingfors Dagblad, 15 Jun., 17 Aug., 27 Aug. 1867; Ilmarinen, 2 Aug. 1867; Oulun Wiikko-Sanomia, 10 Aug. 1867.
\textsuperscript{79} Hirvonen, 2013, 105–10.
\textsuperscript{80} SA XI.1, 316–8, 892–3; SA XI.2, 932.
papers of northern Finland for the fact that they had not exaggerated the situation and for this reason the correspondents of Oulu and Kuopio provinces had offered their stories for the newspapers of Southern Finland. 81

Although Snellman was worried that the local officers and press had a tendency to underestimate the crop expectations and exaggerate the misery following crop failure, research of other famines has shown examples of the opposite. Amartya Sen has described the Great Leap Famine of the mid-twentieth century in China as a situation where the lack of free press led the government to become a victim of its own propaganda. The local civil servants gave overly positive reports of the local situation in hopes of gaining popularity in Beijing. 82 There is not enough proof to make a corresponding claim of the Finnish case, but when examining the communication between Snellman and the governors as well as Snellman's attitude towards the reports of the press, it does not seem impossible that such problems could have occurred at some level in Finland. When looking into the technical developments in communications in the 1860s the claim that there was not enough information does not seem tenable. Based on Snellman's writings it seems rather clear that Snellman was not interested in receiving more information on the needs of the provinces. The administration did not use all channels of information to their fullest extent.

Conclusions

According to Stephen Devereux the failure to prevent famines is explained by insufficient information, bureaucratic inertia, lack of capacity to act efficiently as well as lack of political will. 83 In the case of Finland in the autumn of 1867 all of these explanatory factors can be found. The food crisis is explained by a lack of resources, a lack of political will to help the hungry as well as inadequate use of information.

Previous research has emphasized the importance of poor financial resources as a significant factor in explaining the hunger crisis of 1867–1868. It is indisputable that financial resources to prevent the food crisis were poor. However, the famine research of the new millennium has proved that economic distress does not always lead to a famine. Concentrating merely on economic factors offers a simplified explanation and creates a depolarised picture of the famine.

Refraining from gratuitous aid was the guideline of J.V. Snellman's relief policies during the summer of 1867. The people were encouraged to help themselves and be frugal. In the summer of 1867 the relief actions concentrated on collection of emergency food and the development of handicraft activities. Since the problems

81 SA XI.1, 316–8; SA, XI.2, 1201–5.
83 Devereux, 2000, 27.
behind these forms of aid were well visible already in the summer, the activities can be seen as a means to calm the people in a threatening situation, more than true attempts to help. In the internal correspondence of Snellman and the governors the fear of an impending catastrophe is much more visible than in Snellman’s published writings.

However, Snellman was not alone with his ideas of the destructive consequences of generous and gratuitous aid. The idea, that the poor were themselves responsible for their inferior standing was common in the mid-nineteenth-century public discussion in Finland. In the 1860s the society also accepted inequality and the state was not actively held responsible. Although Snellman was accountable for the chosen politics, his strict politics did receive support. Social historian Christopher Lloyd has emphasized that the actions of a person are caused not only individually, but also socially. Attempts to explain actions should also include analysis of the society and its structures. The failure to help the hungry was based not solely on the individual decisions that were made, but also on wider structural factors. The unequal society and undemocratic governance of the 1860s allowed a situation where the rulers could execute politics that did not serve the best interest of the masses.

A key factor in the context of this crisis was the lack of a political counter force to the government. The press reported diligently on the threatening food crisis, but did not actively hold the government responsible. Censorship laws that came in to effect in the end of May 1867 restricted the freedom of the press. It is still rather probable that the press was mainly restricted by social and economic factors. The proportion of the population of Finland reading the newspapers was very small in the 1860’s. The press did not represent the poor.

The poor did not have a means for resistance in the 1860s, but it does not mean that the political features of this crisis could not be evaluated. The apolitical historical picture of the crisis represents the view that the decision makers of the time had. The actions of the central decision makers were based on strong political views. Even political consequences can be seen, since Snellman did have to resign from his position in the spring of 1868. It is notable that only rather recently have Snellman’s actions related to the famine been brought up as an explanatory factor behind the resignation in mainstream historiography. The historiography of the 1860s has until very recently had very little room for questioning the solidarity of the elite towards their less fortunate countrymen and women. It seems that the lack of counterforce to the government’s politics was not only visible in the politics and press of the time, but also in the Finnish public discussion decades after the event.

The information that the decision makers had at hand was also rather inadequate. The reports sent by the governors did not give hope for a good crop, but the somewhat positive reports in August may have misled the Senate. It is also

possible that the willingness to please the superiors could have led the governors to some modesty in their requests. It is clear that Snellman did not appreciate repetitive requests of aid from the provinces. Snellman would also have had possibilities to supplement the information from the reports of the newspapers. Also the telegram offered possibilities for a more timely exchange of information, but this means was not used efficiently. It seems that it was just as much a case of inadequate information as well as inadequate use of the information that was available. Most famines take a long time to develop\textsuperscript{86} and this also seems to have been the case in Finland in the 1860s. The Finnish case represents a phenomenon which persists even today. Although the information of an impending food crisis is in the air for months or even years, this does not guarantee a reaction.\textsuperscript{87}

### References

Helsinki: National Archives of Finland.
Ministry of Finance Archive: DA117, HI1, KD32, KD45, KD51.

Newspapers:
- *Helsingfors Dagblad*
- *Hufvudstadsbladet*
- *Ilmarinen*
- *Oulun Wiikko-Sanomia*
- *Suomalainen Wirallinen Lehti*
- *Tapio*
- *Uusi Suometar*

*Suomenmaan virallinen tilasto II. Yhteenveto kuvernöörien viisivuotis-kertomuksista vuosilta 1861–1865.* (Helsinki: Keisarillisen Senaatin kirjapaino, 1868) [SVT II:1]

*Suomenmaan virallinen tilasto II. Toinen jakso. Katsaus Suomen taloudelliseen tilaan vuosina 1866–1870.* (Helsinki Keisarillisen Senaatin kirjapaino, 1875) [SVT II:2]


---

\textsuperscript{86} Devereux, 2000, 27

\textsuperscript{87} Weiss, 2000, 122.


Televising the Famine: 
An Audiovisual Representation of the 
Famine in Northern Sweden, 1867–1868

David Ludvigsson
Department of History, Linköping University

In the 1970s, historical documentarists Olle Häger and Hans Villius at the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation made both a documentary and a dramatic television production about the famine years of the 1860s. The productions indicate that a class perspective dominated popular culture at the time. Yet, not least the documentary (“Ett satans år,” [One Year of Satan] 1977) is evidence of how media producers sought to communicate seriously about famine in the past, at the same time relating to contemporary issues.

Introduction

How have memories of famine been used in popular culture? In some cases, famine memories seem simply too painful to be even mentioned. Jun Jing, trying to track memories of the great famine of 1959 to 1961 in a Chinese village found that still decades later people found it very difficult to talk about. He suggests many survivors bore a sense of guilt, which may help explain why there is sometimes a lack of memorial culture surrounding historical famines. By contrast, other famines have become important themes in popular culture as well as elements in political agitation. In the cases of Ireland or Ukraine, memories of famine have laid the foundation for resistance activities against a perceived oppressor.

The Irish famine, in particular, has led to many stories, poetry, prose, art works, films, and monuments. But it is certainly not pre-given exactly what famine memories will survive. The streams of Irish migrants fleeing the famine to the USA created strong narratives, whereas other voices such as those fleeing to Canada have been

---

1 The chapter draws on Ludvigsson, 2003.
heard less often.\textsuperscript{3} As has been argued by Jason King, the Irish famine orphans adopted by French-Canadian families became inscribed in Irish and Canadian consciousness, yet to a large extent this was thanks to John Francis Maguire’s popular book \textit{The Irish in America} (1868).\textsuperscript{4} The well-known song “Skibbereen” tells of the sorrowful state of Ireland in the 1840s, but ends on a vengeful note,\textsuperscript{5} thus emphasizing a political aspect of the famine. Both “Skibbereen” and Maguire’s book are examples of how cultural products influence memories of famine. The meaning and memory of the Irish famine remain contested.\textsuperscript{6} In Ireland the famine continues to evoke memories of suffering, whereas in North America monuments erected to commemorate the same famine contain a sense of optimism, of building a new life.\textsuperscript{7} Even in the case of Ireland, as Emily Mark-FitzGerald has argued, there was for a long time a relative absence of commemorative activities. Mark-FitzGerald suggests that this lack of commemoration was due to the famine’s “lack of central characters, linear narrative, heroic episodes or key dates”.\textsuperscript{8} Yet, she suggests radio and television documentaries and dramas helped keep famine history alive in popular consciousness.

Mark-FitzGerald’s conclusion is an interesting and important one, and for two reasons. First, she points out the power of modern mass media to influence historical memory. A number of scholars have argued that many people learn history from television and film, Gary Edgerton even going so far as to claim that “television is the principal means by which most people learn about history today”.\textsuperscript{9} While the media landscape is constantly changing, and radio and television may already have passed their high peak years, mass media undoubtedly influence historical memory including memories of famine. Second, Mark-FitzGerald suggests that the Irish famine commemoration was muted until relatively recently because of its lack of certain characteristics. It is well known that uses of history in popular culture are influenced by cultural logics such as popular television conventions. These conventions can be, for example, that it should be possible for subjects to be represented visually, that narratives offer objects for identification, and that they follow the dramatic unities of time, space and action. There is a continuous need to investigate how historic famines are shaped or transformed when turned into cultural media formats such as television.

\textsuperscript{3} McGowan, 2014.
\textsuperscript{4} King, 2012, 128–33.
\textsuperscript{5} Falcher-Poyroux, 2014.
\textsuperscript{6} Newby & Myllyntaus, 2015, 157–8.
\textsuperscript{7} Mark-FitzGerald, 2013; Goek, 2013.
\textsuperscript{8} Mark-FitzGerald, 2012, 146.
\textsuperscript{9} Edgerton, 2001, 1.
Televising the Famine of 1867–1868

In this chapter, I shall discuss an audiovisual representation of a historical famine, namely *Ett satans år* [One Year of Satan], a documentary made by historian-filmmakers Olle Häger and Hans Villius for SVT, i.e. the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation, in 1977. The documentary deals with the famine of 1867-68, which affected large areas of northern Europe including Sweden. I will use this film as a case study to explore popular representations of famine.

*Ett satans år* was first broadcast on December 28, 1977. It has since been re-broadcast by SVT several times, and was made available for purchase on DVD in 2007 (the DVD title is *1000 år. En svensk historia. Ett satans år* is on the DVD as an additional film). At the time of publication, *Ett satans år*, and several other 1970s documentaries by Häger and Villius, are available online. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GN2nDkRINsk [accessed 20. Jan 2017]. Research copies are also available for consultation at the Kungliga Biblioteket / National Library of Sweden.
Before discussing the film, a few things must be said about the famine that struck Sweden and Finland in the late 1860s, and which has been considered the last major famine in northern Europe to arise from natural or climatic triggers. Also, a word is needed on the society in which it happened. As the film deals only with northern Sweden and not Finland, the context presented here is about Sweden. Briefly, Sweden at this time was a poor country but also a society in transition. The population was growing rapidly. It was still mostly a pre-industrial agricultural country, yet new industries were expanding. In the northern parts of the country lumbering and saw-mills attracted workers and even caused a worker migration from the south to the north, thus offering an alternative to emigration. From 1851 to 1930 an estimated 1.2 million Swedes emigrated, mostly to North America, which means a fifth of the population (and most of them young people) left the country. Emigration peaked during the famine years in the late 1860s. In spiritual terms, the church still held people’s souls in a tight grip. Politically, a number of important reforms were gradually changing the country, a major parliament reform taking place in 1865/66, but the vote was still restricted on the basis of gender, wealth and income.  

Historically, famine was a recurring phenomenon in northern Europe during the early modern period. The famine of 1695-97 struck hard in Scandinavia, Finland, and the Baltic region, causing particularly high mortality in northern Sweden and Finland. With regard to the 1860s in Sweden, harvests were bad during several years but 1867 was the most difficult, and it remains the coldest year ever recorded in Sweden. Different names have applied to it in different regions, for example the Lichen Year referring to lichen being used as food in this year of starvation. Northern Sweden certainly went through a major crisis, yet modern research has suggested that the relief efforts were largely successful. In the words of Marie C. Nelson, who investigated the famine in the district of Norrbotten, “deaths due to starvation related diseases were not numerous, and deaths due directly to starvation a myth”. Peasants survived yet lived in misery and destitution, many baking bread of bark, lichen, and straw. While conditions were bad in both countries, the famine left a much higher death toll in Finland than in Sweden. 

The memory of the famine years lived on, especially in the northern parts of the country. Further, famine or scarcity of food has been a recurring theme in novels about nineteenth-century Swedish peasants, such as Vilhelm Moberg’s

---

12 Lappalainen, 2012; Jutikkala, 1955, 48-63. In Finland, for example, it is estimated that over a quarter of the population perished. Muroma, 1991, 180.  
13 Nelson, 1988, 174. Donald Harman Akenson has challenged this assertion, however, in his comparative study of Irish and Swedish emigration to North America. He writes: “to take [Nelson’s] study area of Norrbotten, it is hard to see how a crude death rate from 17.9 in 1866 to 27.0 per thousand in 1868 did not involve some emaciated or fever-twisted bodies.” Akenson, 2011, 142.  
epic Utvandrarna [The Emigrants] (1949)\textsuperscript{15}, Linnéa Fjällstedt’s Hungerpesten [Hunger Plague] (1975), and Bernhard Nordh’s Nybyggare vid Bäversjön [Settlers on Beaver Lake] (1946), which plays out in 1867 and 1868.\textsuperscript{16} In Sara Lidman’s Din tjänare hör (1977), peasants in the 1870s cannot stand to talk about the famine of the previous decade.\textsuperscript{17} One of the first Swedish realist children’s books, Laura Fitinghoff’s Barnen från Frostmofjället [Children of the Moor] (1907), also set in 1867, tells the story of seven children whose parents have starved to death and who now wander southwards in search of food and human compassion. The book was popular for decades and has been turned into a feature film (1945) and more recently into a theatre play (2011).\textsuperscript{18} Starving peasants make up the crucial starting

\textsuperscript{15} Utvandrarna (“The Emigrants”), a tale of agrarian hardship in, and emigration from, Småland, was made into a successful film (1971), directed by Jan Troell and featuring Max von Sydow and Liv Ullman in starring roles. A sequel, Nybyggarna (“The New Land”), also based on Moberg’s writing, was released in 1972.

\textsuperscript{16} On the hard life in the north of Sweden where food was often scarce, see also the novels by Torgny Lindgren, and the documentary works by Lilian Ryd.

\textsuperscript{17} Lidman, 1977, 59–60.

\textsuperscript{18} The film was made available for purchase on DVD in 2007 and 2011. When the book was published again in 2011, related teaching materials were made freely available on-line by the Swedish Institute for Children’s Books. See Runsten, 2011.
point also in Sven Nykvist’s Oscar-nominated feature film *The Oxen* (1991). Thus, fictionalized stories of famine have persisted in Swedish culture. Yet while there are starving people in the works mentioned, there are few deaths. Memories of the famine did not result in any extensive memorializing rituals in Sweden. While not unknown, the famine years never reached the status of a key event in narratives about Sweden, and thus have begun to fade in the memories of people even in the north.

The historian-filmmakers who took on the issue of the famine in Sweden, Olle Häger (1935-2014) and Hans Villius (1923-2012), were academically trained historians who both left university to work for the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation, first making radio programmes and then, from the mid-1960s, historical television. Forming a team in 1967, they would work together for over thirty years, making more than two hundred historical documentaries, a few drama-documentaries, and writing several books in the process. Being trained historians, all through their careers they narrated stories about the past with great expertise. In theoretical terms, while making historical documentaries will always involve a process of negotiating between competing considerations, cognitive considerations played an important part in their filmmaking process; by the term cognitive considerations I mean the filmmaker’s efforts to discover and communicate knowledge. As a consequence of their decades-long production of historical programming, often made in the expository mode, the names of Häger & Villius became perceived by the Swedish television audience as a guarantee of high quality programming, and the characteristic narrator voice of Villius became known as the “voice of history” in Sweden. Villius himself once told the anecdote of overhearing someone say “that must be Hans Villius, because when just ordering a herring sandwich it sounded like the outbreak of the Second World War”. It should be added that no commercial television channels were present in the Swedish media landscape until in the late 1980s. Thus, in the period covered by this chapter, public service television had a very strong position in the Swedish media landscape, and its historical programming reached very broad segments of the population.

Widely appreciated, the history production by Häger and Villius comes out of a specific production context. The public service channel where they worked in the 1970s, TV2, was known for politically radical programming. Both conservative and social democratic politicians criticized several programmes for having left-wing...
tendencies, an indication of the radical atmosphere at TV2. The productions by Häger and Villius reflect some of that radicalism. Typically, they tended to focus on experiences of the working population, thus seeing history from below. This perspective comes through when the producers designed their project about the famine year of 1867. Interestingly, they connected the project to the on-going debate on developmental assistance policy. In the description for the project, communicating with bosses at TV2, they wrote that 1867 was:

The last year that Sweden was a developing country.
In this year we saw [...] a possibility to get at and shed light upon the current problems of aid to developing countries. This is about our own background. And here [in Sweden's past] we found the same arguments that one hears today, arguments about our lazy, ignorant, and wasteful ancestors.

Clearly, the producers were critical of those moralizing against the poor. Häger and Villius started planning for the famine project years before shooting the film. In 1974 they contacted university historians for advice. Not much research had previously been done on the famine. This caused them to search through primary source materials such as court records and newspapers themselves. They researched the programmes themselves in the spring of 1976, also seeking assistance from one of the staff members at Skellefteå Museum. After the research phase they wrote scripts, filmed during the winter and then did editing work during 1977. The project resulted in the documentary film *Ett satans år* but also in a docudrama, *Isgraven [The Ice Grave]*, and a book on the famine. Häger and Villius made the documentary, whereas Häger made the docudrama together with filmmaker Carl Torell.

The creative process of the documentary can be partly reconstructed. In an early draft there are twelve paragraphs summarizing what happened during the famine and which form a rough outline. Among the content-focused paragraphs are: poor Sweden; crop failure in successive years; summer's hope; those forced to leave the village; speculators; the first night of frost; fund-raising begins; starving people etc. The draft shows the starting point of the filmmakers was not a particular story, nor a heroic or tragic individual, but a fairly structural, general account about a society struck by famine. The filmmakers wanted to transmit knowledge of importance, or in principal terms, they were strongly influenced by cognitive considerations. *Ett satans år* follows the early outline as set out above, although not

24 On the radicalism of Swedish public service television, see Thurén, 1997.
26 In their book, Häger, Villius and Torell list works they had benefitted from during their research, but most of these works deal with the famine mostly in passing. See Häger, Villius & Torell, 1978.
all of its details. The finished 44-minute programme consists of thirty sequences, which I have divided here into ten segments (A–J):

A. Sequences 1–2. Opening words and the tale of Erik Gideonsson.
C. Sequences 6–7. The wintry forest land. Photograph from 1867 proves the late spring.
I. Sequences 25–29. Relief work. Aid is gathered and distributed. Letter from bishop is quoted.

The programme follows a chronological cycle of the famine year, the annual cycle thus providing a linear narrative. But when compared with the early outline it becomes clear that certain elements were added to the programme along the way. First, there are two authentic witness accounts, one of them (A) illustrating the hard winter and the other (H) the terrible first night of frost.27 These accounts are told in first person voices and add both presence and detail. Not least, and although they are very factual, by being read in an intense tone the eyewitness accounts communicate some of the horrors that people will have felt during the famine. The dramatic sound track is contrasted by still imagery of a landscape that seems deserted by humans. Second, the story of a young boy, Nils Petter Wallgren, has been added and is told bit by bit through the programme. This story was not part of the early draft but is an example of how the filmmakers transformed the abstract past into an engaging, concrete story about human beings, thus evoking identification amongst the viewers. In effect, Wallgren becomes one of those central characters that may, as Emily Mark-FitzGerald suggests, be a prerequisite to permit a famine-related narrative to become an attractive part of popular culture. Further, by telling

27 These eyewitness accounts are preserved in the ethnographic collections of Nordiska muséet in Stockholm.
the story of Wallgren through re-enactments, it provided images with people in them. This will have been a key issue, because television norms demand that subjects are covered both through words and images. This is often a difficult norm to handle in historical television, because there are rarely authentic images of past events or people, unless the subjects have been rich and / or famous. In fact, there is a strong tendency for historical television to portray issues that have gathered a wealth of archival pictures, such as the Second World War which was widely documented by cameramen accompanying the troops. Similarly, royal families have always attracted photographers as well as painters and cameramen. For example, a very large share of the old film archive at SVT contains film depicting the Swedish royal family, which makes it easy to make historical television about the royals.\(^{28}\) By contrast, few professional photographers were active in Sweden in the 1860s, and few of their photographs circulated or entered media archives.\(^{29}\) Häger and Villius found very few historic images that in a direct way could represent the famine year, one of them a photograph taken in early June 1867 showing there was still snow on the ground. But none of these images depicted the starving poor or the harsh living conditions.

Figure 2. The ship “Föreningen” is launched in Härnösand in northern Sweden, early June 1867. The photograph was used in *Ett satans år*. The narrator points out that while it should be summer, snow is still on the ground and people in the foreground have on winter clothing “because it is still winter-time”. Thus, while the photograph does not directly show the famine, it is used as a visual source that demonstrates the cause for the coming failure of crops. Photo Courtesy of Länsmuseet Västernorrland.

\(^{28}\) Ludvigsson, 2003, 74–5, 274.

\(^{29}\) Rittsel, 2008.
conditions of the north. Therefore, in order to live up to the aesthetic norms of the
time, the filmmakers had to create imagery that could function as a substitute for
missing authentic imagery showing the famine.

Two strategies were used to create the important new imagery. One was to
shoot images of wide, snow-covered forests and of log cabins and other historic
environments that could be taken to be from the 1860s. These images propose
to the audience that this is what it looked like, although the viewers are of course
expected to realize that the filming had taken place much later. In *Ett satans år*, voice-over narration was used to give a special sense to the images it was
covering, claiming it took weeks and months to get messages about starvation to
pass through the vast land. Further, the sound track featured the sound of (a cold)
wind, and the dramatic music of Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, which also help
to load these images with the sense of urgency and threatening nature.

The second strategy was adopting re-enactments. Bill Nichols has criticized
documentaries for adopting re-enactments of historically based events, arguing
they “trade documentary authenticity for fictional identification”. However, in *Ett satans år* re-enactments were used in very specific ways. First, re-enactments
in the documentary do not feature dialogue, but instead voice-over narration is
used over these images, thus maintaining a distance between the audience and
the people featuring in the re-enacted scenes. Second, the acts performed in
re-enacted scenes were of typical work in the old, rural society, such as cutting
down a tree or ploughing and sowing, and the actors clearly know their task. Thus,
there is a very strong effort to achieve authenticity in the way the re-enactments
were set up. The element of identification is more obvious only in a couple of
close-up re-enacted scenes, in particular when the camera pans over the bleak
faces of churchgoers, the narrator reading from a pastoral letter that the poor
have “thoughtlessly squandered the rich profits of summer” (I). At this point, the
audience is led to identify with the parishioners who received the message from
the bishop, feeling indignation in response to the moralizing, authoritarian voice
from this church leader.

In the case of the Wallgren story, the element of identification is stronger.
Wallgren is first introduced in a colour film re-enactment scene, when a number of
people are seen slaughtering a pig in front of a small cabin, snow on the ground
(B). The camera zooms in on a tall, thin boy standing a little to the side, the narrator
saying this is Nils Petter Wallgren and there are court records describing him;
“this is how we have imagined him to be”, and “we will meet him again during the
year”. The image freezes to a black-and-white photograph, the narrator adding that
within the year the boy will be dead. When Wallgren appears again, he features in

---

30 In the 1990s, the on-screen presenter appeared in historical programming thus offering a new
solution to the problem of how to provide imagery when covering topics that had not resulted in
authentic pictures. Another creative solution, used by Ken Burns, Marianne Söderberg and other
documentarists but not by Häger & Villius, is to zoom in on words in hand-written letters.
black-and-white photographs, representing not only himself but also clearly being
the representative of the faceless and nameless poor. Thus, he is seen on the
road looking for work (D) as well as working in a lumberyard (E). At one point, the
narrator says Wallgren dreamt of going to America, the image showing the boy
reading a romantic story of American Indians (G). This dream cannot be verified
in written sources about Wallgren, but seeing him as a representative of the poor,
famine-stricken population there can be no doubt some of that population shared
dreams of migrating to America. Ultimately, after the narrator informs that he had
to work hard and was beaten by the employer, images show Wallgren lying down
looking sick (J):

He laid down very sick for 35 days. Nobody cared about him. Snow came through a
broken window. He had gangrene in both his feet, bedsores on his right hip, a wound
four inches long, and the iliac crest was bare to the bone. He was completely emaciated.
In the middle of February 1868, Nils Petter Wallgren’s mother came wandering to Sikeå
to fetch him […] Two weeks after his home-coming, on 29 February 1868, Nils Petter
Wallgren died. He died from negligence and typhoid caused by hunger. A pauper, a
name among all the nameless, one year of Satan.

Sources prove there is a reliable basis for the account. Wallgren was sick for 35
days, his mother came to take him home, he died on 29 February 1868, witnesses
testified there was a broken window near the boy’s sickbed, a doctor used the
word “negligence”, and Wallgren himself testified his employer had beaten him.32
His fate is important in a cognitive sense as it helps the audience to understand
the unknown lives of the poor. Yet, interestingly enough, historical sources indicate
the story could have been told differently. Clearly, the filmmakers have read the
sources in a selective way. According to the court records, there were other people
sleeping in the same room as the boy, indicating others shared the same living
conditions. Second, sources state Wallgren visited his parents’ home shortly before
he fell ill. Because these pieces of information are withheld from the audience, it
leaves the impression that he was alone in the world. Offering images of a sad
young boy created an atmosphere of loneliness and vulnerability, instead of the
feeling of solidarity that could have resulted from images of relatives or working
companions surrounding him. Third, and particularly important, the narrator fails
to mention that the employer and his wife were sentenced by the court to pay the
considerable sum of one hundred riksdaler for the negligence of the sick boy. This
information suggests that society punished employers who treated the poor as
badly as Wallgren was treated. By suppressing it, the filmmakers simplified the
story of Wallgren’s suffering and created a morally indignant tale about poor people
who lacked rights. Through Wallgren, we get to see injustices but not how society
at the time attempted, at least in part, to redress the balance.

32 Sveriges Radio Dokumentarkivet (Stockholm), T21, F1, 30, Ett satans år. 1867, XYZ, copies (21
pages) of court records.
There are other examples indicating that moral and dramatic considerations sometimes won out over more balanced cognitive considerations. According to the narrator, the ruling classes did not handle the relief as one may have hoped:

Finally even the authorities understood […] that a real famine winter was approaching. […] Charity cleared the conscience of the rich […] there was both private and state relief. But much never got there in time [before the sea became ice]. Only half of the money was used for grain. The rest remained in Stockholm. […] Somewhere far away it had been decided in detail how the relief was to be used […] when the Tåsjö people asked for permission to mix bark and straw in the bread, the authorities said no. It should be fir lichen, for that had been decided. And so the old and feeble had to plod out into the forest to collect fir lichen […] the relief was left for weeks and months in Kramfors and Hämnösand before it was collected and distributed.

As noted above, at the time the documentary was made no thorough historic research had been done on the 1860s famine in northern Sweden and thus the filmmakers will have found it difficult to estimate how well the relief met with the needs. Still, it is striking that dealing with the relief efforts, *Ett satans år* focuses on the problems rather than on what was accomplished. The narrator uses a host of verbs that signal passivity, such as the food was “left” for months before being distributed, and money “remained” in Stockholm. And finally “even” the authorities understood what was happening. Further, distribution was connected with apparently foolish stipulations. The overall effect of the account is the impression that while nature sent the bad crops, the authorities caused the famine. Again, this interpretation builds on a simplified view of relief efforts. For one thing, as the narrator notes in passing, famine relief came from both private and state sources, and if in some cases the use of bark or straw in bread was prohibited, then that was probably a localized stipulation by a particular relief organization. Just as the example of the bishop’s letter mentioned earlier, it adds to the overall interpretation that the authorities did a bad job, thus serving the moral function of increasing the viewer’s indignation.

Finally, we should highlight a few interesting language issues. The narrator uses the concepts of “upper class” and “working class”. While the concept of class was commonly used in Sweden in the 1970s, it was a politically loaded term that indicates the filmmakers saw conflicting interests within society. Further, when commenting on the evolving lumber industry of the north, the narrator talks of “squires” with “money in bulging leather cases”, “speculators” and “forest thieves”. Taken together, in the Swedish source language these words build up a story of brutal capitalism that adds to the filmmakers’ interpretation of the famine-stricken society as one deeply divided, where the rich felt little compassion for the poor and where authorities did not take the necessary responsibility.

33 Nelson concluded that the relief was a success. Nelson, 1988, 82 (table 5.2). See also Newby, 2017, in this volume.
Concluding Discussion

Ett satans år is an example of how television producers sought to communicate seriously about historic incidences of famine. As we have seen, the filmmakers took careful cognitive considerations, both by doing extensive research and by including descriptive and analytical elements in the programme. But there is also evidence of their taking aesthetic and moral considerations. Already the original choice of subject was motivated by contemporary problems of aid, and in the documentary both the negative depiction of the authorities and the simplification of the Wallgren story are proof that famine history was in fact politicized. The film’s indignant version of the boy’s fate is based on political morals as much as on historical fact, and the famine is represented as largely the result of the absence of political action.

The tendency to offer empathetic portrayals of the poor and emphasize the greediness of the rich can be perceived as a signifier of the film’s radical 1970s context. During these same years, there was a movement among workers in Sweden to investigate and tell the story of their workplaces from a “view from below” perspective. Also, the increased popularity of genealogy and local heritage groups added to the tendency of ordinary citizens offering historical interpretations, and very often they sided with their poor ancestors against their supposed oppressors. In some ways, this was a demonstration of the consensus-oriented master narrative of Sweden being challenged by alternative, especially leftist narratives. The famine of the 1860s can be interpreted as historical content that lent itself to conflict-oriented narratives about Sweden’s past.

The results confirm studies that have argued that historical documentaries tend to portray those parts of collective memory that are felt to be relevant at a given time, thus negotiating a “useable” past. Yet it should be noted that while the 1970s was a radical period, not all Swedes appreciated the radical programming of the public service broadcaster. When it comes to the political perspective championed in Ett satans år it is not certainly one of restoration, but could be seen as one operating to argue in favour of a more radical position. It is history from below and an expression of a radical public service channel in the radical 1970s. While Ett satans år was not the most provocative of historical programmes to be produced

34 Alzén, 2011.
36Wiklund, 2006. See also Johansson, 2001, who discusses competing interpretations of the Ådalen events in 1931, i.e. a famous incident in Swedish history when military troops opened fire on demonstrators.
37Edgerton, 2001, 8.
38Cf. Ludvigsson, 2003, 100–1.
at SVT in that decade it should be seen as one of those public service productions that challenged the ruling power by championing a perspective of class conflict.\textsuperscript{40}

When compared with the filmmakers' book on the famine, which tells of the famine year in a matter-of-fact way, the analysis confirms that conventions of the television medium influenced how the famine was represented. Dramatic music and sound effects like a cold wind blowing were added to the sound track. The filmmakers struggled to create images that could represent the famine year and the addition of the Wallgren story provided an individual for the viewers to identify with. Wallgren, who was represented in a large number of photographs, was not even mentioned in the book. Thus, they shaped the famine to fit the medium. Through the careful selection of facts, images and stories, the addition of music and sound effects, and the occasional intensity on the part of the narrator, memories of the famine were put to use as television entertainment.

References

Sverige Radio Dokumentarkivet (Stockholm), T21, F1, 31, Ett satans år. Manus, CD, Produktionsbeskrivning.

Sverige Radio Dokumentarkivet (Stockholm), T21, F1, 30, Ett satans år. 1867, XYZ, copies (21 pages) of court records.


---

\textsuperscript{40} A similar phenomenon took place more-or-less simultaneously in the UK, with the BBC defining its “public service” remit to include radical / progressive productions, notably via its \textit{Play for Today} series. See, e.g., McGrath, 2015, xxix; Kershaw, 1992, 148.


Criminality and the Finnish Famine of 1866–68

Mikka Vuorela
Institute of Criminology and Legal Policy, University of Helsinki

The article examines criminality and the use of the criminal justice system during the Finnish famine of 1866–1868. The main research objective of the study is to provide insight on how and why famine affects crime. To provide background for the examination, a description of the trends in crime and crime control during the years 1842–1890 is presented. The latter half of the century and the nascent urbanisation of Finland brought about a considerable increase in the number of criminal convictions for minor crimes but the convictions for serious crimes were on a downward trend. The crime trend was interrupted by the famine when property crime rates quadrupled. Interestingly, the levels of recorded violence and homicides remained stable or even reduced slightly. In order to provide explanations for the phenomenon, theories of modern criminology are used in conjunction with an analysis of individual, structural and cultural factors affecting hidden crime. The conclusion of the analysis is that the reduction of violence is most likely a statistical illusion caused by a multitude of factors discouraging the exposure of violent crimes. After the famine, the downward trend of serious crimes halted and stabilised to a level slightly higher than before.

Introduction

The historical justice statistics of the Nordic countries are well known for their quality and quantity.¹ The collection of Finnish justice statistics began in 1839 when the Emperor of Russia ordered the Procurator of Finland to observe the administration of justice in the Grand Duchy. The Procurator’s office was relieved of this duty in 1891 when the Justice Commission took over the statistical work.² The Procurator’s statistics have not been available for research until recently, mainly because they

---

² Lappi-Seppälä, 2013, 698.
were only published as hand-written manuscripts.\(^3\) The criminal justice sections of the Procurator's reports were published in 2014, compiled for the first time into a single dataset. The statistics include time series on criminal convictions, punishments and the prison population during the years 1842–1890.\(^4\) The data is for the most part unused in previous research, and thus has the potential to yield valuable findings. Comparable justice statistics are available only in Sweden, thanks to the pioneering work of Hanns von Hofer.\(^5\)

Historical criminology opens new perspectives on the development of the current criminal justice system. Observing the past sheds new light on the challenges faced by society and the judiciary in different times. It may also facilitate the critical evaluation of society and the criminal justice system. In the context of the Finnish famine of 1866–1868 (hereinafter referred to as the Finnish famine), the historical analysis of crime and punishment gives an opportunity to learn from the mistakes made during the famine. The investigation should also yield vital information on human behaviour in times of crisis, and on society's responses to it. Three essential questions come to mind. How did the famine influence criminality? How did the criminal justice system react? What caused the changes in crime and punishment?

The focus in this article is on describing and explaining crime trends attributable to the Finnish famine. Understanding the scope of the changes in criminality requires familiarity with the legal reality of the time. It is therefore relevant to begin the study with a statistical overview of the use of the Finnish criminal justice system during the 19\(^{th}\) century, and after that to concentrate on the Finnish famine. The main objective of the study is to apply theories of modern criminology in an attempt to explain crime trends during the famine. The analysis focuses on the effects of poverty, hunger and vagrancy. Research literature concerning absolute poverty is scarce, which probably reflects the good economic standing of the Western world.\(^6\)

The article continues with a statistical overview of the administration of justice in Finland in the 19\(^{th}\) century (section 2), followed by a short description of societal circumstances before and during the famine (section 3). The selected theories of modern criminology are presented in section 4, and are applied in the analysis of crime trends during the famine. The analysis in the fifth section is extended to individual, structural and cultural factors in an attempt to provide an explanation of how the famine affected criminality in reality. The concluding section summarises the objectives and results of the study.

---

\(^3\) The manuscripts are in old Swedish, with a complex handwriting style that was typical of the time.

\(^4\) Vuorela, 2014.

\(^5\) von Hofer, 2011.

\(^6\) It could be said that absolute poverty is practically non-existent in postmodern Western countries, and that reported poverty is relative to other people. This would explain why there are so few studies concerning the effect of absolute poverty on crime.
Crime in 19th-Century Finland

The Reliability of the Data

Given that the earliest publications in the Procurator’s report series are almost two hundred years old, the question of reliability needs to be addressed before the data is used in research. It is viewed both positively7 and negatively8 in the early studies. Two studies were conducted in 2014, based on different statistical methods of time-series analysis. Von Hofer and Lappi-Seppälä used regressive time-series analysis and concluded that there appeared to be no significant quality errors in the data.9 I subsequently supplemented the quality check with a Durbin-Watson test analysis and concluded that there were no statistical errors that would prevent the use of the data in research. In addition, I crosschecked the homicide statistics with the homicide data of the National Research Institute of Legal Policy (Finland), which is based on parish cause-of-death statistics.10 None of these analyses revealed any problems of statistical reliability in the data.

Certain restrictions must nevertheless be taken into account, most notably that the criminal statistics only depict crimes investigated by the courts. Statistics of police-reported crimes have been kept only since 1927. Consequently, the issue of hidden criminality is a major factor in the Procurator’s statistics. The court statistics are not a valid source of information on total criminality but they do provide reliable data on the number of criminal convictions in general courts. It is generally assumed that these statistics are increasingly reliable, the more serious the crime, and thus may be helpful in identifying the real trends in more serious (violent) crime.11

The main function of the historical justice statistics is to facilitate observation of how the criminal justice system is used in different eras. Conviction statistics may not accurately measure total criminality, but they do reveal the kind of crimes that ended up in the criminal courts. This information may then be used in drawing conclusions about society’s reactions to different types of crime. It can be assumed that the courts were more likely to be involved in serious crimes than in petty crimes. On the other hand, the punishment and prison statistics provide accurate and reliable information on the use of sanctions. These statistics were collected directly from responsible officials and there is no problem of “hidden punishments” in the data. The incarceration statistics are based on the prisons’ bookkeeping, and the courts reported the punishment statistics.

7 Baranovski, 1850.
8 Verkko, 1931.
11 The same limitation was noted by Mc Mahon in his analysis of homicide rates during the Irish famine. (Mc Mahon, 2014, 23, endnote 68.)
Crime Trends

The statistics refer to cities and rural communities based on the criminal’s place of residence. Urban dwellers appear to have been much more criminally active than people living in rural communities: in 1842–1890 the average number of criminal convictions per 1,000 population was 5.2 in the countryside and 32.6 in the cities (see Figure 1, which shows the trends in urban and rural areas, and the whole country). All of the statistics presented in this article are from the lower courts: military courts and courts of appeal are excluded from the analysis.

![Figure 1. Criminal convictions, 1842–1890 (per 1,000 population)](image)

The statistics also classify crimes as serious or petty based on the sanction set in the law. Petty crimes were punishable only by fines and the law did not allow for incarceration or corporal punishment. The levels of convictions for serious crimes remained stable throughout the century. However, the proportion of petty crimes increased notably from the 1860s onwards, especially in the cities: the majority of convictions in urban areas were for petty crimes. By the end of the century, breaches of economic or police regulations were the most common types of offence in the whole country, and most of them were committed in the cities. These breaches constituted over half of the total convictions in urban areas in 1890, compared with less than ten per cent in 1842. Table 1 shows the increased frequency of the said offences in cities compared to total convictions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% of all convictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>9.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>25.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>50.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Breach of economic or police regulations, proportions of all convictions in cities
Given the nature and frequency of petty crimes in the total statistics, it is necessary to examine serious crimes separately. Such crimes are at the core of criminal law, and include theft, assault, robbery and homicide. The term "serious" indicates the seriousness of the type of offence compared to other offences. Hence assault, which is categorised as a serious crime, included both normal and aggravated forms of assault. Figure 2 depicts the absolute number of convictions for serious crimes in urban and rural areas, and in the whole country.

The number of convictions for serious crimes is marked by a slight increase during the period attributable to the increase in the urban population (and crime). The Finnish famine caused the drastic increase in serious crime during the 1860s. The change was not permanent, and conviction numbers returned to their original level (compared to the population). The statistics also point to a significant crime trend: the number of convictions for serious crimes decreased until the famine. Figure 3 depicts the decreasing numbers of convictions for certain types of serious crime per 1,000 population.
The number of convictions for sexual crimes decreased during the century, and the famine did not disturb this trend. Convictions for both violent and property-related crimes decreased up until the famine, after which the levels stabilised. The decrease in the number of sexual crimes was attributable to cultural changes in sexual morals. A large majority of the convictions for sexual crimes related to intercourse outside marriage (fornication), and the numbers decreased by the year 1890 to less that 20 per cent of the 1840s level. Homicide levels, on the other hand, remained high\textsuperscript{12} during the whole century.

The crime trends at the end of the century are linked to the changes in societal control and public morality. The nascent urbanisation provided an opportunity for the effective surveillance of citizens, which increased the risk of arrest. The new surveillance did not reach sparsely populated rural areas, where the total number of criminal convictions remained stable during the whole period. Changes in public morality, on the other hand, are reflected in crimes against morality, which fall outside the scope of the criminal law: swearing and breaches of the Sabbath, for example, were among the most common crimes up until 1883, when they were removed from the statistics.\textsuperscript{13} It is unknown whether the courts ceased to convict people for these crimes or whether they were merely transferred to a category such as other breaches of general law. The aforementioned example of fornication also hints at the withdrawal of moralistic criminal law. The decline in such convictions gave way to sentencing for offences involving alcohol or the disturbance of public order.\textsuperscript{14}

**The Finnish Famine of 1866–1868**

**Social Policy**

The purpose of social policy is to improve the quality of life of members of the society, especially the underprivileged. From a criminological perspective, social exclusion and economic hardship increase the risk of criminality.\textsuperscript{15} Therefore, improving the social status of the low-income population is considered an effective method of crime prevention: in the words of Franz von Liszt, “a good social policy is the best criminal policy”. Given the close connection between social policy and criminality, it is natural to begin this analysis of crime trends during the Finnish famine with an overview of the social-welfare system.

When Finland became an autonomous state in 1809 it was an underdeveloped agrarian society, and the only expanding population group was the poor farmer

\textsuperscript{12} Verkko, 1931.
\textsuperscript{13} Vuorela, 2014, 70.
\textsuperscript{14} For a more detailed account of the changes, see Vuorela, 2014.
\textsuperscript{15} Lehti, Sirén, Aaltonen, Danielsson & Kivivuori, 2012, 80–81.
class. The accelerating growth caused an excess-population problem because fewer new farms were being established. The landless also faced difficulties in earning a living as the oversupply of labour caused a decline in wages. The population overspill combined with consecutive years of poor harvests resulted in several periods of famine during the first half of the century.\textsuperscript{16} At the same time, mass unemployment forced many families onto the streets.\textsuperscript{17} The government enacted new legislation in an attempt to relieve the situation. However, neither the begging act of 1817 (\textit{kerjuujulistus} in Finnish) nor the social-welfare reform of 1852 (including the alms statute [\textit{vaivaishoitoasetus}] and the statute on legal protection [\textit{asetus laillisesta suojelusta}]) succeeded in reducing poverty.\textsuperscript{18} Society’s responsibility for its citizens’ livelihood was still a new phenomenon in nineteenth-century Finland.

The social-welfare statute of 1852 has been described as Finland’s first attempt to create a general welfare system for all its citizens, turning the alms system into a juridical institution with a built-in appeal process. Public welfare was further strengthened in 1865 when responsibility for the system was transferred from the parishes to the newly established municipalities.\textsuperscript{19} The system of legal protection was also largely dismantled in the same year with the enacting of new labour and vagrancy laws.\textsuperscript{20} As of 1852, all rural residents were required to own or rent land (“legal protection”), or to work as hired hands. The new statutes of 1865 permitted the landless rural population to move to urban areas to work in factories and for retailers. The cities did not have the same kind of social-welfare system as the rural communities, and the reform increased the individual’s responsibility for his/her livelihood.\textsuperscript{21} The statute of occupations (\textit{elinkeinoasetus}) that expanded occupational freedom further emphasised the right to provide for oneself and the responsibility to look after oneself.\textsuperscript{22}

The year 1865 also brought changes in the national alcohol policy as the new spirits statute prohibited home distillation and granted exclusive distillation rights to factory producers. These restrictions were rooted in the reformatory ideas of public education promoted in the elementary schools, advocating an alcohol-free lifestyle. Several political and ideological movements intent on ridding society of the vices associated with alcohol strongly supported the prohibition of distillation on moral grounds. The Temperance Society and the Laestadian revival movement were among those campaigning against the distillation and consumption of spirits.

\begin{thebibliography}{22}
\bibitem{17} Toikko, 2005, 41–2.
\bibitem{20} In the statute of 1865, the system of legal protection only applied to landless people who lived an ill-mannered life. (van Aerschot 1996, 60.)
\bibitem{21} Toikko, 2005, 43–46.
\bibitem{22} Kekkonen, 1987, 198–201.
\end{thebibliography}
The spirits statute of 1865 did not have the desired effect, and it was reformed many times in the following two decades. It was only after the statute of 1885 that the consumption of strong spirits began to decrease.23

The Great Hunger Years

The multiple years of poor harvests in the early 1860s culminated in serious crop failures in 1862 and 1865. Famine-relief attempts and the distribution to farmers of sown crops stored for use in emergency situations had left communal granaries empty, and no replenishment was forthcoming as the bad weather in continental Europe caused a fall-off in grain imports. Consequently, the crop failure of 1867 quickly turned a difficult situation into a complete catastrophe. Crop reserves ran out early in 1868 in large parts of the country. Hunger afflicted the poor, whereas members of the small upper class were initially spared the discomfort: While tens of thousands of people starved to death, sales of luxury products increased.24 Typhoid fever followed in the wake of the famine: it is estimated that 500,000 people were afflicted in 1868 when, according to parish registers, the deaths of over 57,000 people were related to the disease. However, it is currently assumed that most of these deaths were attributable to starvation.25

The municipal social-welfare systems could not care for the poor, and thousands of families had to leave their homes to live as beggars on the streets.26 The normal annual mortality rate in the mid-19th century was approximately 50,000 people, but almost 150,000 people died in 1868 – a tenth of the population. Mortality rates were as high as 40 per cent in the worst affected areas of the country. Contemporary descriptions refer to dullness and indifference caused by the constant presence of death and hunger.27 According to Väinö Laajala from Perho for example, the death of oneself or one’s family was not feared for death was considered a relief from the suffering.28 Senator V. A. Normén noted in his report that need and poverty had made people’s attitudes “more than harsh to the sick and more than cold to their neighbours”.29 Meurman reported in his study that the urban population mocked the distress of the countryside, and that the provincial mind was “colder than an autumn night”.30

The areas spared from the crop failure of 1862 and 1865 were in a better position than so-called starvation-ridden Finland, which suffered from mass unemployment

23 Tuominen, 1979, 113–121.
26 Pitkänen, 1991a, 38.
28 Pitkänen, 1991b, 209.
29 Häkkinen, Ikonen, Pitkänen & Soikkanen, 1989, 52. Author’s own translation.
30 Meurman, 1892, 58.

126
among the landless population in addition to the famine. Official efforts at crisis control were initially confined to the prevention of begging. Handouts were prohibited and people in need were ordered to report to workrooms or private farms - for work that did not exist. The local governments in the areas that did not suffer the worst began spreading the rumour that they had, in fact, had an even worse crop failure than other parts of the country, the motive being to prevent the poor from migrating to better-off areas.\textsuperscript{31} The social inequality culminated during the famine and it was manifested as a reluctance or inability to help the poor. As the crisis persisted the indifferent attitude towards the starving turned to one of control and blame when the fever epidemic began to affect the rich.\textsuperscript{32} The poor people, in turn, started to mistrust their masters and the officials.\textsuperscript{33} The population was split in two, the rich loathing the poor and the poor suffering their fate in silence.\textsuperscript{34}

Contemporary descriptions portray death as becoming a natural part of everyday life to the extent that it started to have serious negative effects on mental health. “Softer feelings” were said to have passed only to leave a feeling of eternal suffering and dullness. Religious rituals associated with death such as the blessing and burial of the deceased were often passed over due to a lack of interest or strength. According to some of the narratives, many families starved to death because their neighbours did not believe they had run out of food.\textsuperscript{35} As Meurman notes, people had to disregard the suffering of others to protect their own sanity and to “close doors and gates before the hungry hordes”.\textsuperscript{36}

The famine led to the exploitation of the poor and of debtors. The forced sale of small estates offered easy pickings for the rich, but also attracted the condemnation of farmers. The only people more despised than those prospering from the compulsory auctions were the traders exploiting the high prices of grain crops. Abusing the plight of others quickly became a taboo that subdued such business practices slightly.\textsuperscript{37} It was thought that those engaging in the malpractices would face the terrible revenge of fate, and contemporary descriptions even imply that the revenge often materialised.\textsuperscript{38} Mistrust of the exploiters could be seen as an expression of solidarity, a force for opposing the above-mentioned indifference. Solidarity was also evident in feelings of compassion towards the poor folk of one’s own community, whereas non-resident beggars were shunned.\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{31} Pitkänen 1991a, 69–72.\\
\textsuperscript{32} Häkkinen, Ikonen, Pitkänen & Soikkanen, 1989, 31–2.\\
\textsuperscript{33} Häkkinen, 1991a, 203; Häkkinen, Ikonen, Pitkänen & Soikkanen, 1989, 49.\\
\textsuperscript{34} Meurman, 1892, 58–63.\\
\textsuperscript{35} Pitkänen, 1991b, 209–213.\\
\textsuperscript{36} Meurman, 1892, 58.\\
\textsuperscript{37} Häkkinen, 1991b, 242–4.\\
\textsuperscript{38} Häkkinen 1991b, 202–3; Häkkinen, Ikonen, Pitkänen & Soikkanen, 1989, 49-50.\\
\textsuperscript{39} Häkkinen, Ikonen, Pitkänen & Soikkanen, 1989, 49.
\end{flushright}
The market economy and the outsiders (of the community) have faced similar attitudes during other famines of the world as well. Social and political crises have been caused by the export of food from famine-afflicted areas at least in Bangladesh (1974), Ethiopia (1973), China (1906) and Ireland (1840s). According to Sen, the export of food during a famine may be a natural characteristic of the market, despite the public viewing the practice as unethical.40 Sen has also reported the famines in Bengal (1943), Ethiopia, Sahel (1960s) and Bangladesh mostly affected certain minorities rather than the population in its entirety. The Ethiopian famine, for example, placed the hardest strain on the pastoral and nomadic communities of the country. These people had previously been able to secure their livelihood by trading animals for grain with the farmers but the rising market price of grain during the famine subdued the practice.41 Likewise, the Finnish famine mainly affected the inhabitants of the famine-stricken parts of the country and the landless population in general.

### Trends in Crime and Punishment

**Crime**

The Procurator’s statistics reveal the crime trends during the famine. Figure 4 shows the changes in criminality in four of the most serious types of offence.42

The most substantial change was in convictions for property crimes, which quadrupled in four years: there were as many convictions for theft in 1868 as in the previous two years combined. A similar trend is also evident in occupational crimes and fraud, but there was no increase in convictions for other crimes. In fact, the number of convictions for violent crimes (including homicide, assault and

---

42 For more detailed information on the crime classification, see Vuorela, 2014.
infanticide) were at their lowest ever level in 1868: there were 100 fewer convictions for assault than in the previous year, and 250 fewer than in the previous 13 years on average. A similar decrease is evident in infanticide and, to some extent, homicide. Interestingly, each year of crop failure (1862, 1865 and 1867) was followed by a year of very low homicide rates. For the sake of comparison, McMahon has noted the rate of reported homicide incidents doubled during the Irish famine.\footnote{McMahon, 2014, ch. 2} The difference could perhaps be partly explained by data validity as the Irish data includes reported homicides while the Finnish statistics consist of court convictions. However, the reasons behind the disparity in crime trends need to be explained in further comparative research.

The numbers of convictions for sexual crimes and fornication also decreased, in the latter case to half of the 1867 level. All in all, there was a statistical decrease in criminality in the following major types of crime: homicide, infanticide, assault, fornication, breaches of the peace (e.g. trespassing), defamation, intoxication, and crimes against justice and public officials. Around half of the convictions in 1868 were for crimes that were on the decrease, and the only increases in convictions were for property and occupational crimes and fraud. The famine had no effect on the numbers of convictions for the least serious crimes. Excluding the general groups “other breaches of general law” and “breaches of economic or police regulations” the decrease involved two thirds of all crimes. When the decrease in population attributable to the famine is taken into account, there were on average 3.06 crimes (that were on the decrease) per 1,000 population during the preceding ten years, compared with 2.28 in 1868. The ten-year average for property crimes was 0.5 per 1,000 population, compared with 1.43 in 1868. Both the increase in property crimes and the decrease in other crimes were thus real and significant changes in statistical criminality, not illusions attributable to the rapid decrease in the population.

**Punishment**

The Finnish famine halted the development of the criminal justice system. A partial reform in 1866 outlawed corporal punishment, significantly restricted the use of the death penalty\footnote{The reform reduced the use of the death penalty by more than half. See Vuorela, 2014, 36–7.} and introduced a progressive penal scale. The reformation that came into effect in 1870 was humane and represented an ideology of leniency in criminal policy, which was further developed in the criminal code of 1889.\footnote{Kekkonen, 1992, 265–6.} The objective of the project was to abolish the death penalty and to remove the humiliation associated with the punishments, and to strive for repentance and atonement.\footnote{Lappi-Seppälä, 1982, 126–30.} The reformation reflected the fall of the class society that enabled the
A total of 1,314 people were sentenced to corporal punishment in 1868, compared with an average of 350 in the preceding 25 years. This phenomenon was attributable to the increase in property crimes. According to the law, a thief was sentenced to a fine, corporal punishment or death depending on the particulars of the offence. A fine could also be converted to corporal punishment, one lashing with a whip settling three thalers of the fine. The amount of the fine was calculated by multiplying the value of the stolen property: a theft of ten thalers, for example, would warrant a fine of thirty thalers.

---

49 The highest legislative authority in Finland, the riksdag of the estates, was prohibited from operating during 1809–1863, preventing all political reforms.
51 Rangaistus caari V:1–2. Note that the laws in the 1734 codification were named “caari”, literally translated as an arch. Rangaistus caari would translate into “penalty arch”.
52 Pahategoin caari (“crime arch”) XL:1.
Fine conversions explain the sharp increase in the use of corporal punishment. Many people could not pay their fines due to their poverty so the fines were converted to corporal punishment. It was possible to convert the fine to a prison sentence but that would probably have been too costly for the state to make it a viable option. It was cheaper and more effective to sentence the thief to a few lashes of the whip than to offer a bed and a free meal at the county prison. Nevertheless, it seems that sentencing practices during the famine did not conform to the spirit of the reformation statute or the new ideologies of the criminal justice system, the scarcity of resources forcing the courts to administer justice with a stern hand. Interestingly, this development demonstrates how the legal system reacts in a time of crisis and how its ideals can quickly change.

**Incarceration**

The famine had a strong influence on the use of incarceration. However, the available information on the prison population is very limited and does not allow a thorough analysis.\(^53\) This sub-section only covers the county prisons because the famine had no effect on the prison population in correctional facilities and penitentiaries. The county prisons were not intended to enforce prison sentences and only a small percentage of the inmates had, in fact, been sentenced to prison.\(^54\) Figure 6 indicates the total numbers of prisoners in country prisons during the years 1865–1871. The increase was mainly among fugitives and vagrants. Vagrants were persons who did not fulfil their duty of service, in other words who did not have a job or a permanent residence, and were sent to prisons for general labour without a criminal sentence.\(^55\) Given the increased numbers of beggars and drifters, it is hardly surprising that more vagrants ended up in prison.

**Figure 6. Annual population in county prisons, 1865–1871**

\(^{53}\) For more detailed information on the prison system, see Vuorela, 2014. See also Lappi-Seppälä, 1982, 106–12.

\(^{54}\) Vuorela 2014, 48–9.

\(^{55}\) Ståhlberg, 1893, 1–3, 190. There is slight terminological inconsistency as there was also a type of punishment called general labour.
Explaining Crime Trends

Prelude

The following analysis of crime trends is restricted to the increasing trend in property crime and the decreasing trend in violent crime, a limitation that largely relates to data reliability. The risk of exposure to serious violent crime was relatively high and the perpetrators were most likely to be prosecuted and sentenced. Consequently, recorded violent crime is a comparatively reliable measure of total violent crime in normal conditions. A further reason for the restriction is that violent crime is among the most thoroughly researched areas of criminology, and there is an abundance of comparative research material on the chosen crime types.

Before turning to modern criminology I will make a few general observations about historical criminology. First, times of crisis comparable to the Finnish famine have been studied in the Soviet Union, specifically covering war, famine and the economic oppression of Lenin (New Economic Policy). According to these early studies, war caused an increase in violence and property crimes whereas both famine and the New Economic Policy brought an increase in property crimes but not in violence. In the case of Finland, Paasikivi and Tulenheimo compared the price of rye with the occurrence of theft. Both of them concluded that people stole simply because they were hungry during the hard times, explaining to some extent the increasing trend in property crime during the famine.

Second, the Finnish famine was a time of national crisis and its effects were generally comparable to those of war. Both phenomena are disastrous to society and lead to a shortage of supplies. The following presentation of crime trends during the famine starts with an account of theories explaining wartime trends. The analytical focus then turns to traditional explanations of crime in the context of Finnish historical criminology, and theories of modern criminology (anomie theory and the theory of social control). Given the nature of the phenomenon it is not necessary to examine individual theories of crime: it is not plausible, for example, to assume that the three-year period of high property crime was attributable to genetic factors.

War

The effect of war on crime has been studied comprehensively and two very different theories have emerged. It is argued on the one hand that war corrupts public

---

56 Specifically concerning the validity of violent crime in the Procurator’s statistics, see Verkko, 1931, 55.
57 Shelley, 1979, 391–6.
morality, and on the other that it strengthens it.\textsuperscript{59} It is concluded in a Nordic study focusing on the effects of the Second World War that the strengthening influence seems to be a myth that is used in war propaganda. Property and occupational crimes in particular increased during the War. The high amount of theft and black marketing imply a decline in respect for justice rather than improved common morality. It is notable that the increasing crime trend was common to all the Nordic countries despite the fact that no hostile force occupied Finland or Sweden.\textsuperscript{60}

The 1930s was a period of peace and prosperity in Finland. The crime level had stabilised by the end of the decade and the numbers of both violent and property crimes were decreasing.\textsuperscript{61} Then the War changed everything. The levels of violent crime reduced sharply, in fact, but increased quickly after the end of the Continuation War. It is probable that the police did not register violence among 18–29-year-old men while they were stationed at the front. The trend in property crimes was the reverse: the levels were high during the War, but quickly returned to normal when it ended. Jaakkola concludes that the War led to an increase in all crime in Finland, regardless of the type.\textsuperscript{62} The trend was similar in all the Nordic countries.\textsuperscript{63}

The Second World War also brought an increase in female criminality. The majority of women’s crimes were against martial law and rationing regulations. However, even ordinary criminality increased and the longer the War went on, the more assaults, adultery and theft the women committed. By 1943, female assaults had quadrupled from the levels in 1938. Adultery, which in particular could be viewed as a moral crime, increased six-and-a-half-fold during the War.\textsuperscript{64} This development of female criminality contradicts traditional explanations that fluctuations in violent crime are attributable to changes in male violence.\textsuperscript{65}

As Archer and Gartner note, the Second World War led to increased violence in countries that were not directly involved. The increasing trend was not dependent on the outcome of the War or the economic hardship it caused, but according to Archer and Gartner the most influential factor was the change in public morality it brought about. War concretised and justified the use of violence as a means of conflict resolution, and attitudes became more lenient and favourable.\textsuperscript{66} Landau and Pfeffermann support this finding, noting that the number of homicides in Israel was

\textsuperscript{59} Takala, 1987, 7.
\textsuperscript{60} Tham, 1987a, 306–7.
\textsuperscript{61} Jaakkola, 1987, 41.
\textsuperscript{63} See the following chapters in Takala & Tham, 1987: Madsen, 1987, 116; Christiansen, 1987, 37; Tham, 1987b, 214; Wijk, 1987, 265.
\textsuperscript{64} Roos & Takala, 1987, 83–6.
\textsuperscript{65} Ylikangas, 1988, 137.
\textsuperscript{66} Archer & Gartner, 1984, 74–5; Archer & Gartner, 1976.
directly proportional to the number of deaths in military conflicts in the country.\textsuperscript{67} Lehti applies Archer and Gartner’s hypothesis to the Finnish Civil War and the Estonian Independence War, and concludes that civil wars influence homicides indirectly. Most post-war perpetrators of violence were young men who were not involved in the battles, but adopted an attitude idealising violence from their older companions.\textsuperscript{68} Moreover, according to Hannula, the recession after the Finnish Civil War caused a significant increase in property crime.\textsuperscript{69} In sum, armed conflict is likely to lead to an overall increase in criminality.

**Poverty**

Perhaps the most traditional criminological theory is that relative poverty (income inequality) leads to an increase in violent crime. Poverty relative to the surrounding community is a sign of social failure in the individual that easily leads to asocial behaviour. According to the theory, the absolute degree of poverty is not important in that poverty should be understood as a cultural phenomenon linked to a certain time and place.\textsuperscript{70} The anomic theory explains the influence of relative poverty in positing that the social pressure it causes leads to crime. The behaviour of individuals in a society is driven by the pursuit of so-called normal ideals of, happiness and the accumulation of wealth, for example. However, given that society has limited resources, it is not possible for everyone to achieve these ideals.\textsuperscript{71} Humans have evolved an ability to sense their position in a social group that has fostered more effective co-operation. However, relatively poor individuals may feel they have failed to “keep up with the Joneses”, which causes frustration and may even lead to criminal activity.\textsuperscript{72}

In the context of Finnish historical crime trends, Ylikangas claims that the oversupply of available labour and the consequent decline in real wages largely explained the violent outbursts of the *puukkojunkkaris* (“knife-fighters”) of Southern Ostrobothnia. Another factor was the downward mobility in which people who became poorer descended to a lower social class. Together these two phenomena indicated an increase in income inequality, and caused a sharp increase in violent crime.\textsuperscript{73} It should be noted that both of them intensified during the famine.

However, a large majority of the population belonged to the poor farmer class at the time of the Finnish famine and the effects of the crisis targeted them in a similar manner. Clearly, changes in income inequality do not explain the problem and it is

\textsuperscript{67} Landau & Pfeffermann, 1988, 500. See also Lappi-Seppälä & Lehti, 2014, 187.
\textsuperscript{68} Lehti, 2000, 234–40, 319.
\textsuperscript{69} Hannula, 2004, 299, 468–9.
\textsuperscript{70} Taft, 1966, 19.
\textsuperscript{71} Merton, 1938. See also Kivivuori, 2013, 147–50.
\textsuperscript{72} Kivivuori 2013, 175.
\textsuperscript{73} Ylikangas, 1976, 255–84.
therefore necessary to discuss absolute poverty. The criminological research on absolute poverty thus far is insufficient, and there is no prevailing consensus on its effects on crime. It is concluded in some studies that poverty does influence criminality, but there is major disagreement on the direction of the effect. Some authors argue that absolute poverty increases violence\textsuperscript{74} whereas others claim it actually reduces the incidence\textsuperscript{75}.

Pridemore claims that the wrong indicators of poverty have been used in earlier studies, the results of which thus cannot be considered valid. He developed a new measure of poverty he thought was more reliable, and used it to explain the interactions among poverty, income inequality and violence. He concludes that poverty increases homicides whereas income inequality does not affect the levels of violent crime.\textsuperscript{76} According to Pridemore's hypothesis, the increased poverty during the famine should also have led to an increase in violence.\textsuperscript{77} Traditional anomie theory also implies that the culmination of income inequality (demonstrated by the high sales of luxury products and a starving population) would increase violent crime. Although much of the poverty during the famine was absolute, the influence of income inequality should not be ruled out. It may be that had the internal income inequality of the farmer class evened out, the level of violence may have decreased as a consequence.

### Social Control

According to the theory of social control, the criminal tendencies of an individual are connected to his/her social relationships: existing social relationships create social bonds and social control that suppress criminal activity, whereas their absence predicts a higher risk of committing a crime. Unofficial social control is exerted in the family, at work and at home. It is known, for instance, that criminal activity is more rare among individuals the longer they have lived in their hometown.\textsuperscript{78} According to Ylikangas, the period of high levels of violent crime in Finland ended with the decline in status of the violent lower classes, when the unofficial social control of the other classes began to take effect.\textsuperscript{79} The theory of social control is useful in explaining crime trends during the famine. The shortage of supplies forced tens of thousands of refugees to turn to vagrancy, and the recession caused mass unemployment. Additionally, the high mortality rates reduced the number of social relationships and destabilised social bonds.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{74} Bailey, 1984; Patterson, 1991; Hsieh & Pugh 1993; Pridemore, 2011.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Messner, 1982; Krahn, Hartnagel & Gartnell, 1986.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Pridemore 2011, 754–61.
\item \textsuperscript{77} See also Hsieh and Pugh 1993, 198.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Kivivuori 2013, 186–7, 197–200.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Ylikangas 1976, 293–4.
\end{itemize}
Crutchfield, Geerken and Gove examined the effects of migration on urban criminality. They found that individual mobility explained many different types of offence, and was the most effective factor in explaining property crimes. Anomie (frustration), in turn, was a major cause of violent crime, but only explained a small proportion of property crimes.\(^8^0\) The theory of social control thus seems to be effective in explaining property crimes and anomie theory in explaining violent crime. This conclusion is disputed in the field of criminology, and Hartnagel, for example, claims that migration has a significant effect on violent crime.\(^8^1\)

**Alcohol**

Alcohol consumption has traditionally been an explanatory factor in violent crime, especially in early Finnish criminology. Modern statistics reveal that, on average, 60 per cent of assaults in Finland are committed under the influence of alcohol, and even this is considered an underestimation.\(^8^2\) Likewise, over 80 per cent of homicides are committed by intoxicated individuals.\(^8^3\) The correlation between alcohol consumption and violence appears to be clear, and it could help to explain crime trends during the Finnish famine. According to the Procurator's statistics, in 1868 convictions for intoxication dropped by 50 per cent in rural areas. Home distillation was also prohibited in 1865, not that the food shortage would have even allowed it. Alcohol consumption also decreased in the whole country during the famine.\(^8^4\)

Is there a causal relationship between alcohol consumption and violence? If there is, the arrival of strong spirits in Finland in the 17\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\) centuries should have caused a tide of violence. However, as Ylikangas notes, that there appear to have been no significant changes in the levels of violent crime that would support causality between alcohol and violence.\(^8^5\) He concluded that alcohol did not cause violence but only acted as a catalyst, and that both high alcohol consumption and violence originated from the source he refers to as “Finnish forest lunacy” (metsähöperyys).\(^8^6\)

The catalyst effect implies that alcohol does not cause violence or even influence the long-term trends. However, changes in alcohol consumption may cause shifts in violence in the short term. The theory is based on the hypothesis that some catalyst will eventually appear and trigger the violent action, of which alcohol is only one, albeit effective. The theory is closely connected to the theory of social control.

---

\(^{80}\) Crutchfield, Geerken, & Gove, 1982.

\(^{81}\) Hartnagel, 1997, 393–6.


\(^{83}\) Lehti & Kivivuori, 2012, 35.

\(^{84}\) von Hofer & Lappi-Seppälä, 2014, 180.

\(^{85}\) Ylikangas, 1988, 156. On the other hand, see Lehti, 2000, 228–31.

Alcohol consumption complicates the forming of meaningful relationships, thereby weakening social control, and loosening social bonds could expose individuals to problem drinking. Both violence and alcohol consumption could also be attributable to individual factors, especially low self-control. However, alcohol is not a cause of crime, it merely eases the decision to commit a crime (acts as a catalyst). Given the short-term effect of alcohol on violence and the low alcohol consumption during the famine, the amount of violent crime should have decreased.

**Crime Trends – Concluding Remarks**

Four criminological theories of the causes of crime have been examined. The next step is to establish what theories of national crisis, poverty, social control and alcohol consumption would predict with regard to crime trends during the famine. To begin with crisis theory, it seems that war generally has an accelerating effect on criminality. War and famine have similar effects on society as a whole: fear, uncertainty, shortage and misery follow in the wake of both war and famine. The majority of war studies described above would predict an increase in all kinds of crime during a famine. However, war does have the distinctive effect of making the use of violence an acceptable means of conflict resolution. It is not likely that the famine would have had a similar effect. This observation reduces the comparability of crime during war and famine.

The Finnish famine resulted in a period of absolute deprivation that income inequality in itself does not adequately explain. It is likely that the prevalence of absolute poverty during the famine would have caused high rates of homicide and violent crime, but no such trend is visible in the statistics. The effect of absolute poverty on property crime is uncertain. According to one previous study, there is only a weak correlation between poverty and numbers of robberies. Nevertheless, it is obvious that most people would be prepared to steal when facing starvation and potential death. Furthermore, such thefts are commonly perceived as justified. It stands to reason that absolute poverty during the famine would lead to an increase in the amount of property crime provided that other people had anything worth stealing.

The number of vagrants, beggars and unemployed people multiplied during the famine, which meant an increase in the mobility of individuals. The landless population drifted from town to town in search of food and employment. Social relationships also became fragile due to the high mortality rates. Given these two phenomena, the theory of social control would predict an increase in criminality.

---

87 Kivivuori, 2013, 105.
89 Hsieh & Pugh, 1993.
91 Taft 1966, 19.
during the famine: low social control effectively explains property crimes, and such control was exceptionally weak at the time.

Alcohol consumption is commonly linked with violent crime even though there is no causal relationship between the two. Nevertheless, alcohol consumption has an obvious short-term effect on violence. The normal yearly alcohol consumption was approximately five litres per person during the 1860s–70s, as opposed to under a litre in 1868. Sentences related to intoxication also decreased from 0.667 per 1,000 population in 1865 to 0.471 in 1868 (approximately 30 per cent). The reason is obvious: the available crops were used for food and could not be distilled into alcohol. The decreased consumption should predict a decrease in the amount of homicide and violent crime.

In sum, according to predictions based on modern criminological theories, the Finnish famine should have caused a major increase in criminality, especially in property crime. The statistical data concerning the multiplied rates of property crime are thus in line with the explanations. The reason for the fewer sentences for homicide and violent crime is nevertheless unclear. The only factor hinting at a real decrease in violence is the low alcohol consumption, whereas the other theories point in the other direction. The problem can only be solved if account is taken of the restrictions of the data. Court sentencing statistics do not give reliable information on real crime levels, and may not even reflect the trends in exposed criminality. It is therefore necessary to expose the hidden criminality through broader analyses of the effects of famine.

**Explaining Hidden Criminality**

**Phrasing the Question**

Even if the court-sentence statistics do not portray the real crime rates, they do demonstrate the reactions of society to crime. Hence, the changes in the statistics reflect the changes in the composition of crime investigated by the courts rather than criminality in itself. An analysis of hidden criminality is thus required before conclusions on crime trends can be drawn. Criminologists nowadays tend to investigate hidden criminality using empirical methods such as victim surveys. Such methods are not suited to historical research, and there is a lack of available empirical data from the 19th century. However, it would be possible to use the court statistics as a basis on which to build possible scenarios of crime in reality.

Any explanation of hidden criminality requires a wide-ranging analysis of the factors that affect criminality in general. The rest of this section charts the developments in societal behaviour on three major levels. The aim on the individual level is to reveal the changes in the actions and motivations of members of the

---

population. Structural explanations, on the other hand, focus on the functional component of society, whereas cultural explanations relate to how people and society thought on a more general level. The main objective of the following interpretations is to identify factors that could shed light on the actual crime trends during the Finnish famine. These interpretations could then be generalised in terms of describing and explaining crime trends during other times of national crisis.

**Sentiment**

Assuming that the decrease in convictions for violent crime reflects actual crime levels, it is a surprising finding. In the search for individual explanations of crime, educational and evolutionary theories should be dismissed given the limitations discussed above. However, it is worth noting that an individual’s readiness to commit or tolerate crimes fluctuates suddenly. Taft, for example, describes “morally upright people” who, despite their sublimity, are willing to steal to fend off starvation.\(^{93}\) As noted above, people began to feel indifferent towards death during times of famine: respect for human life turns to numbness, which is apt to increase the propensity for violence. As Pitkänen observes on the basis of contemporary descriptions, the high mortality rates reduced the value of human life.\(^{94}\) The “inflation of the value of life” also lowered the threshold to commit homicide. Such changes in attitude should have led to an increase in homicide rates even though the statistics testify otherwise. Homicide figures are generally considered to be among the most accurate justice statistics, so this explanation does not appear to be very plausible.

On the other hand, the mobility of the unemployed and the starving, as well as the high mortality rates reduced the number of social relationships, and the surviving relationships thus became relatively more important. Contrary to the above assumption, the value of life should, in fact, have increased, and the indifferent attitude towards death should not negatively affect the appreciation of life. This kind of sentimentality would also have led to a reduction in violence. The credibility of this theory is strengthened by the fact that the moral legitimation of violence is a major prerequisite for its perpetration. Few people are willing to commit a violent crime without harbouring a sense of internal justification. Placing a high value on life would have made the legitimation of violence harder, which in turn would have decreased the levels of violent crime.\(^{95}\)

A similar phenomenon is reflected in the strengthening of a sense of responsibility and solidarity in a community. The crisis brought people closer together because everyone was in the same boat – hungry and suffering. The setting reflects Foucault’s theory of the influence of prisons on the morals of the working classes, his rationale being that the real purpose of prisons was to brand the criminal lower

\(^{93}\) Taft, 1966, 19.

\(^{94}\) Pitkänen, 1991b, 209.

\(^{95}\) Eisner, 2014, 93.
classes as abnormal, creating in the working classes a need to stand out from prisoners and criminals to prove their superiority. The best way of standing out was through diligence and honesty at work.\footnote{Foucault, 1980.} In the same way, the poor peasants of the 1860s wanted to stand out from the loathed exploiters of their poverty. This stronger internal solidarity subdued violent outbursts among the farmers, and because violence is usually prevalent among lower-class men, the subduing effect was significant.\footnote{On the socio-economic status of violent criminals in present-day Finland, see Lehti, Sirén, Aaltonen, Danielsson & Kivivuori 2013, 80–3. On historical violence, see Ylikangas, 1988, 137.}

The described change in public sentiment would have had an effect not only on violence but also on the catalysts. From a historical perspective, defamation has been a notable trigger of violence related to the consumption of alcohol.\footnote{Ylikangas, 1988.} A simple experiment using convictions for defamation will serve to exemplify this hypothesis. It should be kept in mind that the data does not make it possible to reach a reliable conclusion, but it is nevertheless worth finding out if the statistics comply with the hypothesis. The offence of defamation was called slander (“parjaus”) in the 19th century, and indeed the trend seems to be in line with the solidarity hypothesis (Fig. 7): there were 16-per-cent fewer convictions for slander in 1868 than in the preceding and following three years, on average. A comparison of the number of convictions in 1868 with the average number of convictions per year in 1842–1890 reveals a 59-per-cent reduction. It is likely, however, that the statistical changes reflect shifts in the inclination to report an offence rather than actual changes in criminality.

Figure 7. Convictions for slander in 1865–1871 (/1,000 population)
The cohesion argument requires a wider context to effectively explain the increase in property crimes. If solidarity strengthened as suggested, why did people still steal so much from one another? Here is one possible scenario. The proneness to violence and provocation among the poor farming community that resided permanently in the area related to the higher level of solidarity. Meanwhile, landless vagrants and beggars were prepared to steal to ease their suffering. Consequently, the increase in the number of property crimes was attributable to the drifters, whereas violence was subdued among the local population. It should be pointed out that the theory of social control is effective specifically in explaining property crimes, and is the theory that best explains the effect of vagrancy on crime. It therefore supports the scenario described above.

Opportunity and the Risk of Arrest

What if the criminal statistics do not reflect the development of crime in practice? Statistics covering homicide and serious violent crime are usually reliable, but not necessarily in times of crisis: they may not indicate, or even echo the real trends. In other words, the court statistics validly demonstrate the number of convictions but do not cast light on the development of crime outside the courts. In practice, the varying portfolio of crimes reaching the courts depends, for instance, on the risk of arrest and the opportunities that arise for criminal action. It is evident that the government was powerless to contain the hunger crisis, and the failed social-security system was just one example of the chaos brought about by the famine. Death by starvation was common in rural communities, and the mortality rate could be measured in tens in percentage terms. Given the normality of death it would have been easy to mask a homicide as a natural death. The ease of concealment offered numerous opportunities to commit homicide unnoticed, such as by letting an unwanted child starve to death.

The low risk of arrest for homicide may have been tempting for larger families struggling to feed their children. It could have crossed the minds of numerous parents to kill a newly born child if they did not have enough food to feed their other children. No one would have questioned the death of a child when half of the town’s population was on the brink of starvation. The statistics on infanticide convictions supports this theory: 25-per-cent fewer convictions were recorded in 1868 compared with the average number during the previous five years. As Verkko points out, however, the proportion of exposed infanticides was low even before the famine, so the significance of the statistics should not be exaggerated. The low risk of arrest was not restricted to infanticide and also applied to homicide, although

100 Pitkänen 1991b, 209.
101 Verkko, 1931.
not to assault. It may be that, as argued below, the risk of being sentenced for assault was lower during the famine for cultural reasons.

On the institutional level, the errors in the justice statistics may simply have been attributable to the scarcity of resources. The annual processing capacity of the courts and other justice authorities was limited, therefore the difference between court-sentenced and actual criminality is bigger than normal during periods of high crime rates. The statistics give solid support to this argument: the proportion of serious crimes of all criminal convictions in rural areas during the first half of the 1860s was approximately 9.5 per cent, compared with 24 per cent in 1968. The relative increase is attributable to an increase in convictions for property crimes whereas the total number of convictions increased only slightly.

The number of criminal convictions in 1868 was approximately the same as in the previous years, but an abnormally high proportion of them were for serious crimes. The changes in criminality on the statistical level would therefore seem to have been an illusion caused by the functioning of the courts: they focused their limited resources on serious crimes and ignored some of the less serious criminality. It should be acknowledged at this point that the risk of exposure to serious violent crime is traditionally thought to be relatively high, and is thus relatively reliably visible in the official statistics. If violence did increase, the courts did not investigate it. This could have been attributable to cultural factors that had a general impact on society, such as changes in penal values.¹⁰²

**Changes in Penal Values and Other Cultural Factors**

The court system was probably able to function relatively normally during the famine. The judiciary belonged to the rich population groups that were not directly affected by the crisis and did not have to adjust their lifestyle during the winter of hunger.¹⁰³ It may be that the famine complicated the court proceedings in one way or another, but the number of cases they handled remained on the same level as in previous years. It is assumed in the following that the courts were able to function without major disruptions. The question that remains is why the increased violence was not reflected in the courts. The explanation may be connected to the changes in penal values, or conversely the value structure of the society. It concerns a change in society’s tolerance of crime, which could have raised the threshold of reporting a crime to the police, or on the institutional level in the way the authorities reacted to different types of criminality. What is important is that the change occurred in the values and outlooks of the people, rather than in the criminality or the criminal legislation.

¹⁰² See Christie, 1968. The concept of penal values refers to the experienced seriousness or “value” of different crimes and penalties in the society relative to the dominant value structure. For example, if the value of health increases, the penal values of assault and corporal punishment also increase.

Let us exemplify such a change in the penal values and consider a small rural community in which the famine has caused high child-mortality rates. The townspeople are being tormented by the cold weather of the late winter, constant hunger and a shortage of essential food. The staple food in almost every household is bark bread, containing equal amounts of grain and pine bark. Two crimes are committed at the same time in the town, one assault and one theft. Which victim is more likely to report the crime to the local police chief, and whose need for legal redress is greater? It is likely that the victim of the theft will report the crime because the value of property (comprising at the time mainly food and the necessary farm equipment to produce it) during a famine is higher than the value of physical integrity. One might also wonder which crime the police chief is more likely to take seriously. When more than two thirds of the community’s population have succumbed to hunger and disease, a simple assault does not seem very important.

Economic hardship causes the value of property to increase relative to other objects of legal protection. This was emphasised during the famine because the crisis led to a decrease in the value of life and health. The importance of the object of the crime directly affects the likelihood of its being reported to and investigated by the authorities. The preceding example highlighted the threshold of reporting an offence when the object of the crime was not considered very valuable. The same phenomenon is common today in that people do not report relatively harmless crimes to the police, for example, because they feel the potential legal redress is not worth the effort of going through with the reporting and the subsequent process of litigation. Similarly, the reporting of an ordinary assault may have been viewed as humiliating during the famine. As Ylikangas notes, since the 16th century at least Finns have been characterised as people with low self-esteem and a pronounced sense of honour. Violence was viewed as an acceptable means of conflict resolution in cases of defamation, for example. The typical Finnish man did not report an insult to the Lord of the manor, but rather used his fists to right the wrong. Verkko, on the other hand, refers to the “dark-natured” Finnish man (in the 19th century) who endured the wrongs he faced with silent bitterness that easily erupted later in a disproportionate act of violence – especially when intoxicated. Both of these accounts of the Finnish national character describe people for whom resorting to the authorities is not a natural way of resolving conflicts. In my view, both descriptions support the notion that people would generally have considered the reporting of an assault inappropriate during the famine.

Changes in the penal values also guide the allocation of the limited resources of the criminal justice system. These resources are used, above all, to prevent and punish the most serious crimes. The system constitutes a segmented sieve, the last level of which is the court. Given the scarcity of resources, only the most serious cases pass through the whole sieve and end up in the courts. Changes

105 Verkko, 1936, 225–6.
in priority among the objects of legal protection could thus cause a change in society’s reaction to different types of crime. Property crimes easily passed through the system during the famine because the value of property had increased, which is why the number of convictions for violence decreased and the court statistics became less reliable as an indicator of actual crime levels. Nevertheless, the statistics provide the strongest evidence for the validity of the hypothesis. If the relative seriousness of property crimes increased compared to other crimes during the famine, the average seriousness of property crimes would have decreased in the courts. One could calculate the average seriousness of a theft by dividing the total amount of property lost via crimes by the number of convictions for theft (Fig. 8). The result clearly indicates that the property crimes investigated by the courts were significantly less serious in 1868 than during the preceding and subsequent years. This observation supports the theory of changes in the penal values.

Sociologist Norbert Elias’ theory of the civilising process also supports the hypothesis positing an increase in violent crime during the famine. By way of a context-bound summary, it is suggested that humankind creates norms that subdue natural behaviour. Together these norms constitute the civilisation on which the society is built, which in turn exerts social control to ensure that its members obey the rules. The stricter the society’s control, the more effectively is the natural aggression of individuals contained. If the society is weakened the subdued aggression emerges, causing violence. This weakening process is referred to as decivilisation. The theory has been used as a theoretical framework in criminological studies in which it is observed that homicide and violence are less prevalent in a strong central state with strict social norms. Finnish researcher Ylikangas criticised the use of the theory in explaining criminality, but in my opinion

---

106 Elias, 1978; see especially, 191–2, 322.
the later applications, especially as described by Eisner and Pinker, effectively take the criticisms into consideration.108

The Finnish famine brought about decivilisation as the social norms weakened. Official social control slackened because the resources did not suffice to meet the increased demands. Society could not spend as much time and energy in monitoring and controlling people as before the famine. As the binding effect of the social norms weakened, individual aggression and violence increased. Elias also emphasises the effect of trade-related reliance on other people in subduing violence:109 the absolute poverty during the famine brought the majority of trade to a halt, thus causing a surge in violence. The downward mobility mentioned by Ylikangas accelerated among the upper classes during the famine as people became poorer, and at the same time the violent lower classes grew in numbers.

According to Pinker, the civilising process did not reduce violence but only transferred it from the upper to the lower classes.110 Pinker’s interpretation refutes Ylikangas’s criticism of the argument that there was no reduction in violence among the lower classes despite the process.111 At this point it does not matter whether the civilising process reduced violence or transferred it to the lower classes because both possibilities predict a similar crime trend during the famine. The upper classes were not directly affected and thus did not go through the process of decivilisation that would have brought back violence among their ranks. Meanwhile, the poor grew quickly in numbers due to unemployment and food shortages, which together with the weakening social norms probably provoked an increase in violence. Hence, both alternative interpretations of the civilising process support the idea of an increasing trend in violent crime.

Lappi-Seppälä and Lehti studied the effects of cultural factors on homicide. In the context of the Finnish famine the most significant of these factors were social trust and what Hofstede refers to as long-term orientation. Long-term (as opposed to short-term) orientation here means that the members of a community place more emphasis on the future than on the present, and both long-term orientation and social trust reduce homicide rates.112 The famine produced the feeling among the people that death was the only escape from their suffering. This kind of outlook reflects a short-term rather than a long-term orientation, and predicts increased homicide rates. Social trust is a more complicated phenomenon: on the one hand the internal solidarity among communities probably strengthens social trust, but on the other the large numbers of vagrants and beggars with their criminal activity probably weaken trust, pointing towards increased homicide rates.

111 Ylikangas 1999, 27.
Conclusion

The composition of crimes investigated by the courts changed notably during the 19th century. The number of convictions for core crimes decreased up until the Finnish famine of 1866–1868, after which the downward trend ended and the number stabilised on a level slightly higher than before the famine. The criminal control of public morality was slowly eroded during the century, and prosecutions for fornication, breach of the Sabbath and swearing, for example, gradually disappeared from the courts. Finland’s emergent urbanisation produced new kinds of petty crime, the amount of which increased significantly during the century. The majority of such crimes were “breaches of economic or police regulations”. The urbanisation trend facilitated the effective monitoring of the population, which accounts for the relatively high crime levels in the cities compared to the rural communities. Urbanisation did not develop very quickly, however, and the majority of people were still living in the countryside at the end of the century.

The Finnish famine of 1866–1868 brought about an abnormal crime trend that is clearly visible in the court statistics. The number of property crimes drastically increased whereas there was a decrease in convictions for homicide and assault. I have compared two competing theoretical streams explaining how the real crime levels changed and why. Traditional criminological theories incorporating historical and modern explanations predict that famine leads to an increase in all kinds of crime. However, the court statistics only show the increase in property crimes. A few explanations focusing mainly on individual factors support the statistical data. Although theories supporting the idea of increased violence outnumber these explanations, individual factors may have helped to contain violent crime to some extent.

A more plausible alternative, however, is that the violence increased but the perpetrators did not end up in the courts. Criminological theories along with the theory of the civilising process and the cultural explanations drafted in this article support such a notion. Nevertheless, the question arises as to why the increased violence is not visible in the court statistics. The most likely reasoning concerns the changes in society’s functioning and in the general culture. The interpretations presented in the article do not give definitive explanations of how real crime levels changed during the famine, but they do shed light on the grey area that tends to surround historical criminality. It would be interesting to compare the criminality of the famine in Finland to the crime trends in other European countries, and the topic would definitely call for further comparative research. In conclusion, the Finnish famine probably led to an increase in both property and violent crimes, but the criminal justice system did not react to the surge in violence.
References

Rangaistus caari V:1–2. Note that the laws in the 1734 codification were named “caari”, literally translated as an arch. Rangaistus caari would translate into “penalty arch”.

Pahategoin caari (“crime arch”) XL:1.


Considering Famine in the Late Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire: A Comparative Framework and Overview

Özge Ertem*

Koç University’s Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED)

This article analyzes the Ottoman famines of the 1870s – that killed tens of thousands of people in Anatolia due to starvation and disease – from a global comparative perspective. It focuses on two famines in particular that struck the central and eastern provinces of the empire in 1873-75 and 1879-1881 (just following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78), respectively. They were triggered by climatic causes, yet their devastating effects were also a product of the global and domestic economic and political environment of the decade. Local, imperial and global man-made reasons exacerbated the severe impacts of nature and climate. The article addresses these famines as significant traumatic disasters, the memories of which were overshadowed by later catastrophic events in Ottoman history and historiography, and which have been almost invisible in European and global famine historiography of the nineteenth century. It summarizes the political-economic environment of the decade, attempts to investigate Ottoman famines in a global historical context and outline a comparative research agenda for an Ottoman history of famine and empire in the late nineteenth century.

(…)I have found, in many places, many persons who did not so much as know that there was a famine in Asia Minor, who had no knowledge of it before, who were not aware that a struggle against death from starvation had been going on in Asia Minor for the last twenty months, and that the whole population of that country had been decimated, enfeebled by disease, and so scattered and dispersed, that the whole of its social system had been utterly disorganized.¹

* This article has been prepared at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) at Harvard University during the post-doc fellowship term (2015–2016), funded by TUBITAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) 2219 Program. I would like to thank editor Andrew G. Newby and the reviewers for their significant critique and inputs on the article, and Seçil Yılmaz, Michael Raskin, Paula Garbarino and Fatih Artvinli for their invaluable support, feedback and comments. This article is derived from my doctoral dissertation completed at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence (2012). I dedicate it to my supervisor Professor Anthony Molho to whom I am indebted for teaching me the significance of scales and trans-communal, trans-national, world-historical perspectives.

¹ Whitaker, 1875, 15–6. See Ertem, 2015, 17–27 for a critical analysis of the meeting report.
Edgar Whitaker, the British proprietor and editor of the Istanbul-based English-French language newspaper *Levant Herald*, addressed the crowd composed of British and several other European businessmen, diplomats, statesmen and merchants at Willis’s Rooms in London with the above sentences on June 24, 1875. It was the meeting of the Asia Minor Famine Relief Fund established with the purpose of collecting relief subscriptions from the British public for the starving population in the central Anatolian provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The members of the auxiliary committee seemed to listen with the self-confidence and pride of just having “saved” the starving Indians from the pangs of hunger during the famine in Bihar and Bengal in 1873-74.\(^2\) Then was the turn of the starving Ottomans. One year earlier, in May 1874, A.A. Low, a prominent member and the previous president of the New York Chamber of Commerce, had responded to a toast for commerce at the annual dinner of the organization in New York, saying that commerce’s virtue lay in its ability to bring human societies together. “From populous provinces of India and from Asia Minor, woeful tales are brought us of wide-spread famine,” he stated; yet it was by “virtue of commerce” that the people of those countries were being saved from starvation. He had praised the railways, and electric wires which permitted “neither land nor water, however lofty or deep, to arrest the work that makes of one great family all the nations of the earth.”\(^3\)

Railways and electric wires did not always necessarily save people and relieve suffering as claimed by the British and American merchants, businessmen and administrators at the time. As Mike Davis has discussed thoroughly, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they were used also for exactly opposite interests or the interests of a privileged few as well.\(^4\) Yet, the same technology has also generated historical evidence about the connected elements of modern human experiences of people living within a “coeval modernity.”\(^5\) Famines in different parts of the world in the nineteenth century have been significant events mutually shaping this modernity, and thus they offer us insights into diverse interrelated imperial hi(stories) of the modern world.

This article analyzes the Ottoman famines of the 1870s that killed tens of thousands of people in Anatolia due to starvation and disease, from a global

\(^2\) Unlike the catastrophic death of millions during the next famine in India in 1876–79 under strict British *laissez-faire* policies—which had not occurred yet by the time of the above mentioned meeting—the efficient famine intervention policies of the colonial British administration during the previous famine in Bihar and Bengal in 1873–74 had proved successful. Davis, 2000, 36.

\(^3\) *New York Times*, 8 May 1874.

\(^4\) The same means would soon be used for exporting grain from India to London while millions in India were dying of hunger. Asian and African perception(s) of “imperial glory” were different from those of the British colonial masters. Davis, 2001, 7. Not just food and welfare—but not always to the appropriate destination—but also guns and violence have been transported and disseminated through these networks.

\(^5\) Harry D. Harootunian, a prominent historian of inter-war Japan, describes “coeval modernity” as shared by global actors in the same temporality against linear understandings of modernization that scaled and measured countries based on their levels of development and progress in that linearity. See Harootunian, 2002.
comparative perspective. It focuses on two famines in particular that struck the central and eastern provinces of the empire in 1873-75 and 1879-1881 (just following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78), respectively. They were triggered by climatic causes, yet their devastating effects were also a product of the global and domestic economic and political environment of the decade. Local, imperial and global man-made reasons combined with the heavy impacts of nature and climate. The article addresses these famines as significant traumatic disasters, whose memories were overshadowed by later catastrophic events in Ottoman history and historiography, and which have been almost invisible in European and global famine historiography of the nineteenth century. It summarizes the political-economic environment of the decade, attempts to investigate Ottoman famines in a global historical context and outline a comparative research agenda for an Ottoman history of famine and empire in the late nineteenth century.

The 1870s: Famine and Empire in Dire Straits

While European and global famine historiography were not interested in Ottoman famines of the nineteenth century, the historiography of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has, for the most part, told either variations of an elite-bureaucrat-led modernization story, or rising religious/ethnic tensions, wars, decline and dissolution. The few studies on famines in Ottoman historiography made significant contributions in Turkish, especially by drawing attention to rich archival materials. However, they also treated the topic usually from the perspective of state institution(s), employing solely logistical and administrative-chronological approaches. Due to the emphasis put on Ottoman successes, and the paucity of historical sources on ordinary people’s voices, the political-ideological dimensions of the famines, and local perspectives were mostly overlooked. There is still a lot of room for research on the political, environmental, social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of the famines. Today, however, encouraged by the emerging field of Ottoman environmental history, future studies on the comparative socio-cultural and political impact of famines can find a more solid background.

---

6 According to contemporary records, in the first famine no fewer than 100,000 people, and in the second famine no fewer than 10,000 people, lost their lives.

7 Among these studies, the only monograph in Turkish on famines in the nineteenth century is Erler, 2010. For a general bibliography on the subject, see Ertem, 2012a.

Famines in the Ottoman Empire are smaller scale famines, compared with the other great famines of the nineteenth century, but the intensity of their impacts on the daily life of local populations was similar. Both famines in central and eastern provinces were triggered by harsh droughts followed by extremely cold winter conditions. Yet, the general environment of political and economic crisis of that decade played a crucial role. Class mattered extensively, and although there was general impoverishment across all classes, religions, and sects during the famines, local merchants and grain-holders in particular localities profited from the situation. Usually, poor peasants and townspeople paid the highest price.

The central Anatolian famine started with the drought in the summer of 1873. Following the exhaustion of all supplies—including the grain saved as seed after the 1873 round of taxation—during the extremely cold winter of 1874-75, the disaster reached intolerable levels in isolated villages. The center was the province of Angora [Ankara] but it effected a region covering an area of about 40,000 square miles. In his tour in the region, Cesarea [Kayseri] station missionary Wilson Farnsworth observed that in the whole district, the inhabitants had fled searching for food, and leaving behind their starved. Their flocks and herds had perished, their fields and vineyards were ruined and they had burned their own houses for fuel, he observed. The collection of the autumn tax in 1873, which had occurred despite previous warnings from locals about the expected bad harvest, had left the peasants with few resources when winter arrived. In Ankara and Konya, due to contemporary records, 40 per cent of all herds died, and each and every community, especially the poor Turks, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews were effected. Around 100,000 people alone died because of diseases related to hunger. Once winter was over and roads were opened, villagers had no choice but walk for hours at first to neighbouring villages. However, the neighbouring villages were as devastated as theirs. Then they started walking to cities without any calories to subsist them. Many people died on the road. Roads, towns, and cities as far afield as Istanbul filled with famine refugees. British businessmen, merchants, journalists, and Protestant American missionaries each established separate relief commissions both in Istanbul and the Anatolian provinces. The Ottoman government also established its own commission. However, most people seem to have died during the winter and early spring of 1874, before there was any awareness of the true magnitude of the disaster, and any official efficient relief organization corresponding to it.

---

9 In his classical work, Roderic H. Davison calls the years 1871-5 a “period of chaos.” Davison, 1963, 301–5.

10 Farnsworth, 1904, 56.


12 Ottoman state’s taxation practices in the provinces did not exclude the use of force as Nadir Özbek has shown. Özbek, 2009.


14 Erler has written in detail in Turkish about the Ottoman government’s and local officials’ famine relief initiatives, committees, and actions. Erler, 2010, 193–202.
total number of casualties of starvation, hunger, and disease was estimated to be around 100,000-150,000.  

**Ottoman Provisioning Policies**

In order to discuss the continuities and discontinuities in official famine relief policies in the 1870s, one needs to remember earlier provisioning policies. The administrative measures the Ottoman government took against earlier famines were in keeping with the provisionist legal and moral tradition that survived until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, which required the state intervene to control prices in each phase of the production, trade, transportation, and distribution of grains. The rationale behind regulatory policies of provisioning, as Seven Ağır underlined, was “redistribution of grain in order to ensure an affordable and abundant supply in the cities”. Price controls such as price ceilings (narh) were “justified by a rhetoric of welfare, that identified public good with ensuring the subsistence of all.”  

---

15 Naumann, 1893 (in Kuniholm, 1990); Quataert, 1968.  
Ottoman measures in response to crop failures in the following manner: “[...] partial rebates or full waivers of taxes [while] in times of prosperity it sought to compensate for temporary and local shortages by enforcement of resource sharing between better-off and less fortunate districts.”

In her Ph.D. dissertation, Ağır argued convincingly that increasing international competition, political, and financial losses in wars and the narrowing of the grain supply zone in the Ottoman Empire in the late eighteenth century paved the way for “a shift of focus in political economy... away from a moral ideology that emphasized welfare and justice towards an ideology that emphasized wealth and development in the grain sector.”

While the establishment of a central Grain Administration [Zahire Nezareti] in Istanbul in 1793 may give one the impression that grain provisioning for the capital city was becoming more centralized, regularized, and protectionist, the centralizing attempt in fact, took place simultaneously with “a more flexible attitude towards price controls.”

The Grain Administration was abolished in 1839. Bilateral free trade agreements between the Ottoman Empire and foreign powers in 1838-41 led to a further loosening of state control over the grain trade. Bilateral commercial agreements upheld the principle of free trade in relation to the major European powers, beginning with the Anglo-British Treaty of 1838. Thus, they led to the end of state monopolies in trade and provided easy, open access to Ottoman markets for British merchants. At the same time, local merchants were still bound by rules that limited their mobility in trade transactions. Eventually, along with the abolishment of the internal custom dues on local trade in 1874, prospects for local merchants engaged in grain in Anatolian towns improved. Grain merchants began to act relatively more flexibly once freed from state control on their mobility.

Despite these relaxations, due to the absence of railways until the late 1880s and the uneven commercialization of agriculture in the Anatolian provinces, a small number of local notable families continued to dominate grain trade in several towns. Grain hoarding and consequent class conflicts deepened in the countryside during both famines, yet the former’s impact remained local and regional. Only after the 1890s did the once famine-stricken regions of central Anatolia become the breadbaskets of the capital city. Unlike the relationship between India and London, before 1890, the amount of Anatolian grain consumed in Istanbul was low; it amounted to only 2 per cent of all Anatolian grain in 1889. Thus, while London consumed Indian grain during the famine in India, it was not Anatolian grain that

---

17 Murphey, 1988, 218.
19 Ağır, 2009, 117. See also Salzmann, 1993.
20 See Kütükoğlu, 1976.
21 Local perceptions of corruption, tyranny, justice and moral economy could transform into significant expressions and actions of discontent and resistance to grain hoarders and state officials. For an excellent example of local points of view on state intervention and local perceptions of justice in an Ottoman Balkan province in the 1840s, see Kırıl, 2015.
22 Quataert, 1993.
fed the imperial center in Istanbul. As Pamuk noted, only after the establishment of the Anatolian railroad that linked Eskişehir, Konya and Ankara to Istanbul, “as many as 400,000 tons of cereals were being shipped annually on the railroad” in the 1890s.23

One cannot discern a clear-cut departure from a provisionist ‘ancien-regime’ in state famine relief of the late nineteenth century. As Mehmet Genç underlines, long-established provisionist practices and customs were not abandoned wholly in the provisioning of food and basic requirements for subsistence.24 The relief policies the Ottoman government implemented to address agricultural distress and famine in 1873-75 still included some of the older measures, such as strict bans on exports and black-marketing. During both famines, the state organized relief initiatives, loosened its taxation policies and ordered tax remissions for particular periods of time until peasants could get better yields from the fields in 1875 and in 1881, respectively. They were temporary solutions. Sometimes the policy brought short-term relief; usually, however, it was not sufficient and daily survival of the poor was still at stake. The outcomes and influences of these policies were neither even nor coherent, but varied due to local circumstances, the role of local intermediaries in their implementation, the hegemony of grain-holders in a region and the financial and political strains that the country faced at the time. The sources of those strains were both local and global. Climate, socio-spatial geographies of vulnerability, regional political-economic dynamics, political inaction and infrastructural problems combined with the international political-economic context that imposed its harsh conditions on the Ottoman government. The droughts transformed to catastrophes within this context. The Ottoman polity was an actor in the world of modern empires, and the quiet famines in isolated villages in Ottoman Anatolia in 1870s were strongly related to the developments in the world around them in the same temporality. During the famines, the non-colonial Ottoman imperial realm—with all its particularities intact—shared a lot with both the “colonizers” and the “colonized” of the nineteenth century, despite being technically neither.25

---

23 Pamuk, 1987, 104.
25 In his article (Gölbashi, 2011), Edip Gölbashi demonstrates the problems of overemphasizing the ‘colonialism debate’ in the Ottoman context and instead focuses on modern state practices, elements of social control, and Ottoman understandings of citizenship to define and discuss the particularities of Ottoman imperialism in the nineteenth century. Regarding Ottoman particularities, Thomas Kuhn’s study (Kuhn, 2007) of Ottoman policies in Yemen in the late nineteenth century suggests that “in marked contrast to the example of Britain, Ottoman politics of difference were not meant to separate those who came under the purview of an official nationalism from those who did not.” Therefore, in a political-institutional sense, the Ottomans did not establish their policies on the basis of “colonial difference,” but on political “negotiation” and “integration” because of their own survival needs.
Politics and Economy – Context, Comparison and Historiography

Until the publication of a special section of the journal Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East in 2007, analysis of the British and Ottoman Empires within the same historical and analytical framework had been confined to studies of the early modern era.26 The articles in the volume were significant contributions to the historiography of empires in the nineteenth century. They helped interrogate the historiographical problems embedded in the perception that “the two empires [British and Ottoman] inhabited what were for all intents and purposes quite different realms of temporality.”27 Khoury and Kennedy underline that the above conviction, which had its origins in European works of the nineteenth century and earlier, functioned to make a distinction between “progressive, liberal and modern” states and societies vis-a-vis the “static, oppressive, and archaic” ones. The articles in the above-mentioned volume challenged these assumptions and pointed to the need of putting the two empires into the same analytical framework of comparison:

Both empires ruled vast territories that were inhabited by peoples of widely different faith, customs, ethnicities, and more; both made accommodations to these differences even as they sought to erase them; both advanced a universalizing mission while acknowledging its limits; both asserted authoritarian powers and conceded local autonomy.28

However, the emphasis Peter Gray places on Ireland’s and India’s differences in order to escape from “crude analytical models” of colonialism is valid for the Ottoman context as well.29 In a similar vein, in their quest to historicize studies in Ottoman history that have used comparison as a tool since the 1990s, Alan Mikhail and Christine Phillou underline that the particularities of the Ottoman Empire should not be overlooked for comparison’s sake. Instead, referring to Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s useful concept, they suggest doing “connected histories” which preserve the specifics of each historical experience while showing the connections and “struggle, tension, mutuality and contestation” in the space “between”:

The Ottoman Empire was an elaborate and changing power formation where the structures and mentalities of empire met more abstract ideologies of early modern

26 Khoury and Kennedy, 2007. For a significant analysis of literature on comparative political history of the early modern Ottoman Empire, see Salzmann, 1998. The ‘Mediterranean’ became also a prominent category of analysis for the early modern Ottoman world thanks to the notable work by the Ottoman historian, Faruk Tabak (Tabak, 2008). For the early history of the Ottomans within “the larger story of medieval Asia Minor,” thus in the history of the broader world surrounding them and having a counterpart in the Iberian peninsula, see Kafadar, 1995.
sovereignty, then nationalism and the exigencies of imperial rivalry, and then colonialist contestation. It is in the interaction among all of these forces that the dynamism of this empire takes center stage.\textsuperscript{30}

The decade of the 1870s was one of the most difficult periods for both the Ottoman state and its subjects, making evident the interplay and contestation of such forces both in the global and in the local arenas. The two famines took place at a time of Ottoman preoccupation with the survival of empire / state in a decade of imperialist rivalry and internal economic and political turmoil. In 1876, following the fiscal bankruptcy of the Ottoman state, social and political uprisings in Bosnia and Bulgaria, and consequent protests of Muslim religious school (medrese) students in Istanbul, Sultan Abdülaziz was dethroned by a pro-constitutional and pro-parliamentary government faction. It was only a year after the agricultural yields in central Anatolia had started to improve and the previous famine disaster was on its way out. The opposition promoted liberal and Islamic patriotic discourses denouncing the financial and political weaknesses of the state, and the increasing financial and political intervention of foreign powers in the affairs of the Empire by way of the turmoil in the Balkans. After Abdülaziz, Murad V ascended the throne for only three months until being replaced by Sultan Abdülhamid II. The latter was enthroned by the liberal faction in 1876, on the condition that he would order the promulgation of the first Ottoman constitution and opening of a parliament. The constitution was promulgated the same year, and parliament was opened in 1877. However, Sultan Abdülhamid II dissolved it once the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 started.\textsuperscript{31} Subsequently, he would rule the country without a parliament for more than thirty years.

Looking at the Ottoman state under Sultan Abdülhamid II’s rule (1876-1909) in the context of world changes, and taking issue with those perspectives which either orientalized the empire as the “Terrible Turk” and “Oriental Despot” or glorified it, Selim Deringil, a notable historian of the late Ottoman Empire and Abdülhamid era, defines the period with the legitimacy crisis of the Ottoman state. Since the last quarter of the eighteenth century, likewise their contemporaries in Europe, the Ottoman rulers and administrators had developed reforms and policies aimed at political, fiscal, judicial, and military centralization of the Ottoman state. In 1839, the Tanzimat-ı Hayriye or the Gülhane Reform Edict set the stage for the establishment of a modern state apparatus in the Ottoman Empire. The Edict prepared by the Minister of Foreign affairs Mustafa Reşid Pasha in 1839, promised reform in four main areas: it guaranteed the lives, honour and property of all Ottoman subjects, and promised the equality of all subjects before the law, thereby introducing an egalitarian concept of “Ottoman” citizenship. In addition, it promised a centralized and rationalized military conscription system as well as the establishment of a

\textsuperscript{31} Somel, 2003, lx–Ixi.
new, centralized tax system to replace the old system of tax-farming. As Deringil stated, the modern state with its “mass schooling, a postal service, railways, lighthouses, clock towers, lifeboats, museums, censuses, and birth certificates, passports, as well as parliaments, bureaucracies, and armies was only constituted in the Ottoman Empire after the Reform Edict of 1839.” These developments all paved the way for an intense bureaucratization and centralization of the state in the Ottoman lands. Indeed, the Ottoman Empire shared the same ambitions as other empires in seeking centralized political, administrative, military power, state fiscality and economic growth; the “inseparable features of nineteenth century historical environments.”

After the Crimean War (1853-56), the challenges brought by global change on both the rulers and the ruled became even more tangible:

[...]just as the state was permeating levels of society it had never reached before, making unprecedented demands on its people, it created new strains on society, leading to what Jurgen Habermas has called a “legitimacy crisis” or “legitimation deficit.” Nor was this legitimacy crisis confined to the relationship of the Ottoman center with its own society. In the international arena also, the Ottomans found themselves increasingly obliged to assert and reassert their legitimate right to existence as a recognized member of the Concert of Europe, as recognized after the Treaty of Paris which ended the Crimean War in 1856.

The legitimacy crisis in question was situated both in the political/ideological and the economic realm/sphere. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) Protestant missionary accounts, reports, correspondences, diaries, and the British consulate archives have been some of the most crucial sources showing the political implications of the crisis during the famines in Ottoman Anatolia. These global actors provided famine relief to thousands of Turkish, Armenian, Kurdish, Greek, Jewish, Syriac, Nestorian, Arab, and Chaldean communities in central and eastern provinces. During the famine years, the ABCFM missionaries and the British consuls stationed in Asia Minor tried to fill the void left by the Ottoman state in many provinces by way of relief networks, which in many instances became influential. They helped save thousands from starvation in central and eastern provinces and Mosul. Yet, in addition to humanitarian purposes, the missions had their own religious and political agendas. In accounting for both famines, they produced discourses about the Ottoman Empire that were embedded in particular ideologies and regimes of government. The missionaries

32 Zürcher, 2002, 7. In 1842, the old system of tax-farming was reapplied due to the difficulties of maintaining the system of centralized tax-collection.
34 İslamoğlu & Purdue, 2009, 112.
36 Ertem, 2012b.
laid stronger emphasis on the decay of “Mohammedanism” and “Islam”, whereas British relief agents pointed to corruption and the lack of railways, reform, *laissez-faire* economics, and overall faith in trade and science. Individual accounts written by missionaries and consuls were much more nuanced and complex, yet, as institutional representatives, they had the motive of increasing their religious and political influence in Asia Minor by claims on moral, political, economic, and religious superiority.

The British and foreign language press also took the famines as occasions to condemn the Ottoman Empire for being a “corrupt despotism,” a backward polity with bad government. In Istanbul, Edgar Whitaker’s *Levant Herald* blamed the local Ottoman authorities for “entirely ignoring the inexorable laws of supply and demand,” by forcing “the importers to sell their grain at unremunerative rates.” The paper went on to state: “The laws of economy triumphed, the door was opened to famine, and starvation stalked in.” British actors continued to underline the “corruption” of the Ottoman government and its misrule as the real cause of the famine. Likewise, the Shaghai-based *North China Herald* condemned the Chinese government’s intervention in the “natural laws of supply and demand,” during the Chinese famine (1876-79). A decade earlier, the London-based British press had used similar discourses to “humiliate the Russian Empire” and condemn “Russian rule and indifference” during the Finnish Famine in the 1860s: “The Finns were presented as a people who had endured ‘the most cruel sufferings in the defence of national independence’ during the Russian-Swedish war of 1808-9, a people for whom the ‘burden’ of Russian rule was ‘too heavy to be any longer endured.” Such publications and official voices identified Ottomans, Chinese, Russians and Indians pretty much by the same words.

Not surprisingly, the British short-term and long-term policies regarding famine and government in India were considered in British accounts to be the best example of government. They saw *laissez-faire* economies and free trade to be the real, modern path to development and reform in the famine-stricken regions of Asia Minor, in accordance with British policies in India. They advised the same path for China. This belief also served their own political interests: famine relief and charity gave the British consuls and the American Protestant missionaries the grounds on which to challenge the legitimacy of the Ottoman government during both famines. They were effective in the majority of famine localities; but their role became more crucial in places where the Ottoman government intervened late, or where governors applied coercive taxation policies and policing, such as Mutasarrıf [District Governor] İbrahim Kamil Pasha in Erzurum during the second famine.

---

38 Edgerton-Tarpley, 2013, 140.
Regarding the latter realm (the economic dimensions of the crisis), the Crimean War had already born significant consequences for Ottoman fiscality. It started the long-term borrowing of the Ottoman governments from European markets and creditors in 1856, and caused a quasi-dependence of the Ottoman state on European financial sources for several decades. In his work on the Ottoman budgets during Abdülhamid II’s rule, Engin Akarli states: “Money, the reformers did find. They borrowed it liberally from wealthy West European countries for the principal purpose of covering budget deficits”, adding, “but not to improve the productive capacity of the country. Thus, they put a burden on future generations without bequeathing equivalent benefits.” Yet, as Akarli, Deringil and several other Ottoman historians also cautioned, this story of dependence has been imagined far too easily within an “Ottoman decline” paradigm for decades in Ottoman historiography. Several groups of Ottoman reformist statesmen constantly negotiated the terms of the Ottoman state despite prevailing domestic and international challenges, and unlike the dependent conditions that many of their counterparts in colonized India and Africa had to face, they “were nonetheless able to carve out a critical space for manoeuvre” within the international scene. They were also acutely aware of the political, financial, and infrastructural problems the empire faced, and especially during the years of Abdülhamid II’s reign, they attached special importance to raising agricultural production, social welfare policies, and infrastructural development. Isa Blumi, developing solid arguments of modernization narratives in late-nineteenth century Ottoman historiography, writes: “To some crucial outside interests, the Ottoman capacity to produce wealth proved both a long-term threat to their own expansionist aims and at the same time an attractive source of potential revenues if properly harnessed.” Thus, in contrast to accounts interpreting Ottoman imperial collapse as a product of a premodern, backward, “oriental” social order and violent sectarian rivalry, he focuses on the “emergent Euro-American financial oligarchy,” and “private banks that were extensions of vast family networks” as critical forces shaping the terms on which “Ottoman demise” took place. Their role is crucial for understanding the imperial challenges of 1870s.

41 Akarlı, 1992, 443.
42 For a critical analysis of declinist and Eurocentric tendencies in Ottoman historiography, see Faroqhi, 2010.
43 Deringil, 1999, 3.
44 Akarlı, 1992, 443; see also Akarlı, 2010.Nevertheless, the “public good” was not necessarily the priority; they deemed these necessary in order to survive in both domestic and international arenas. For the relationship between power, legitimacy and welfare, Özbek, 2005.Their projects and solutions did not prevent / exclude the accelerating violence, the loss of legitimacy, and the eventual deposition of Abdülhamid II by the Young Turks in 1908.
45 Blumi, 2013, 19.
46 Blumi, 2013, 19: “In other words, Ottoman collapse was contingent on a number of factors that as much reflect a variety of indigenous actors’ interests informed by local processes as those of the banking houses in Paris, London, Frankfurt, Vienna, and Milan.”
British India experienced similar developments within a colonial context. While comparing British and Ottoman Empires, Christopher Bayly suggests that they had parallel trajectories of “distorted development”, albeit for varying reasons. He explains the concept in relation to British India thus: “…the British government did “develop” India through infrastructural and social investment, but only to limited degree and only to an extent that was compatible with British strategic and commercial aims”.\textsuperscript{47} He found a parallel for this “distorted development” in the reform attempts of the \textit{Tanzimat} and the Hamidian eras. He claimed that these attempts, which “were driven by a desire to save the dynasty,” were constrained by two factors. The first one was “the external regimes of free trade, capitulations, and Ottoman debt repayments.” Bayly suggests the system created by these constraints was “remarkably similar in its outlines to the more direct imperial economic pressures that were felt in India.”\textsuperscript{48} He found a parallel for this “distorted development” in the reform attempts of the \textit{Tanzimat} and the Hamidian eras. He claimed that these attempts, which “were driven by a desire to save the dynasty,” were constrained by two factors. The first one was “the external regimes of free trade, capitulations, and Ottoman debt repayments.” Bayly suggests the system created by these constraints was “remarkably similar in its outlines to the more direct imperial economic pressures that were felt in India.”\textsuperscript{48} He notes that the difference between British India and the Ottoman Empire lay in that fact that European resident commercial interests did not have a direct effect on government policy in the Ottoman Empire. However, their similarity was more striking: “During the age of capitalist imperialism after 1860 it is noteworthy that the drain of ‘home charges’ and debt repayments on the Ottoman and Indian exchequers amounted to about the same, 2.5 percent per annum.”\textsuperscript{49}

The second constraint that laid the ground for a ‘distorted modernization’ was the “internal social structure” based on the use of intermediary groups such as “tribal” headships and religious \textit{millet} [the system of religious communities—Muslims, Christians, Jews—having legal identities] divisions as a tool of local government and cooption. According to Bayly, “old religious, millet and tribal distinctions remained lines of fracture that could widen in the case of external enticement and local opportunism.”\textsuperscript{50}

The famines did indeed strike the empire during such a period of compounded vulnerabilities. In the Balkans, the Serbs had gained autonomy and the Greeks had become independent. Egypt also gained wider autonomy from the Ottoman state in 1873. There was civil strife in Herzegovina between 1874 and 1876, and intellectual groups such as the Young Ottomans, who stood for Ottoman patriotism and liberal constitutionalism, were gaining influence and would contribute to the deposition of Sultan Abdülaziz in 1876.\textsuperscript{51}

Throughout these years, besides military spending, further borrowing increased at ever higher interest rates in order to manage the existing debt. The “Great Depression” of 1873 in Europe and the United States triggered a world financial

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{bayly2004} Bayly, 2007, 339.
\bibitem{bayly2007} Bayly, 2007, 339. Richard Horowitz develops similar arguments while comparing China, Siam and the Ottoman Empire. He writes, international law based on diplomacy and free trade agreements in the nineteenth century was an agent in the transformation of these states as “semi-colonial political systems.” Horowitz, 2004, 446–7.
\bibitem{bayly2007} Bayly, 2007, 339.
\bibitem{somel2003} Somel, 2003, Ix–Ixi.
\end{thebibliography}
crisis that put Ottoman state finances in great trouble because of the difficulty of obtaining new credit and capital flight. The government managed to sign a new contract for loans in October 1874, an act, which prompted the following commentary on the pages of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*:

 [...] it may be doubted whether this loan, or indeed any financial measure will materially improve the desperate condition of the Turkish finances. Her national debt amounts to more than 700,000,000 dollars, the interest on which is 50,000,000 dollars or more than half of her last year’s revenue...In view of the famine in Asia Minor and other districts, the really collectable taxes will hardly be increased by one-fourth the amount anticipated.

When the Ottoman government declared partial insolvency in 1875, inhabitants were still struggling with the severe consequences of the famine disaster in central Anatolia. Not long after, another drought followed by a harsh winter in 1879 hit this time eastern provinces, and aggravated the devastation caused by the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 in the region, especially in Erzurum, Van, and Diyarbekir. In 1880, just like in 1874, grain prices increased, bread was inadequate, peasants had to migrate to towns, and many lives were lost. The war had already made the lives of populations in north-eastern and eastern provinces miserable, especially in Erzurum, a major battlefield province. The Ottoman Empire lost much in terms of land and manpower. After diplomatic negotiations between the European powers, article 16 of the San Stefano Treaty was integrated into the Berlin Treaty (signed on 13 July 1878). This clause put pressure on Abdülhamid II and the Ottoman government to “carry into effect, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security from Kurds and Circassians.” The Berlin Treaty pointed to the emergence of the politically comparable ‘Armenian’ and ‘Reform’ questions regarding the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The intensity of the political and financial crises increased as the Empire faced three major issues: the re-settlement of Circassian and Muslim refugees arriving in these provinces from lands lost in the war, the burden of paying war indemnities, and the challenge of controlling the plunders committed by the Kurdish tribes especially in villages inhabited by Armenian peasants in eastern provinces. These acts intensified with the famine.

52 Pamuk, 1984, 114.
54 Around 10,000 people in the eastern provinces and 25,000 in Mosul died according to contemporary records. Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives [BOA], Ministry of Internal Affairs Correspondence Registers [DH.MKT], 1331/42, 9 May 1880; Duguid, 1973.
55 Rolin-Jaequemyns, 1891, 34.
An Overshadowed Memory: War and Famine

When famine hit the Ottoman east in 1880, it marked the beginning of a new configuration of circumstances. Unlike the previous famine in central Anatolia, this one closely related to war. The resultant loss of agricultural produce, as well as the scarcity, and high price of bread raised the intensity of violence and plundering in the eastern and north-eastern provinces. Conflicts over land and food deepened with the arrival of the first Muslim refugees in a period of general scarcity. As paper currency continued to depreciate, the price of bread increased even further. Several imperial decrees were issued to “maintain peace and order” through attempted stabilizations of bread prices, the provision of bread rations for the poor, and the assigned supervision of bakeries by zaptiye (police) and municipal authorities in order to prevent anyone from buying extra amounts of bread. The bakeries, however, usually refused to distribute free bread to the refugees. These events alerted the government to the fact that it needed new measures to curtail the rising cost of bread. Despite several attempts to relieve the distress, conflict over bread and small-scale bread riots (mostly initiated by Muslim refugees) persisted in Istanbul. Scarcity and the devaluation of currency by order of the Ottoman government triggered discontent in the rest of Anatolian provinces as well. Another serious unrest in the Malatya district of Diyarbekir in March 1880 by Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants alarmed the central authorities. An imperial fiscal crisis could translate into a severe political crisis in a province already struggling with famine and scarcity.

On 24 August 1879, Thomas Boyacıyan, Acting British Vice Consul in Diyarbekir, reported the first signs of famine:

The price of provisions is getting very high, and already the signs of poverty and famine are appearing. Hundreds of Arab families are located in the neighborhood of Diarbekir [sic]. Farmers are demanding seed for next year, but the Government does not care much about it. I pointed out, both to the Vali [Provincial Governor] and to the Commission [Local administration] the other day, the danger of neglecting an affair like this. They promised to consider the matter.

---

56 Terzibaşoğlu, 2004, 102; Chochiev & Koç, 2006. See also Blumi, 2013, 43–66.
58 In the Beşiktaş neighbourhood of Istanbul, the bakeries refused to supply the refugees with free bread despite the coupons allocated to these refugees by the government. BOA. Y.PRK. ŞH 1–19, 29 June 1879.
59 For example, almost a year later, in the Çemberlitaş area of the capital city, refugees attempted to plunder a bakery. BOA. Y.PRK.ŞH 1–30, 11 Mar. 1880.
60 Stephen Duguid was the first to mention this unrest, referring to foreign accounts of these events in his unpublished thesis from 1970. According to Duguid, it was “one of the few instances of civil protest during this period.” Duguid, 1970, 145.
Villages and towns on the Erzurum Plateau and in the area of Diyarbekir, provinces which had been ordered to provide relief to famine-stricken districts a couple of years earlier, were themselves hit by famine and scarcity in 1879–81. Messrs. Dewey and Thom, Protestant American missionaries stationed at Mardin, reported that the famine extended from Diyarbekir to the Persian Gulf. The scanty rainfall during the winter of 1878–79 resulted in the loss of summer crops and a rapid rise of prices. As it had occurred a couple of years earlier, the region experienced “[…] a winter of almost unexampled severity from cold and snow, so that not only did food and fuel rapidly vanish, but thousands of cattle and sheep perished […]”

In the countryside, the loss of cattle and other means of subsistence triggered increased plundering by starving Kurdish nomadic tribes in frontier villages mainly composed of sedentary Armenian, Kurdish, Turkish, Syriac and Arab communities. In urban areas, scarcity and high prices aggravated pre-existing economic hardships. In Diyarbekir, in June 1880, a bread riot directed at two local council members, one of them a Catholic Armenian grain merchant, the other a Muslim notable, took place. The crowd, including many women and children, according to contemporary sources, was also composed of both Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants (including Armenians and Turks). Economic problems cut across religious-ethnic lines, and when merged with famine, the former were expressed as communal conflicts as well as united actions against political and economic authorities by poor and deprived inhabitants. The problems in Diyarbekir, and news of violence against Armenian villages in the district of Van posed serious threats to political legitimacy and the heritage of the Tanzimat reforms in the first years of Abdülhamid II’s reign. Before it could address the financial crisis and the aftermath of war, the new Ottoman government had to cope with famine.

While the legitimacy of the Ottoman state was being strongly undermined in the eastern provinces during the famine, its financial independence was also on the wane. In 1881, the Public Debt Commission (Düyun-u Umumiye), consisting of the representatives of Ottoman bondholders, was established in Istanbul. The duty of the commission was to administer and collect most of the taxes and revenues that would repay the foreign debt, as well as the recently added war indemnity to Russia. With the establishment of this institution, the Ottoman government placed about one third of its revenue under the control of foreign creditors, thus rendering it more vulnerable to the interventions of foreign powers. These developments in

---

64 Ertem, 2010.
65 In order to fight the famine in the eastern provinces, an Ottoman Famine Commission was established in Istanbul in the last week of April 1880. BOA. I–DH 802–65028, 8 April 1880. It had two main duties: (1) to procure grain from neighboring provinces, either as gratuitous relief, or to purchase and transport it to famine-stricken provinces; (2) to encourage the organization of public and private charity through diverse campaigns and newspaper announcements in Istanbul.
66 Shaw & Shaw, 1995, 224.
the 1870s and the early 1880s forced the Ottoman administrators to re-evaluate the limits of Tanzimat reforms in the region, and search alternative methods of integration and order for these provinces.

• • •

Abdülhamid II managed to consolidate his modern autocratic rule in the empire throughout the 1880s and 1890s and several Kurdish tribes became his prominent political and economic allies in maintaining “security” and “order” in the Anatolian countryside. After the Armenian massacres of the 1890s in the eastern provinces of the empire, memories of the latest famine became subsumed under this new heavy trauma much in the same way memories of the previous famine had dissolved into the trauma of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78, and the hunger experience during the First World War. The Russo-Ottoman War (1877–78) erupted only a few years after the great central Anatolian famine. Thus, the intensity of war suffering overcame the painful memories of the previous famine period (1873–75). The famine that struck eastern provinces in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War, on the other hand, was overshadowed by the emergence of the “Armenian Question” as an international political issue. The mainstream historiography of the Ottoman east has ignored the famine that killed at least 10,000 people in 1879–81 for two main reasons: 1) the number of the deceased was not deemed significant to be analyzed separately; 2) the violent bloodshed during the Armenian massacres of 1895–96 and 1915 was a more powerful upheaval. It has dominated memory and historiography of the Ottoman east during the Ottoman era.

In her excellent book on the cultural history of the Great Chinese famine [Dingwu qihuang, 1876–79], Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley stated that “few Chinese people outside the scholarly community have even heard the term Dingwu qihuang.” She explained why:

Both local and national discussions of the disaster were … rapidly buried under layer upon layer of new upheavals – China’s loss to Japan in the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, the invasion by eight allied armies after the Boxer Rebellion, the 1911 Revolution, the May 4th Movement, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and then of China proper, civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists, and the Communist Revolution. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Chinese history was marked by one enormous disaster after another, and the horror of mass starvation was repeatedly ignored in favor of focusing on disasters with clearer-cut heroes and villains.

67 Klein, 2011.
68 Maksudyan, 2014.
69 The latest volume on the Ottoman East is a significant contribution to the historiography of Ottoman Anatolia, that goes beyond conventional paradigms and building on the previous literature, takes into account the perspectives of the locals. Sipahi, Derderian & Cora, 2016.
The Ottoman famine history and historiography had similar problems. Hunger accounts in 1870s soon mixed with the succeeding traumas in Ottoman Anatolia and became ordinary details within stories of violence, bloodshed and misery in 1890s. The daily struggles, pains, clashes, hopes, and frustrations of ordinary children, women, men, and already quiet stories of starved animals in the region were silenced under the weight of ensuing wars, massacres, political, religious, ethnic upheavals in collective memory.

The trauma of famine was one which affected numerous regions and peoples during the nineteenth century, including Ireland, British India, China, Brazil, Iran, Europe, and Russia. Global, imperial, and colonial economic relations, consequent financial straits, repercussions of modern statehood, taxation policies, impoverishment, infrastructural problems, domestic political chaos, wars, violence, corruption, and political recklessness all compounded the devastating impact of climate and natural disasters. States and private actors took certain relief measures and actions, and international humanitarian agents developed relief missions and initiatives. However, millions of people still died of hunger and disease unnoticed in places whose rulers had been relying extensively upon discourses of science, physical and moral superiority, and modernization. Disease due to hunger, immigration, rising bread prices, grain hoarding, riots, theft, plunder, violence, moral corruption, transformation of values, dissolving of family and community bonds became widespread phenomena in the very same century of prevalent reform, progress, centralization, state power and development discourses. Starving men, women, and children could not make their true agony be heard. Notwithstanding their individual contexts, stories, and differences, the Ottoman famines were at the same time part of this broader history. The ordinary Ottomans had their share from nineteenth-century hunger(s) with all peculiarities intact. Its memory might have remained dim; but it is not non-existent.

References


John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI.

Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), İstanbul.
DH. MKT (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Correspondence Registers)
I.DH (Imperial Decrees of Internal Affairs)
Y.PRK.ŞH (Yıldız Palace, Municipality Documents)
The National Archives, Kew, London.
FO (Foreign Office Papers).

Chicago Daily Tribune
Levant Herald
Missionary Herald
New York Times


Rolin-Jaequemyns, M.G. 1891. *Armenia, the Armenians and the treaties* [translated from the *Revue de Droit International et de Législation Comparée* (Brussels), and revised by the author]. London: John Heywood.


Finland’s “Great Hunger Years”
Memorials: A Sesquicentennial Report.¹

Andrew G. Newby
Department of World Cultures, University of Helsinki

This article provides an interim report, and gazetteer, on the enumeration and categorisation of memorials to Finland’s Great Famine Years, an element of the Academy of Finland’s 2012-17 project, “The Terrible Visitation: Famine in Finland and Ireland ca. 1845-68 – Transnational, Comparative and Long-Term Perspectives”. To outside observers, it can sometimes seem as though Finland’s famine of the 1860s has been “forgotten”, particularly in comparison with catastrophes in Ireland (1845-51) and Ukraine (1932-3). In the latter cases, political circumstances have influenced historic narratives, and placed the Great Famines at the centre of a national narrative that emphasises the baleful role of an external other. In Finland, which was responsible for its own economic and political administration by the 1860s, commemoration has been more local in focus. The memorials nevertheless highlight the existence of an idealised national autostereotype, which stresses stoicism and forbearance, along with a persistent belief that the nation could be crystallised by shared suffering.

Introduction, Structure & Sources

This interim report is based on a combination of fieldwork, and primary / secondary source research, and is a step towards the creation of a comprehensive record of memorials to Finland’s Great Hunger Years [Suuret Nälkävuodet] of the 1860s. The 150th anniversary of the great mortality crisis of 1867-68 represents an appropriate time take stock of these memorials, and this account is supplemented by a more analytical / comparative article which will be published in the summer of 2017.²

¹ The extensive fieldwork that has been required for this article has been funded as a part of the broader Academy of Finland project, “The Terrible Visitation: Famine in Finland and Ireland c. 1845-1868 – Comparative, Transnational and Long-Term Perspectives” (# 1264940 and #1257696). I am grateful to many individuals who have helped in the search for these memorials. These include Liisa Kortelainen (Juuka), Juha-Matti Junkari (Juuka), Rev. Jouko Ala-Prinkkila and Raija Kumpula (Kauhajoki Parish), and several good Samaritans from Kankaanpää and Nummikoski who in May 2016 helped to rescue my car from a particularly deep and viscous ditch on Road 6700, near Ämmälä, after I took a misguided shortcut between the memorials at Lapinkaivo and Hämeenkyrö. Unless otherwise stated, photographs are by the author.

² Newby, 2017.
The content of the report is based on various types of source. As might be expected, many valuable clues about memorial locations were found in Finnish local newspapers from the twentieth century. The newspapers were particularly useful in reporting inauguration ceremonies, and the local campaigns / committees which formed in order to establish a memorial. In a similar vein, a diverse range of internet sources has proved important in either confirming, or hinting at, the existence of a particular memorial. These sources include: the websites of Finnish municipalities and Lutheran parishes; heritages websites such as Kirjastovirma³ which provides pictures and historical sketches of parishes in Northern Ostrobothnia; individual travel and heritage blogs (the Rastipukki⁴ photo collection, and Mauri Kinnunen's Karelia-focussed Makkerin blog⁵ have been especially interesting); and even online descriptions of geocache sites have given vital information.

The thirteen-volume series, Suomen Muistomerkit [Finland's Memorials] gives a marvellous indication of the diversity of Finland’s public monuments, although it does not by any means record all of the memorials to the Great Hunger Years. Nevertheless, the series not only provided guidance and inspiration, it helped to contextualise the famine memorials in Finland alongside monuments to other historical events & individuals. While poring through these volumes in the library of the Board of Antiquities in Kallio, it was also possible to consult the myriad local histories of Finnish regions and municipalities, many of which highlight the famine to a greater extent than general national histories.

My own fieldwork, which is due for completion in September 2017, has meant thousands of kilometres of travel around Finland. Without having employed “scientific” oral historical methods, the contribution of local informants, as well as colleagues, must be acknowledged. Antti Häkkinen's work, in particular, has been a very important basis for this research into sites of famine memory, not least as Professor Häkkinen shared the results of some his own earlier fieldwork. Local residents have been extremely generous with their time and have helped in several instances to locate memorials.

Models and Inspiration

Various stimuli coalesced into a motivation to explore the existence, location and form of memorials to the Great Finnish Famine. As a mere dilettante in relevant academic fields such as Material Culture, Memory Studies, or History of Art, I have remained mindful of Peter Gray's warning that “the professional historian's role in commenting on these manifestations of ‘public history’ is not straightforward”.⁶

³ <www.kirjastovirma.fi>
⁴ <www.rastipukki.kuvat.fi> features photographs of several 1860s memorials, amongst various other types of memorial, churches, statues etc.
⁵ <http://maurikin.blogspot.fi>
Moreover, I have necessarily approached the topic with a foreign gaze, but particularly the gaze of someone whose mode of thought around famine commemoration has been shaped by the Irish experience. In general, it is easy to understand why Irish academics have written of Finnish popular “amnesia” in relation to the 1860s famine, and that the famine years themselves have been “unduly neglected” by historians. It is important to remember, however, that the Irish have also been charged with collective amnesia in relation to the 1840s, particularly prior to the “famine fever” which gripped the country in 1997. We should take care not to suggest that the post-1990s historiography on the Great Irish Famine is “normal” in an international context, even though in many respects it provides a model for critical interdisciplinary research.

An examination of the general historical literature on nineteenth-century Finland – not by any means limited to English-language sources – confirms the primacy of an economic-historical narrative that posits a relatively short crisis, followed immediately by an economic and demographic recovery. Moreover, the 1860s was a decade that saw confirmation of Finland’s autonomy within the Russian Empire – indeed its emergence as a nation – and the famine years have scarcely been deemed worthy of analysis in a political context. In addressing the question of “historical amnesia”, Eliza Kraatari has recently written of the “silence” that surrounds the history of the famine years in Finland, and of the “hesitation to address the concept even in related historical research”. While academic studies of the 1860s seem to have increased again in recent years, after a lull since the 1980s and early 1990s, public awareness of the sesquicentenary remains limited, particularly as it is subsumed beneath the more celebratory centenary commemorations around Finland’s independence. And yet, an unqualified “amnesiac” hypothesis is problematic. The famine years are covered in Finnish children’s books (including on the national curriculum), in university courses, and it has even been claimed the famine years are “indelibly marked in the memory of the Finns”.

Recent academic work – in a variety of disciplines – on memorials to the “Great Famines” in Ireland and (to a lesser extent), Ukraine, have been important guides as this project has developed. In its form and execution, it owes a debt to Emily Mark-FitzGerald’s comprehensive Irish Famine Memorials website, itself a valuable adjunct to her academic analyses. Inspiration also came from Rob Gibson’s Highland Clearances Trail (1983, subsequently several revised editions),

7 Ó Gráda, 1995, 208; Daly, 1997, 596.
10 Kraatari, 2016, 192.
12 <https://irishfaminememorials.com>
13 Inter alia, Mark-Fitzgerald, 2012; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013; Mark-FitzGerald, 2014.
a book that identified, located and contextualised “Clearances” sites in the Scottish Gàidhealtachd, and which had a tremendous impact on me as a student. There is no intention on my part, however, to follow a path towards “heritage tourism”, or indeed “misery tourism”, not least because of the size of Finland and the relative inaccessibility of some of the monuments noted. This research will, however, eventually form the basis of an open-access, interactive website, again inspired by Emily Mark-Fitzgerald’s work on Irish Famine Memorials, and will provide accurate locations and descriptions of these important Finnish sites of memory.

Memorialising the 1860s – A Brief Overview

A Memory of the Years of Dearth: In the lower storage room of Karstula belfry is a knapsack preserved from the 1867-68 Years of Dearth, which contains inside the remainder of some poor starving individual’s bark-bread. This ever-so-nasty relic from the Dearth Years, which can be witnessed with one’s own eyes, should be preserved, to remind future generations of the our ancestors’ anguished history.

By the time this “memorial” was discovered, in 1895, Finland’s famine years of the 1860s were already a part of the nation’s history. “Hunger Bread”, although it was also used in non-famine years, became a recurrent symbol of the 1860s. Its use in memorialising the famine years had been noted by the British writer Emile Dillon (using the pseudonym E.B. Lanin) in 1892:

famine decimated the population [in the 1860s]...the museum of Helsingfors still possesses a gruesome collection of the “hunger bread” on which the peasantry was in those time of scarcity forced to live. They are all black or brown; as hard as a stone and generally as free from admixture of corn.

Early written recollections focussed largely on the mortality crisis of 1868, and in emphasising the role of early frosts in September 1867 implied strongly that Finland’s devolved administration in Helsinki were helpless in the face of a natural disaster. Anders Svedberg, a Swedish-speaking Finnish teacher, journalist and editor who represented the peasantry in the House of Estates in Helsinki, produced one of the earliest retrospectives. Entitled “Famine [Hungersnöden] in Finland. 1867”, Svedberg’s article was published in the Swedish newspaper Förre och Nu in September 1871. He noted the impact of the frost, as well as aid from overseas (particularly Sweden), and the redoubtable efforts of the Finns themselves. The emergence of a hegemonic elite narrative was already discernable:

14 Gouriévidis, 2010, is also a key influence in this respect.
15 Elliot, 2016, 35.
17 Lanin, 1892, 420.
However, when God strikes He heals well, and after the storm He lets the sun shine. This happened even here ... You could ask in conclusion, what Finland learned in the fiery trial it had just undergone. As the issue concerns the entire population, one cannot anticipate visible results immediately; but this much is certain, however, that greater diligence and thrift is notable as the first and immediate lesson of the time of trouble.¹⁸

Shortly after the publication of Svedberg's article, the nationalist Suometar published a similar narrative for a Finnish audience – emphasising the sense of Divine challenge, and the opportunity that the economic troubles provided for crystallising the people into a nation.¹⁹

The early 1890s, partly as a reaction to a renewed threat of famine, witnessed the emergence of literature dealing with the 1860s, and a potential challenge to the hegemonic narrative.²⁰ The elite's response was prompt, with the publication in 1892 of Agaton Meurman's Hungeråren på 1860-talet [The Hunger Years of the 1860s].²¹ Meurman's work reaffirmed a famine narrative that highlighted the people's stoicism, and the benefits that accrued from the experience of shared suffering. His arguments provided the template for articles and books on the 1860s until deep into the twentieth century. Of particular relevance to this report is Meurman's assertion that the Riihimäki-St. Petersburg railway, constructed as part of the famine relief works and opened in 1870, provided the Finnish people with the only monument they needed to the “noble sacrifice” of the 1860s.²²

In fact, the railway did become known colloquially as the “Skeleton Track” [Luurata], or “Hunger Track” [Nälkärata]. In 1907, a report in the railway workers' newspaper Juna claimed that each kilometre of the St. Petersburg-Riihimäki railway represented a construction worker who died from starvation or disease.²³ Memories faded, however. Writing in 1903 from Hausjärvi – a key railway construction site and a municipality which saw two contemporary memorials erected at Oitti and Hikiä – farmer and journalist Kalle Kajander complained that if someone in the south of Finland could not recall the 1860s, then they could have “no idea of what real hunger is”.²⁴ By 1913 a concerned railwayman wrote to the press to highlight the “forgotten graveyard” at Kärkölä, which “nobody had touched for decades”, and which possessed not a single memorial to distinguish it from the surroundings.²⁵ The writer added that there was a “sacred responsibility” to care for sites such as the mass grave at Kärkölä.

¹⁸ Svedberg, 1871.
²² Newby & Myllyntaus, 2015, 157–8; Meurman, 1892, 44, 78.
²³ Juna, 30 May 1907.
²⁴ Kajander, 1903, 5.
²⁵ Uusi Rautatielehti, 15 Aug. 1913.
Although this interim report is intended primarily as a gazetteer of sites, rather than an in-depth discussion of the place of the 1860s famine memorials in the construction of Finnish national history, it is possible to argue that the memorials can be used to construct / solidify both the hegemonic and the counter-hegemonic narratives:

1. **HEGEMONIC**: the location of many of these memorials in graveyards overseen by the state church, along with biblical quotations stressing forbearance and stoicism in the face of Divine challenge; the proximity in many cases of “Hero Graveyards”, the graves of locals who fell in battle in 1918 and 1939-44 (and in the case of the Civil War limited to those who fought the “White” cause) indicates adherence to a particular narrative of adversity; the inauguration ceremonies for these memorials often follow a well-established format, including the traditional interpretation of the famine years as a frost-induced natural disaster; the inclusion of the Great Hunger Years as a “building block” for the nation, alongside later traumas.

2. **COUNTER-HEGEMONIC**: highlighting regional tensions and divisions in the context of an overarching national famine narrative, particularly in areas with higher than the average excess mortality; taken as a whole, the widely divergent sets of dates which can be found on the memorials indicates that different areas of Finland suffered severe economic difficulties well in advance of the frost “trigger” of September 1867 – the inefficient reaction of the central administration in Helsinki is therefore thrust into sharper relief.26

### Summary of Findings

**Geographical Spread of Monuments**

It is notable that, in contrast to e.g. Ireland and Ukraine, there is no “national” famine monument, either in the capital or some other symbolically important site.27 Indeed, the largest town to host a famine memorial in Finland is Lahti, which in


27 Although famine memorials are notable by their absence from Finland's largest towns, there are nevertheless sites which are linked to the 1860s in, for example, Helsinki, Espoo, and Tampere. Perhaps the best-known example of this in Helsinki is the paving at the observatory in Ullanlinna Park (Tähtitorninvuori). Although landscaped by C.L. Engel some decades earlier, private initiatives from the local residents used relief labour to flatten and tarmac the road. (Hufvudstadsbladet 27 Jan., 12 Feb., 18 Feb., 1868; Suomalainen Wirallinen Lehti, 18 Feb. 1868.) In the neighbouring city of Espoo, the medieval cathedral is one of many examples of an unmarked famine-era mass-grave. It is recorded that 298 people were buried in the Espoo Churchyard in 1868, mainly unmarked. In at least one instance, though, there is the grave of an identifiable individual victim: Carl Birger Agricola, whose death in March 1868 was caused by “the raging typhus epidemic that was hitting all social classes.” (Hufvudstadsbladet, 24 Mar. 1868). In the city of Tampere, the pathway through Pyynikki churchyard was constructed by relief work in 1867, and the “puuportti” at Finlayson’s factory was also a site of gratuitous distribution of relief meal by the factory owners. See <www.tampere.fi/material/attachments/pjiSwrlyA0/pyninkin_kirkkopuisto_esite.pdf> <www.tampere.fi/liitteet/k/64kuOvsey/ nottbeckin.pdf>
2016) was the eighth most populous municipality. The local focus becomes more explicit when examining the distribution of memorials on Map 1, which exposes a close correlation between the presence of a memorial and higher mortality during the 1860s. Three main clusters of memorials can be identified: (i) sites associated with the Riihimäki-St. Petersburg railway; (ii) western sites in Pohjanmaa and (iii) eastern sites in Vaara-Suomi. The northernmost site found to date is at Pudasjärvi, some 700 km north of the capital Helsinki and 640 km from the most southerly memorial (Mäntsälä). This reflects the relatively minor impact that the famine made on the north of the country. On the west-east axis, Vaasa lies approximately 550 km from Ilomantsi.

Map 1:
The seventy-eight memorial sites noted in this article correlated to excess mortality on the level of Lutheran deaneries (rovastikunnat) in 1868. Based on the territorial borders of the Grand Duchy of Finland 1833-1920 (see Jukarainen, 2002). I am grateful to Miikka Voutilainen for allowing me to use this map. See Voutilainen, 2016, 180 (Map 16). N.b. the eastermost (Greek Orthodox) deanery of Salmi lacks the relevant data. Details on deaneries taken from Finlands Statskalender, 1868.

28 Newby, 2017; Voitto Viinanen’s account of the “Ruijan Reitti” – the northern road taken by some Finns in search of work in Norway or, indeed, onward passage to America, implies that some graves in Inari belonged to 1860s vagrants. See <www.voittoviinanen.com/albumi/ruijanreitilla/676142>
There is a strong tendency in Finland (over 70% of those noted in the gazetteer) for famine memorials to be located in churchyards, often in proximity to a famine-era mass grave. The excellent records of the Lutheran church have arguably made it easier to locate these memorials, which might create a bias in the results until such time as all the memorials are found, but nevertheless the role of the church in famine commemoration is undeniably strong. Otherwise, mass-graves related to relief work sites are also common locations. Finnish famine memorials (in contrast to the Irish case) are only rarely afforded “public spaces” in towns – and in no case is there a memorial that would arrest the attention of a casual visitor or tourist. It can be said, therefore, that the intended “audience” of the Finnish famine memorials differs considerably from those of their post-1997 Irish famine equivalents.29

Chronological Development of Monuments

The earliest memorials are contemporary, generally plain stones with a simple inscription, and hark back to an earlier tradition of marking significant events, including famine.30 An exception in this case appears to be the site at Oitti, where a gravestone-style memorial was erected in memory of lost railway workers. It was nearly sixty years after the famine years, however, that a new generation of memorials – planned by committees at particular lieux de mémoire, emerged. The earliest of these were at Varkaus (in the vicinity of the Taipale Canal relief work mass grave), and at Sotkamo.31 The events of the 1940s understandably interrupted famine memorialisation, but the first post-war monument at Piipola (1946) presaged a new burst of activity. The 1950s saw memorials established at Alajärvi (1951), Lahti (1953), Varpaisjärvi (1950s, precise date not yet established), Veteli (1954), Kiuruvesi (1955) and in Hämeenlinna’s old graveyard (1958), where four hundred victims of hunger and disease were buried during the famine. Reports of the Hämeenlinna memorial made specific mention of the 90th anniversary of 1868, a sign of the increasing awareness around the importance of anniversaries.32 This awareness was confirmed in the 1960s, with the famine’s centenary focussing the attention of parishes and local history societies, particularly in some of the places that had been worst affected: Lehtimäki (1962); Karttula, Kitee (1963); Lohtaja (1964); Nurmes (1965); Soini, Sievi (1966); Eno, Evijärvi Väinöntalo, Heinävesi, Lavia, Paltaniemi (1967); Leppävirta, Lieksa, Nilsiä, Ristiina (1968). Railway-related sites were also inaugurated in Kärkölä and Kuusankoski during the centenary period, as was a new memorial to the famine road at Tokerotie, in the

29 Newby, 2017.
30 For example, Vaarojen Sanomat, 5 Nov. 1969 notes the discovery of a contemporary stone commemorating a famine year in 1835.
31 See also the gazetteer entry for Lieksa, where a plan for a monument was announced in 1935.
32 Suomen Kuvalehti, 15 Nov. 1958.
Aronkylä neighbourhood of Kauhajoki. In the five decades since the centenary, the memorials have increased steadily in number, with more diverse artistic forms being employed. To date, the most recent additions have been at Vaasa (2008), Nivala (2009), and Kärsämäki (2014). There is no indication that the famine sesquicentenary will herald a new wave of memorialisation such as that seen in Ireland around 1997, although it is possible that local organisations will mark the occasion amidst the national-scale Suomi100 celebrations.

**Inscriptions**

The most common euphemism for the 1860s famine years found on famine memorials is, unsurprisingly, “the (Great) Hunger Years” [(Suuret) Nälkävuodet], an expression that was popularised by Agaton Meurman’s 1892 book. Other expressions occur, including: Years of Dearth [Katovuodet]; Years of Frost [Hallavuodet]; Years of Disease [Tautivuodet], and Poor Years [Köyhät Vuodet]. To date, not a single example has been found of the word used to describe modern famines – nälänhätä. Many of the memorials also contain mortality figures specific to the locale. Moreover – unsurprisingly given the tendency for the memorials to be located in churchyards – biblical quotations proliferate. Details are given in the individual site descriptions below, although the most common quotation is “give us this day our daily bread”, or a variation.

**Varying Forms of Monuments**

As might be expected, there is also a diversity in the form of the memorials, reflecting local or time-specific trends, or the use of particular tropes which might be considered local manifestations of more universal themes: grieving human (particularly female) forms, begging hands, or the failed foodstuff (generally depicted in Finland as rye). The re-appropriation of material germane to the site also occurs regularly, for example: the use of millstones in Evijärvi, Sonkajärvi and Ilmajoki; the reconfiguring of a bridge built as relief work into a memorial (Kivijärvi), or the symbolic use of iron railway tracks at mass-graves of railway workers (Lahti, Kärkölä).


34 It was translated into Finnish as Nälkävuodet 1860-luvulla.

35 An examination of these euphemisms is outside of the scope of the current report, but it will be important to analyse the Finnish and Swedish words used to describe “famine” events both in Finland and abroad.
Next Steps

Various gaps in the basic information of some of the memorials remain, and this is the immediate priority – viz. discovering the date / year of inauguration, and completing the task of visiting each one personally to record GPS coordinates and check inscriptions, form etc. To date, secondary information has been obtained from fieldwork, local informants, local newspapers and internet sources (particularly Lutheran parish websites). It will be important to consult archival sources – particularly church and municipal records – as a means of confirming inauguration dates etc. of the memorials. There are also plenty of local newspapers still awaiting analysis.

The development of a complete catalogue of 1860s memorials is intended to create a resource for further research, particularly allowing contextualisation: (i) alongside other “trauma” memorials in Finland (many of which have aesthetics, locations, and indeed sculptors in common with the famine memorials), it will be important to analyse the position of famine memorials within a “hierarchy of memory”\(^\text{36}\); and (ii) comparative work with other countries.

In taking the comparative study with Ireland to its logical conclusion, it will of course be necessary to confirm whether any 1860s memorial sites exist outside of Finland. This includes among diasporic settlements in North America and the lands that comprised the Russian Empire, but also those “lost territories” of the 1940s.\(^\text{37}\) It seems quite apparent that, despite the following pages describing over seventy memorials, more are waiting to be uncovered. Indeed, it is hoped that by publishing this interim report informants might contact the author with more sites, or more details of the memorials noted here (or errors in fact or interpretation). In the week before submission, two more memorials came to light which precipitated further road-trips, and there seems no doubt that this will not be a “final” list.\(^\text{38}\)


\(^{37}\) Other than a memorial to the 1697 famine in Jääski (erected in 1916. See Uusi Suometar, 7 Sep. 1916) I have not encountered references to any other memorials in the ceded parts of Karelia.

\(^{38}\) To put this interim report into perspective, Petri Raivio’s study, based on fieldwork undertaken in 1997-99, was based on 546 sites of memory related to the Second World War in Finland. Raivio, 2000, 164 (fn. 25).
Map 2: Locations of the seventy-eight memorials recorded in the gazetteer. Based on the territorial borders of Finland 1944 to present (see Jukarainen, 2002). Map by permission of ZeeMaps.
Sites of Memory: The 1860s Great Hunger Years

An Interim Gazetteer of Finnish Famine Memorials
Organised Alphabetically by Location.

NB: Finnish spelling conventions are used; translations of inscriptions are the author’s own, and attempt to take some account of style and cultural peculiarities; for reasons of space, original Finnish texts / inscriptions have been omitted here but, but the author can be contacted for further details if required.

As far as possible, the name of the municipality in 1868 has been used in the alphabetical arrangement. In cases where this municipality has been merged subsequently, the new entity is noted in square brackets before the region. Where it is considered useful, the name of the specific village within the municipality is noted in brackets.

Naturally, there are numerous sites of memory around Finland which relate to the Great Hunger Years, but which are not explicitly indicated by a memorial or interpretive board. These include place names, former parish grain-stores, grave-sites etc. The list of memorials adheres to the definition suggested by Emily Mark-FitzGerald in her analysis of recent Irish memorials: a “Famine monument has been defined as a three-dimensional form set in public space”, and other existing historical sites, “famine roads”, or the remains of poor-houses, are not included unless they are also accompanied by a memorial or more extensive commemorative intervention.39

1. Alahärmä [Kauhava]
Southern Ostrobothnia

2. Alajärvi
Southern Ostrobothnia
Gabriel’s Church, Alajärvi; Kirkkotie 6 (63°00’00.3”N 23°49’31.7”E).41 Inaugurated 12 August 1951; gravestone with inscribed Christian cross and text: “This stone was erected in 1951 by Alajärvi parish in memory of those who perished during the Great Hunger Years of 1866, -67 and -68. Father Give Us Our Daily Bread”.

Fig. 1: Alajärvi, July 2016.

39 <https://irishfaminememorials.com/user-guide/>
40 SM 1994c, 6.
3. Asikkala
Päijänne Tavastia

Fig. 2: Asikkala, January 2017.

4. Elimäki (Koria) [Kouvola]
Kymenlaakso
In the vicinity of Kallioniemi Dancing Hall (60°51’07.2"N 26°36’60.0"E). A granite stone memorial (currently to the right of a wooden terrace with picnic table), which is dated 19 August, 1869. The memorial features the initials of six people, and is said to be carved by the railway workers themselves in memory of their dead colleagues.

5. Eno [Joensuu]
North Karelia

Fig. 3: Eno, October 2016.

---

42 SM 1996c, 8.
6. Evijärvi 1  
Southern Ostrobothnia  
Evijärvi Churchyard, Kirkkotie 77 (63°22'31.7"N 23°28'27.4"E).\textsuperscript{45} Inaugurated in 1986. Re-used millstone, lying flat. Organised and funded by the local Lions Club. Millstone donated by Erkki Paalanen. Inscribed by Aleks Kultalahti with: “Give us our daily bread. In memory of the hunger-dead of the 1800s. Lions Club Evijärvi 1986”.

7. Evijärvi 2  
Southern Ostrobothnia  
Väinöntalo Lake Region Museum, Latukantie 99. A memorial to the Great Hunger Years is located in the garden of Väinöntalo Museum. It was inaugurated in 1967. It is a natural stone slab, into which is carved: 18 1/6 67.\textsuperscript{46}

8. Haapajärvi  
Northern Ostrobothnia  
Haapajärvi Old Churchyard, off Kauppakatu (63°44'52.5"N 25°18'57.2"E).\textsuperscript{47} Inaugurated in 1988 and designed by Armas Kosonen. Stone memorial with inlaid black marble, featuring three emaciated hands praying and grasping for a single rye stem. Text “In memory of those who died of starvation in the 1860s”. Author Aki Ollikainen suggested that the memorial in Haapajärvi partly inspired his award-winning novel Nälkävuosi (White Hunger) (2012).\textsuperscript{48}

9. Halsua  
Central Ostrobothnia  
Halsua Churchyard, off Perhontie. Memorial in the form of a stone wall, inscribed with text: “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”. Designed by Sulo Kalliokoski and prepared by Kalle Jokela.\textsuperscript{49}

10. Hausjärvi (Hikiä)  
Tavastia Proper  
Hikiäntie, Pässinlukko, between Seppälä and Hikiä on Road 290 (60°44'32.4"N 24°56'13.7"E). A contemporary memorial stone, in the vicinity of the Riihimäki-St. Petersburg railway relief work, resituated in 1988. Accompanied by a plaque: “The years of poverty, 1862-1868. As a consequence of the Years of Dearth, the parish of Hausjärvi lost one fifth of its five thousand inhabitants to contagious diseases. According to tradition, this stone was placed here on Pässinluko Hill in memory of those who died of typhoid”. Organised by the Hikiä Society. Confirmed by National Board of Antiquities in 1987 as marking a mass grave.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{45} SM 1994c, 16.  
\textsuperscript{46} SM 1994c, 16. This seems to indicate a specific date (1 June 1867). The municipality of Evijärvi was founded around this time. The Väinöntalo museum is open during the summer and has an entry charge.  
\textsuperscript{47} Maaselkä, 22 Dec. 1994; SM 1996a, 9.  
\textsuperscript{48} Kansan Uutiset, 16 Dec. 2012.  
\textsuperscript{49} SM 1994c, 18; see <http://www.kase.fi/~joukohe/pappi.php> for an image.  
\textsuperscript{50} Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 24 Oct. 1987.
11. Hausjärvi (Oitti)
Tavastia Proper
Vanha Valtatie, Hausjärvi, opposite junction with Viinikaisentie (60°47’28.8”N 24°59’38.0”E).\(^{51}\) Railway Builders’ graveyard fenced, with sign “Radaran rakentajien Hautausmaa” from the road. Gravestone with cross motif and inscription: “1867. The Railway Builders Lie Here”.

12. Heinävesi
Southern Savonia
Heinävesi Church, Kirkonmäki Graveyard, Museokuja (62°25’57.1”N 28°37’44.2”E).\(^{52}\) Inaugurated in 1967 and designed / executed by the noted sculptor Veikko Jalava (1911-1981, see also Nurmes). Granite relief featuring a grieving figure, and the inscription: “In commemoration of the suffering of the inhabitants of our area during the Great Hunger Years 1866-1868. Erected by the Heinävesi Society, 1967”.

13. Hämeenkyrö
Pirkannaa
Hämeenkyro Church, Härkikuja 13 (61°38’08.8”N 23°11’36.1”E). Tall natural stone, inscribed with: “Years of Dearth 1867-1868. Grave of the Hundreds of Dead. Lord You Kill, But You Restore Life”.

14. Hämeenlinna
Tavastia Proper
Hämeenlinna Old Graveyard Park, Turuntie (60°59’41.4”N 24°27’10.4”E).\(^{53}\) Inaugurated in 1958, a gravestone with plaque: “In this graveyard lie four hundred who perished from hunger and disease during the Great Hunger Years 1867-68”. Nearby in the same graveyard is the tombstone of Pastor C.W. Appelqvist, who died in 1868 “from the fever that ravaged Hämeenlinna”.\(^{54}\)

\(^{51}\) SM 1996c, 19.
\(^{52}\) SM 2000c, 13.
\(^{53}\) Suomen Kuvalehti, 15 Nov. 1958.
\(^{54}\) Hämeläinen, 24 Dec. 1868.
15. Iisalmi  
Northern Savonia  
Old Churchyard, Kirkkotie 10  
(63°34'42.5"N 27°10'10.6"E).  
Inaugurated in 1977. Menhir-style memorial with two plaques: (1) "In memory of those who suffered during the 1860s Years of Dearth. Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread – 4th PETITION". This indicates the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer; (2) on the reverse of the monument a second plaque records "this memorial was erected by Iisalmi Parish, in the year 1977".

Fig. 5: Iisalmi, February 2017. Image courtesy of Ronan Newby.

16. Ilmajoki  
Southern Ostrobothnia  
Iilmajoki Churchyard, Kirkkotie 18  
(62°43'37.6"N 22°33'44.6"E). Broken millstone, with metal Christian cross. Designed by Pentti Haapamäki. Prepared by Otto Talvitie (1914-2007). Inscribed with the text: "Victims of the Hunger Years – Known to God".

Fig. 6: Ilmajoki, July 2016.

17. Ilomantsi  
North Karelia  
A memorial to those who perished during the Hunger Years of the 1800s was inaugurated in 2003 in Mustamäki Churchyard.  

Fig. 5: Iisalmi, February 2017. Image courtesy of Ronan Newby.

---

18. Jalasjärvi [Kurikka] (Taivalmaa) 
Southern Ostrobothnia
Taivalmaa Village Roadside, Tokerotie (Road 672), by junction with Vainiontie (62°33'21.7"N 22°54'08.6"E).  
Tokerotie itself translates as "Slop Road", as it was said that its builders were too weak to ingest anything other than a very "sloppy" mixture of flour and water. According to local tradition (via Antti Häkkinen), the sign was made by Joel Kanto the only local man who could write (Finnish?), who had learned to write while in prison. Original Stone: "Road Built 1867. Aleksander Nikolijv". Plaque: "The Builders of Tokerotie – Did this text here during the Great Hunger Years. Villagers lifted the stone onto its pedestal in 1967 for it to be cherished by future generations".

Fig. 24: Tokerotie, April 2016.

19. Juuka 
North Karelia
Juuka Churchyard; Kokkokalliontie 3. In the vicinity of the famine-era mass-grave. Inaugurated in 1980. Menhir-style memorial, approx. 1.5 metres high, comprising two natural stones (memorial and base), designed and executed by the well-known sculptor Kauko Kortelainen (1933-). Inscription “1689 – 1868. In memory of those who perished by hunger”, with representations of wilted rye stems carved into one flank. Commissioned by a local memorial committee, led by Pietari Korhonen, and fundraising organised by local entrepreneurs and Lions Club. The name of the memorial is "Katovuosi" (Year of Dearth), and the additional allusion to the crisis of the late seventeenth century is distinctive among the 1860s memorials.

Fig. 7: Juuka, October 2016. Image courtesy of Liisa Kortelainen.

56 <www.jalasjarvenkylat.fi/taivalmaa_tokerotien_muistomerkki>
58 Antti Häkkinen was informed by a local resident, Yrjö Taivalmaa, in 1986 (Häkkinen, 1991a, 138, fn. 24) . The Joel Kanto story is also noted in Maaseudun Tulevaisuus, 10 Feb. 1972.
59 Karjalainen, 8 May 1980. A preliminary sketch, including some small differences from the finished monument, is included in this article.
20. Jämsä
Central Finland
Jämsä Churchyard, Koskentie (61°52’27.2”N 25°11’01.7”E). Inaugurated in 1987. Abstract granite memorial with small plaque: “In Memory of those who were lost during the Hunger Years 1866-1868”. Designed by Paavo Keskinen, the monument lies in the main church’s “Memorial Graveyard”, situated next to the (White) Civil War and later Winter / Continuation War graves, and a memorial to the Karelian refugees. An interpretive board notes the “Hunger Years, 1866-68”, and quotes the former Finnish President, P.E. Svinhufvud (1861-1944): “our people’s entire past is a guarantee of the future”. Moreover, the memorial was invested with explicit meaning by the artist: “the monument consists of a recumbent stone slab, cleaved into three sections [...] the three-piece slab represents the tragedy of people lost to hunger, and their broken life cycle. The rough, untreated surface of the stone reflects the diversity and nuances of human existence”. The interpretive panel gives the local context – 1,082 people perished in 1868 in Jämsä – and highlights the “awful weather conditions” which triggered the famine.

![Fig. 8: Jämsä, April 2016.](image)

21. Kangasniemi 1
Southern Savonia
Joutsanmaantie 568, approx. 9km SW of Kangasniemi (61°56’42.6”N 26°31’34.8”E). Pylvänälä-Joutsa Road Memorial. Interpretive board explaining the history of the road, which was started at relief work in 1868. Vagrants in debt to the municipality were also ordered to help in the road’s construction. The road was completed in 1880, and was in use between Kangasniemi and Joutsa for around one hundred years. Moss-covered contemporary memorial, marked “Rauhoitettu Kivi” [Protected Stone] with sign from the main Road 616: “Muistokivi” [Memorial Stone].

22. Kangasniemi 2
Southern Savonia
Museum of Local History & Culture, Joutsantie 1 (61°59’25.3”N 26°38’34.9”E). Inaugurated in 1970. Site of a famine-era grain store. Recumbent stone, with abstract relief. Accompanying plaque: “To the memory of those lost to hunger and deprivation

---

62 Quoted on <http://www.museo24.fi>
during the Great Years of Dearth in Kangasniemi. Kangasniemi Peasant Culture Foundation [Talonpoikaiskulttuurisäätiö] 1970”.

23. Karttula [Kuopio]
Northern Savonia

![Fig. 9: Karttula, February 2017. Memorial bottom right. Image courtesy of Ronan Newby.](image)

24. Kauhajoki (Aronkylä)
Southern Ostrobothnia
Aronkuja 1, in the Aronkylä neighbourhood of Kauhajoki, by the start of Tokerotie (see Jalasjärvi).66 (62°27’17.3”N 22°13’42.1”E). Inaugurated in 1967.67 Menhir-type natural stone on a base of smaller stones. Designed by Matti Porkkala. Plaque with text: “In Memory of the Builders of Tokerotie during the Hungers Years 1867-68. Kauhajoki Society”. Organised by neighbourhood residents.68

65 <www.kuopionseurakunnat.fi/hautausmaat/karttulan-hautausmaa>; SM 2000b, 28. This source notes that 200 were buried in the mass-grave at Karttula, including the uncle of future Finnish President, Urho Kekkonen.

66 SM 1994c, 35.

67 Suomen Kuvalehti, 22 May 1998.

68 A play, “Tokerotie” had also been conceived a year earlier. Written by Kaarlo Peren and performed by Lauri Tuuri. Maaseudun Tulevaisuus, 13 Sep. 1966.
25. Kauhajoki (Lapinkaivo)
Southern Ostrobothnia

The memorial to “Juurakko Gustaf” at an isolated location in Kauhaneva-Pohjakangas National Park (62°15'60.0"N 22°26'26.0"E), simply records that he died of hunger at that spot in April 1868. Little is known about this memorial, other than the current stone monument supplemented a carving in a nearby tree. As “Gustaf” (Kustaa Salomoninpoika Ohmero) came from Kauhajoki, some 30km distant, it seems as though he may have been in Lapinkaivo, a few weeks short of his 60th birthday, engaged in the marsh drainage that was being carried out as relief work.

26. Kiihtelysvaara (Joensuu)
North Karelia

Kiihtelysvaara Churchyard; Aprakkatie 3 (62°29'37.7"N 30°15'06.7"E). Inaugurated in 1974. A 150cm tall installation by Eero Eronen, (see also Tohmajärvi) entitled “Tyhjentynyt kappa”. Featuring a bronze sculpture of three hands (representing a child, an adult and an older person) grasping at the empty container, with an inscription on the dolerite base: “In memory of those who died of hunger 1864-1868”. Nearby, surrounded by an iron fence, is the tomb of a local victim, “Young Isidor”, who died aged two years and eight months, in April 1868. According to the Kiihtelysvaara Society, on the day of Isidor’s burial, seventy other victims were waiting to be buried.

---

70 I translate “Tyhjentynyt Kappa” as “The Emptied Basket”, although “kappa” is a technical term referring to a container – and by extension weight – of produce, typically potatoes. Details of the memorial at <https://erkkieronen.com/portfolio/tyhjentynyt-kappa/>
71 See <http://kiihtelysvaara-seura.fi/nahtavyydet/muistomerkit/>
27. Kitee
North Karelia

28. Kiuruvesi
Northern Savonia
Pappilanranta, Kirkkokatu (63°38′47.2″N 26°38′30.1″E). Inaugurated in 1955. Designed by local architect, Aarne Timonen. Site of a famine-era mass-grave, approximately one kilometre south-east of Kiuruvesi’s main Lutheran church. Pyramid with stones inlaid around the central plaque, topped with a granite cross. “Here lie those forest-clearers who perished through hunger during the great frost years of 1867-1868”.

---

72 Despite the centenary context, the reports around the inauguration of this memorial actually suggest it was erected to remember the 105 known – and many other unknown – victims of hunger in Kitee in 1809-10. *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, 23 Sep. 1963.

73 Leinonen, 2008, features a picture of the Kiuruvesi memorial on its front page. See also SM 2000b, 38.
29. Kivijärvi
Central Finland
Hannonsalmi Bridge, junction of Sallatie and Kivijärventie (63°07′57.5″N 25°01′05.8″E).
Inaugurated in 1985. Memorial made from the stones of the Hannonsalmi and Matalasalmi Bridges, which had originally been constructed as relief work. Plaque with text: “HUNGER YEARS MEMORIAL erected from the old bridges. Eat your bread with gratitude and blessings. Lions Club Kivijärvi. Kivijärvi Municipality. 1985”.

30. Kouvola (Kuusankoski)
Kymenlaakso
At Ristikankaantie, location 60°50′33.1″N 26°42′39.5″E. Inaugurated in 1987. Established by Kouvolankylä Village Council, 7 Jun. 1987. Commemorating the Ristikangas Graveyard, and particularly: those buried as a result of wars in the 1700s; Russian army reservists from the Crimean War; residents of Kouvolankylä; and those who died while building the Riihimäki-St. Petersburg railway.

31. Kuhmo
Kainuu

32. Kuhmo (Lentiira)
Kainuu

33. Kälviä [Kokkola]
Central Ostrobothnia
Kälviä Churchyard, Kälviäntie 22. A memorial to those of died of hunger is situated in the churchyard.

34. Kärkölä
Päijänne Tavastia

---

74 SM 1998, 66.
75 Kuhmolainen, 23 Sep. 2016; SM 1996a, 34.
76 SM 1996a, 34.
77 See <www.kase.fi/~eharju/toimipisteet.htm>
78 SM 1996c, 61; Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 29 May 1967.
“Radanrakentajien Kalmisto 1868-70” from the road. After falling into some disrepair the site was cleaned up by forty volunteers, and rededicated with the help of European Union rural development (LEADER II) funding in 1998.79

35. Kärsämäki
Northern Ostrobothnia


36. Lahti
Päijänne Tavastia

Off Road 312, in the vicinity of Motorway 4 & Motorway 12 junction (60°58’16.8"N 25°42’54.6"E). Inaugurated in 1953 (1954?). Again, this memorial was placed in the vicinity of a mass grave. The monument’s main text reads: “During the 1867-1868 Great Hunger Years, were buried in this place railway builders who died of hunger and disease from Hollola parish, the villages of Lahti and Järvenpää, and from other places. Monument erected by Lahti Parish, 1953.” Surrounded by a fence made of railway tracks, and in the style of a Finnish croft There is also a contemporary gravestone in the vicinity. Plans for dedicating the site were made from as early as 1947.81 In 1950, the “Lahti Society”, a typical Finnish community group, petitioned the town authorities to ensure that the “so-called ‘Hunger Years Graveyard’, which has persistently been left completely untended”, should be protected and equipped with the appropriate symbols of a cemetery.82 In support of their argument, the Lahti Society provided a historical account of the famine years in the town, noted that popular memory still recalled these harsh times, and stressed that the mortality was so great at the time that the local churchyard was unable to accommodate the workers’ corpses. As a result, the railway authorities reserved land on a nearby ridge for the purpose. Although the site was revered for decades, the current generation had forgotten its significance, and it had become a “playground for the children and dogs” of local inhabitants. The existence of the railway had contributed greatly to the development of the town, the society argued, and so those who gave

80 <http://karsamaenseurakunta.fi/hautausmaa>
their lives in creating it should be given due recognition. The petition seemed to have some effect, a considerable amount of money was raised locally, and when the Railway Board transferred the cemetery to the care of the church in 1953, a monument was erected. The site's centenary (of the start of the building work) was noted in 1968. The 110th Anniversary of the railway opening was acknowledged at the site in 1980. Nowadays, the site is completely surrounded by the Lahti intersection of Motorway 4, but it is signposted as the “Railway Builders’ Graveyard.”

84 Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 21 Dec. 1950. Although the memorial stone is dated 1953, the inauguration ceremony seems to have taken place in the summer of 1954. See Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 26 Jun. 1954.
85 Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 18 May 1968.
87 A report of a commemoration at the site in 1980 notes that this fence was planned at the time. Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 12 Sep. 1980. The symbolic use of railway track is repeated in the monumental cross at the Kärkölä railway workers’ memorial (1967). In a similar vein, the memorial at Hannonsalmi (Kivijärvi, 1985) is made from the remains of a stone bridge that was built as a relief work in 1868.
88 See <www.pohjois-savonmuisti.fi/documents/10543/0/Lapinlahden+kirkonkylän+historiakierros>
89 Nerkoo / Lapinlahti was also one of few sites which recorded a serious popular agitation during the famine years. See Häkkinen, 1992, 158.
90 <www.lapinlahti.fi/fi/Tietoa-kunnasta/Kylat/Nerkoo/Historia/Kanavatyon-uhrit> "Akka" is a slang and generally dismissive / derogatory word for a woman, and might be suited to a more colloquial translation.

37. Lapinlahti (Lapinlahden Kirkonkylä) (Northern Savonia)

Lapinlahti, Linnansalmentie 2. Inaugurated in 1968. Large boulder with plaque. “Erected in memory of those who died during the Hunger Years of 1867-68. Lapinlahti Parish. Give us our daily bread”. Connected to relief work building the nearby Nerkoo Canal, which started in 1866 and cost over one hundred lives. A lieu de mémoire can also be found at nearby Akanoja (“Women’s Ditch”), where women – tired of circumnavigating a peninsula to bring food to the male labourers – dug a passage at the neck of the peninsula.
38. Lavia [Pori]
Satakunta
Lavia Churchyard, Tampereentie 9 (61°35'41.8"N 22°35'53.8"E).
Inaugurated in 1967. Tall sculpted stone, with “Hunger Years, 1866-68” text above a relief of a mother bending protectively over a pleading child. Small plaque on the base with text: “In this garden of God lie approximately 800 Lavia residents, who during the sore trials of the Hunger Years died without leaving their home parish. Centenary Memorial Erected by Grateful Lavia Residents, 1967”.

39. Lehtimäki [Alajärvi]
Southern Ostrobothnia
Murtolampi Old Graveyard, Töysänkatu. Inaugurated in 1962. Tall natural stone with relief of a mother giving food to children, designed by engraver Ensio Antikainen. Inscribed text: “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread. Hunger Years, 1863-1868”.

40. Leppävirta
Northern Savonia
Leppävirta Churchyard, Kirkkokaari (62°29'24.3"N 27°47'16.8"E). Inaugurated 1968. Simple gravestone with plaque: “To the victims of the Hunger Years 1867-68”. It was reported at the inauguration that 1,536 parishioners were buried in the famine-era mass grave.

41. Lestijärvi
Central Ostrobothnia
Lestijärvi Church Graveyard, Lestitie 16. A memorial to the 1868 Great Hunger Year is located in the graveyard.

---

91 Pitkäjärvi, 2008; Maaseudun Tulevaisuus, 18 Feb. 1967; Tyrväänn Sanomat, 26 Sep. 2013 notes that Lavia has a “rare 1867–68 memorial”.
93 Suomen Kuvalehti, 13 Jul. 1968.
94 SM 1994c, 192.
42. Lieksa  
North Karelia  
Roadside memorial, Lamminkyläntie, near junction with Koulutie (63°18'24.7"N 30°03'46.5"E). Inaugurated in 1968 at the instigation of the Lieksa-Pielisjärvi Society. Boulder with motifs: (i) Christian cross; (ii) three broken stems of rye. Text: “1866-1868. Hunger Years”. Plans were afoot already in 1935 to erect a monument to the famine dead of the area. The Finnish Garden Alliance [Suomen Kotipuutarha-liitto] reported in 1937 (in a special “Graveyards and Churchyards” issue of their newspaper), that a memorial was planned for the Pielisjärvi Churchyard in the Rauhala neighbourhood, by the famine-era mass graves. The famous artist and designer Antti Salmenlinna, a member of the alliance, had designed a cuboid stone memorial with a text: “Here Lie Those Who Perished From Starvation”. The article only mentioned that this stone – a matter of 500 metres from the 1968 memorial – was intended for the churchyard, and so more research / fieldwork is needed to confirm what transpired.

43. Liperi (Ylämylly)  
North Karelia  

44. Lohtaja [Kokkola]  
Central Ostrobothnia  
Lohtaja Graveyard, Karhintie 143. Inaugurated in 1964. Memorial dedicated to those who died of hunger, 1867-1869. A gift of the Lohtaja Local Society [kotiseutuyhdistys]. 350 local inhabitants and homeless vagrants were buried in the churchyard in the famine years.

45. Merijärvi  
Northern Ostrobothnia  
Merijärvi Churchyard, Kirkkotie 14. Inaugurated in 1992. Approximately 65 inhabitants of Merijärvi died of hunger and related diseases in 1867-68, and a memorial in their memory was erected near the gates of the graveyard. Two broken rye stems on black stone and inscription: “To the victims of the Hunger Years 1866-1868. Merijärvi Parish”.

46. Mäntsälä  
Uusimaa  

95 See <http://lieksapielisjarviseura.fi/45-artikkelit/100-seuran-historia> Note also footnote 29.  
96 Viena-Aunus, 1 Jun. 1935.  
97 Puutarha ja Koti, 6–7 (1937).  
98 SM 1994c, 90.  
99 SM 1996a, 44.  
100 See <www.kirjastovirma.fi/merijarvi/historia>  
101 Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 7 Nov. 1983; 23 Jul. 198
which are intended to be reminiscent of mourning ribbons. Main text: “In memory of the victims of the 1866-68 Hunger Years” with a supplementary credit to “Mäntsälä Council. Mäntsälä Society”. The Mäntsälä monument is reminiscent, in some respects, of the much larger Irish Memorial (2003) in Philadelphia. Its development followed typical lines. In late 1983 it was reported that the Mäntsälä Society has undertaken to collect money in order to finance a monument to the “Hunger Refugees” of 1866-68. The money would purchase a large natural stone, which was located directly outside the old parish hall. The society’s chairman, Osmo Viljanen, stated that “famine refugees came in their droves to Mäntsälä […] the former parish hall, which was the largest building in the town, was the reception centre for those refugees”. The Mäntsälä Society’s active fundraising over the winter of 1983-4 was rewarded. The well-known sculptor Heikki Varja (1918-1986) produced the piece, which was unveiled to great acclaim at a wreath-laying ceremony in July 1984. Viljanen’s speech suggested a long crisis, as he alluded to the earlier hard year of 1856, but nevertheless the cause of the famine was again given as “the power of nature”, specifically “severe rainfall, ice and night frosts”, rather than any failures on the part of the Helsinki administration. He continued: “when the famine years were at their worst, entire families went around begging. Infected beggars spread diseases north and south. Animals were forced to eat roof thatch as there was no other food available”. The memorial depicts a scene of chaos and vagrancy, one of the most literary common tropes of the 1860s famine years in Finland.
47. Nastola [Lahti] (Uusikylä)  
Päijänne Tavastia  
Ylämaantie 213, Uusikylä (60°55’33.7"N 26°06’35.0"E). Inaugurated in 1990. Natural stone memorial with cross mounted. Text inscribed: “To the memory of the dead builders of the Riihimäki-St. Petersburg railway, 1868-1870. Nastola Council and Parish, 1990.” An article in a local newspaper in 1988 had bemoaned the fact that: “the existence and historical significance of railway-builders’ graveyards in Oitti, Järvelä (Kärkölä) and Pekanmäki (Lahti) is already recognised, and they have received deserved memorials, but for one reason or another, the neglect of the Uusikylä mass grave just continues…” A stone wall of approximately 10km in length, also part of the famine relief work, runs next to the memorial.

48. Nilsiä [Kuopio]  
Northern Savonia  
Nilsiä Old Churchyard, Pisantie 2 (63°12’08.1"N 28°05’24.9"E). Inaugurated in 1968. Large natural stone with a plaque: Memorial: To the blessed unknown in this graveyard, particularly the inhabitants of Nilsiä who died of hunger in the 1860s. 1253 souls perished in 1868. Town and Parish, 1968”.

49. Nivala  
Northern Ostrobothnia  

50. Nurmes  
North Karelia  
Kirkkoharju, Nurmes (Nurmeksen Sankarihautausmaa); via entrance and stairs on Pappilansuora (63°33’11.3"N 29°07’10.4"E). Inaugurated in 1965. The memorial in Nurmes was a pioneer among Finnish famine memorials in that it was a named piece of art, a relief by Veikko Jalava (see Heinävesi, above) entitled “Maanemon syli” (“In 102 Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 7 Nov. 1990.  
104 <www.kirjastovirma.fi/muistomerkit/nivala/15>  
105 Plans seem to have been under way as early as 1962 for the memorial in Nurmes. See Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, 18 Sep. 1962. For the inauguration in 1965, see Maaseudun Tulevaisuus, 10 Jun. 1965; Juustila, 1965, 6–8; SM 2000a, 63.
the Lap of Mother Earth”). On the base of the relief a text reads: “In memory of those who died of hunger in 1866, [this memorial] was erected in 1966. Nurmes Parish, Council, and Chamber of Commerce. Valtimo Parish and Council”. Another indication that famine memorialization was entering a new stage in 1965 is that the unveiling of “Maaemon syli” was accompanied by a 147-page book, edited by Yrjö Juustila. The local significance of the famine years is highlighted by the inclusion of the opening lines of Juho Reijonen’s Nälkävuonna (which focuses on the tribulations of a family from the Nurmes village of Kuohatti) in the preface of Juustila’s book. The foreword also explains that the Nurmes parish lost 1,218 inhabitants in 1868, buried in unmarked mass graves, and that to “honour these victims’ difficult battle for their daily bread”, the consortium of local organizations named on the memorial had commissioned Jalava’s sculpture. An additional aim was to connect those who died “to the members of the same families one hundred years later”, something that was achieved by naming all of the local famine dead, including date and cause of death.106

---

51. Nurmo [Seinäjoki]  
Southern Ostrobothnia  
Nurmo Churchyard, Nurmonjoentie 17 (62°50′18.8″N 22°54′25.5″E). Natural stone memorial with inscription: “In memory of the victims who died in the Great Famine Years of the 1860s: Give Us Our Daily Bread”.

52. Paltaniemi [Kajaani]  
Kainuu  

53. Perho  
Central Ostrobothnia  
Perho Churchyard, Sahintie 3. Simple contemporary stone memorial, inscribed with “1869”, and protected by a low, chained, fence.

54. Pielavesi (Kirkosaari)  
Northern Savonia  

55. Pihlajavesi [Keuruu]  
Central Finland  
“Wilderness Church” [Erämaakirkko] Graveyard, Erämaakirkontie 100 (62°21′48.3″N 24°21′29.8″E). The memorial was inaugurated in 1984, in the proximity of the mass-grave on the north side of the churchyard. A grey natural stone with a black granite plaque: “1862-1867: To the memory of those who died by starvation. Pihlajavesi parish”.

107 SM 1996a, 25.  
108 Accessible via <http://areena.yle.fi/1-2202143>  
111 See <www.keuruunmuseo.fi/kotiseututietoa/pihlajavesi> The best approach is from Hollikankaantie, where there is a sign directing people along Erämaakirkontie to the church. Depending on driving direction, a navigator might encourage crossing a small wooden bridge on Virransillantie (at 62°22′17.2″N 24°21′30.9″E – about one kilometre north of the church). Travelling from Soini, I was directed along this road, but decided against crossing the bridge with my car, heading instead around Köminjärvi for Pihlajavesi Station and then approaching the church from the south.
grave of the parish priest at the time of the famine, Carl Nauklér, (1846-1868), is also in the cemetery. Nauklér was particularly active in raising relief funds from Germany in 1867-68.112

56. Piipola [Siikalatva]
Northern Ostrobothnia
Piipola Churchyard, Keskustie 3. Inaugurated in 1946.113 Natural stone memorial with two inscriptions and central plaque. "Travelling Man. We had belief in prayer, and work. You reap the harvest. Sanctify your thoughts while you stand on our resting place." [PLAQUE: In this place are buried five hundred of parishioners who died victims of hunger and disease in the years 1866-68. Give us this day our daily bread. Matt 6:11.] "Blessings on our ancestors and gratitude for their labours – from the current generation".

57. Pudasjärvi
Northern Ostrobothnia
Pudasjärvi Churchyard, Siuruantie. Plaque on natural stone. “In the Dearth Years of 1866-1868, 962 people died in Pudasjärvi, to whose memory this stone is erected. Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread. Matthew 6:11”. Broken rye stems motif.

58. Pyhäjärvi
Northern Ostrobothnia
Pyhäjärvi Old Graveyard, Pyhäjärventie 387. The section of the graveyard that was used from 1736-1875 is called “Jumalanpelto” ("God’s Field"). Surrounded by a stone wall with famine memorial in the centre.114

59. Rantsila [Siikalatva]
Northern Ostrobothnia

Fig. 20: Rantsila, December 2016.

112 Kalliala, 1924.
114 See <www.pyhajarvenseurakunta.fi/hautausmaat/hautausmaiden-historia>
115 SM 1996a, 103.
60. Ristiina [Mikkeli]
Southern Savonia
Site of famine-era mass grave. Boulder memorial with plaque: “Peace to the living, rest to the dead”. Inauguration ceremony (July 1967) included an unveiling by council secretary Jarl Meling and local farmer Aulis Karhinen, a speech by Rev. Kalevi Toivainen (1929-2015), and a play by local schoolchildren, written by their teacher Katri Pulkkinen (“Nälkävuosina 1867-1868”). Toivainen’s speech described that disease was already present in 1866, but the mortality in Ristiina culminated with 271 deaths in 1868.

61. Sievi
Northern Ostrobothnia
Sievi Graveyard, Haikolantie, 1966 (63°54’31.3"N 24°30’44.7"E). Black stone with inscription, “In Memory of the Victims of the Hunger Years, 1866-1868”. Accompanied by a motif of broken rye stem and a quotation from the poem Saarijärven Paavo (J.L. Runeberg, 1830) “Vaikka Kokee Eipä Hylkää Herra”. (“Although you may be tested, do not abandon the Lord”). The theme embodies important elements (forbearance, sedulity) of the Finnish national autostereotype.

62. Soini
Southern Ostrobothnia
Soini Churchyard, Karstulantie 2, 1966 (62°52’31.3"N 24°12’27.1"E). “During the Hunger Years of 1866-68, the people of Soini lost 354 souls. This stone was erected in their memory, V 1966. "Father Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”.

63. Sonkajärvi
Northern Savonia

---

116 Länsi-Savo, 23 Jul., 25 Jul., 29 Jul. 1968. The later of these articles also has a picture of the memorial, notes that there were “hundreds” in attendance and highlights the role of the Ristiina Society in arranging the memorial.
117 SM 1994c, 128.
118 SM 2000b, 93.
119 This site was mentioned on the Widgren Family’s 2009 annual reunion report. I have not yet visited the site personally and cannot confirm at this stage whether it accessible to the general public. See <www.widgren.fi/sukukokoukset/sukukokus-2009-viereman.html>
64. Sotkamo
Kainuu
Sotkamo Parish Graveyard; Rauhantie 11. One of the earliest memorials in Finland to the 1860s famine years. Inaugurated in August 1938 at an event to commemorate the forgotten dead. Designed by architect Ulla Hjelt (née Lukkari), and constructed by stonemasons Juho Kivioja and Matti Lukkari. The memorial is situated at the eastern side of the Prayer Chapel. Large Christian cross on a square base. Inscribed on the base is: “In Memory of the Dead of the Great Hunger- and Disease-Years of 1867-68. This memorial erected by Sotkamo Parish, 1938. // To the Memory of all the unknown or forgotten victims buried here. // ‘Your cross be the only sign on my journey.’ Hymn 49”. This was a traditional verse adapted by Elias Lönnrot, and is Verse 49 in the Finnish Lutheran Hymnal (Virsikirja).

65. Tohmajärvi
North Karelia
Tohmajärvi Churchyard (Kirkkoniemi), Kirkkotie 590 (62°11'29.3"N 30°23'02.5"E). Inaugurated in 1994 after several years of planning. Sculpture by Eero Eronen (see also Kiihtelysvaara), named “Tuhoutuneet tähkät” (Destroyed Ears), depicting the failed rye harvest. Inscription: “Every Third Resident of Tohmajärvi Died of Hunger, 1865-68”.


121 Kajaani-Lehti, 23 Aug. 1938. It was noted in a speech at the inauguration that 1,300 out of 6,000 inhabitants in the parish died.


66. Toholampi
Central Ostrobothnia
Toholampi Churchyard, Kirkkotie 143 (63°45'48.5"N 24°16'09.1"E). Inaugurated 30 May 1971. Approximately 180 victims were buried in the graveyard. Designed by Voitto Laine, and uses the stone step from Matti Koskela's house. Text on the stone: “1866-1868. Others have done the hard work and now you have taken up their labour. John 4:38”. Arranged by Toholampi Local Society.

67. Ullava [Kokkola]
Central Ostrobothnia
Ullava Old Churchyard, Ullavantie 665 (63°42'27.9"N 23°53'36.9"E).
Some similar elements in form to the memorial in the neighbouring parish of Toholampi. Mortality rates were so sign in the worst years of the 1860s that three mass graves were dug in the Ullava churchyard. The memorial is natural stone with iron text in capital letters: “In Memory of the Dead of The Years of Hunger 1865-1868: My Grace Is Sufficient For You. Cor. 12:9”. Below the text is the image of an angel, kneeling and weeping.

68. Vaala
Northern Ostrobothnia
Säräisniemi (Old Graveyard). Two monuments for mass graves. One is for a boat accident in October 1856, the second is to commemorate those who died during a dysentery epidemic while draining the Pelonsuo swamp as relief work in the 1850s and 1860s.

69. Vaasa
Ostrobothnia
Kappelimäki Old Graveyard, Kappelimäentie, Ristinummi (memorial is at the north end of the graveyard 63°05'46.2"N 21°43'57.5"E). Erected by Ostrobothnia Historical Society (Pohjanmaan Historiallinen Seura) (proposed in June 2006), in collaboration with Vaasa

124 SM 1994c, 137.
125 SM 1994c, 141.
126 Suometar, 11 Aug. 1863, Länsi-Savo, 19 Aug. 1985. For an illustration of the drainage channels see Asuttaja, 1 Nov. 1918. See also Turun Sanomat, 13 Nov. 2000; Nevanlinna, 1907, 98.

70. Varkaus
Northern Savonia
Könöpelto, signposted ("Hautamuistomerkki") after Pitkälänniementie 24 (62°18'33.5"N 27°55'49.5"E). The Varkaus memorial stands in the vicinity of a mass grave for those who perished in the construction of the Taipale Canal. News of construction work spread quickly in 1867, and people streamed in to Varkaus – from nearby parishes but also from Ostrobothnia and Karelia – in the hope of finding employment and food. Located in a gap in the forest just outside the town, the monument itself is a striking truncated square pyramid, nowadays covered in moss. This is apparently the first example of a famine monument built specifically to reflect upon the suffering of the generations that had gone before. A text recalls 281 nameless victims who were buried in the mass grave from 51 different parishes. As would become common, a New Testament quotation is included, in this case from the book

---

127 <www.pohjanmaanhistoriallinenseura.com/pohja%2020N%E4lk%E4vuosien%20muistomerkki.htm>
129 Tapio, 16 Nov., 7 Dec. 1867.
of Jeremiah: “You are my refuge in the day of disaster”. The inscription is completed by: “this statue was erected by Varkaus parish in memory of the deceased. 1936”. Local newspapers reflected on the historical context in their reports of the inauguration ceremony for the new memorial in September 1936, which was attended by inter alia, SDP politician Onni Hiltunen.

71. Varpaisjärvi [Lapinlahti]  
Northern Savonia
Site between Varpaisjärvi and Kangaslahti, off Road 582 (Rautavaarantie) at the settlement of Korpinen (63°26'03.1"N 27°59'09.8"E). Wooden memorial from 1950s replaced in June 2012 with a stone monument – “Buried here are approximately 60 people, who died during the Great Hunger Years 1867-1868”. Accompanied by a Biblical text (Exodus 3:5 – “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground”). Note: Exodus is known in Finnish as the Second Book of Moses.

72. Vehmersalmi [Kuopio]  
Northern Savonia
Horkanlahti Graveyard, Lempelänniementie 286 Vehmersalmi. The majority of the deceased in Horkanlahten Graveyard succumbed to tuberculosis or during the hunger years. There is a memorial to the victims of the hunger years, many of whom lie unmarked.

73. Veteli  
Central Ostrobothnia
Veteli Churchyard, Torpantie 130 (63°28'36.3"N 23°45'35.3"E). Inaugurated in 1954. Elongated granite gravestone, featuring three stars and three broken stems of rye. Two inscriptions: (i) 1866-1867. Victims of the Hunger Years lie here in Veteli’s consecrated earth; (ii) “The hand of God lays heavily over us // Oh lift our harsh load just once! // Heaven, relieve your people’s burden!”.

74. Viitasaari  
Central Finland
Memorial in the vicinity of Viitasaari Church, Kirkkotie (location might be more accurately described as Haapasaarentie, at 63°28'36.3"N 23°45'35.3"E). The memorial was completed in 1977 by Elis Räsänen, and recalls specifically the construction of a hundred-

---

130 Jeremiah 17:17.
132 Matti ja Liisa -lehden kesäliite 31 May 2012 accessed via <www.varpaisjarvenseurakunta.fi>
133 Savon Sanomat Online (published 17 Aug. 2015), features a video tour of the Horkanlahti graveyard. See <www.savonsanomat.fi/kotimaa/Hautausmaa-on-%C3%A4yn%C3%A4-harvinaisia-muistomerkkej%C3%A4/537959>
134 Veteli’s Kotiseutuyhdistys noted that 1954 had been a very productive year, including the inauguration the “Famine Years Memorial.” Keskipohjanmaa, 4 May 1954.
135 SM 1998, 92.
metre long stone swing-bridge, as famine relief work. The memorial's low stone base is supplemented by a relief with illustration of a man with a horse and belongings in the foreground, and silhouette of a line of workers in the background. An inscription reads: "This bridge was built as relief work during the Great Hunger Years of 1867-69".

In addition to the above memorials, the following sites feature plaques or interpretative boards highlighting a historical connection with the 1860s Famine Years. These sites are indicated by green markers on Map 2.

A. Hämeenlinna
Tavastia Proper
Katisten Kartano, Katistentie 91 (60°59'43.5"N 24°29'53.0"E). Having bought the manor house at Katinen in 1856, the businessman J.F. Lönnholtz oversaw a private relief scheme during the Great Hunger Years. In return for constructing a stone fence around the house's grounds, workers were offered a meal. Grateful recipients built a stone mound in the gardens.

Fig. 29: Katisten Kartano, Hämeenlinna, March 2017.

136 An interesting analysis of the rates of remuneration on this particular famine worksite can be found at: <http://blogit.ksmi.fi/mehta-pena/sillanrakentajien-palkkaseurantaa/> (posted 30 Oct. 2014).

B. Kauhajoki
Southern Ostrobothnia
Kauhajoki Church, Toopeka 9 (62°25’16.9"N 22°10’42.4"E). Plaque on the exterior wall of the main church sacristy ["Give us this day our daily bread. In memory of victims of the 1867-68 hunger years"]. Designed by Arvo Lusa and organised by Kauhajoki Society.138

C. Puolanka
Kainuu
Puolanka Old Church Graveyard. Kirkkokatu 1. An interpretive board notes that the dead from the Great Hunger Years are buried in this place.139

D. Reisjärvi
Northern Ostrobothnia
Reisjärvi Church, Reisjärventie 15. On the wall of the church is a memorial to the Great Hunger years, unveiled in 1972, "which tells not only of the harsh experiences of the people, but also their faith in God".140

References

Newspapers:
Asuttaja
Etelä-Suomen Sanomat
Förre och Nu

138 SM 1994c, 33.
139 <www.puolanka.fi/media/matkailu/hautausmaaesite.pdf>
140 <www.reisjarverseurakunta.fi/toimitilat>
Hufvudstadsbladet
Hämäläinen
Irish Times
Juna
Kainuun Sanomat
Kajaani-Lehti
Kansan Uutiset
Karjalainen
Keskipohjanmaa
Kiihtelys-Pyhäselkä Lehti
Kuhmolainen
Länsi-Savo
Maaselkä
Maaseudun Tulevaisuus
Matti ja Liisa
Nuori Kansa
Pogostan Sanomat
Puutarha ja Koti
Rakennustaito
Savon Sanomat
Sotkamo-Lehti
Suomalainen Wirallinen Lehti
Suomen KuvaLehti
Suometar
Tapio
Turun Sanomat
Uusi Rautatielehti
Uusi Suometar
Vaarojen Sanomat
Vartiisten Viesti
Viena-Aunus

National Library of Finland, Helsinki

National Board of Antiquities Library, Helsinki:
Suomen Muistomerkit [Finland’s Memorials] Series


**Internet Sources [full page references given in the endnotes]**

http://blogit.ksml.fi/mehta-pena/
https://erkkieronen.com
www.ilomantsi.fi
https://irishfaminememorials.com
www.jalasjarvenkylat.fi
http://karsamaenseurakunta.fi
www.kase.fi/~eharju
www.keuruunmuseo.fi
www.kiihtelysvaara-seura.fi
www.kirjastovirmo.fi
www.kuolismaankettuset.fi
www.kuopionseurakunnat.fi
www.lapinlahti.fi
www.lieksapielisjarviseura.fi

http://maurikin.blogspot.fi
www.pohjanmaanhistoriallinenseura.com
www.pohjois-savonmuisti.fi
www.puolanka.fi
www.pyhajarvenseurakunta.fi
www.rastipukki.kuvat.fi
www.reisjarvenseurakunta.fi
www.savonsanomat.fi
www.tampere.fi
www.varpaisjarvenseurakunta.fi
www.vartiaiset.fi
www.voittovihanen.com
www.widgren.fi
Declan Curran lectures in Development Economics and Industrial Economics at Dublin City University Business School. He holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Hamburg. He is co-editor of *Famines in European Economic History* (Routledge, 2015) and a contributor to the volume *Global Legacies of the Great Irish Famine* (Peter Lang, 2014). His research interests focus on industrial development and economic geography. His research has been published in such journal as *Business History, Journal of European Economic History*, and *Irish Economic and Social History*.

Özge Ertem (PhD), currently Editor and Publications Coordinator at Koç University’s Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations in Istanbul, studied Political Science and International Relations at Marmara University (Istanbul) before pursuing graduate studies in the field of history. She received her MA from Boğaziçi University Atatürk Institute in Istanbul (2005). During her MA years, she worked on the history of childhood, and representation of class and nationalism in early republican Turkey. She received her PhD degree from the department of History and Civilization at European University Institute (EUI) in Florence (2012). Her research focuses on two famines in late-Ottoman Anatolia, particularly on the political and cultural history of famine(s) from the perspective of locals, missionary and foreign networks and perceptions, everyday life and communal relations in Ottoman Anatolia. She is also a member of the independent theatre company buluT in Istanbul.

David Ludvigsson is Associate Professor of History at Linköping University, Sweden, where he works with History Teacher Training Programmes. He is the president of the Swedish Association of History Teachers and serves as an associate editor of *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice* (Sage). His research interests are mainly in the fields of history of historiography, uses of the past, teaching and learning of history, and history of education. His books include *The Historian-Filmmaker’s Dilemma: Historical Documentaries in Sweden in the Era of Häger and Villius* (2003) and *Enhancing Student Learning in History: Perspectives on University History Teaching* (ed., 2012). His current research, financed by the Swedish National Heritage Board, deals with modern uses of historical sites.

Kersti Lust (PhD, History, 2005) is senior research fellow at the Estonian Institute for Population Studies. She has written extensively on a wide variety of topics and time-periods in Estonian, English, and German and her research interests stretch from early modern maritime history to the Soviet university policy. Her most recent research focuses on famines and family history in the nineteenth century. For over a decade,
her primary area of research has been peasant emancipation in the Russian Baltic provinces. Her publications include both micro- and macro-level studies. Most of her c. 60 works are based on qualitative analysis of narrative sources but several others apply also quantitative methods (about migration, prices, and wages).

Andrew G. Newby is Senior Research Fellow of the Academy of Finland, and Docent in European Area and Cultural Studies at the University of Helsinki. He has written and edited many works on different aspects of northern European history, society and culture, including: *The Life and Times of Edward McHugh: Land Reformer, Trade Unionist and Labour Activist* (EMP, 2004); *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh UP, 2007); *Michael Davitt: New Perspectives* (co-editor, Irish Academic Press, 2009); *Language, Space and Power: Urban Entanglements* (co-editor, CollEgium, 2012); *Famines in European Economic History* (co-editor, Routledge, 2015), and *Éire na Rúise: An Fhionlainn agus Éire ar thóir na saoríse* (Coiscéim, 2016).

Heidi Reese is a Master of Social Sciences, having graduated in 2013 from the University of Helsinki. Her Masters thesis, *Tiedon, tahdon vai resurssien puutetta? Suomen hallinto ja syksyn 1867 elintarvikekriisi*, was supervised by Professor Antti Häkkinen, and examined the reactions of the devolved Finnish administration during the height of the famine crisis in 1867-68. She currently works for the Finnish National Agency for Education, specifically in the field of international cooperation in Higher Education.

Ciarán Reilly is a Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses & Estates at Maynooth University working on ‘The Landed Estate and the Great Famine’ project. The major outcome of this research to date has been the publication of two monographs, *The Irish Land Agent, 1830-1860: the case of King’s County and Strokestown and the Great Irish Famine*, both published by Four Courts Press in 2014. He is a core member of the International Network of Irish Famine Studies, International Advisor to North American Irish Famine Network and a founding member of the European Forum for the Study of Country Houses and Landed Estates. His research interests include the Great Irish Famine, the landed estate and the country house, the Irish Diaspora and the Irish Revolution, 1912-23.

Miikka Voutilainen holds a PhD in Economic History and MSc in Economics and works as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. His research interests include famines, pre-industrial poverty and inequality and history of population and economic growth.

Mikko Vuorela is a doctoral student at the Institute of Criminology and Legal Policy at the University of Helsinki (Finland). His dissertation research focuses on the historical trends in crime and punishment in the Nordic countries during the previous two hundred years. He has previously published articles in the fields of historical criminology, criminal justice and legislative studies. He also teaches contemporary and historical criminology at the Law School at the University of Eastern Finland.