**St. Patrick’s Day**

***Leading up to the 1870s, Irish-American identity in the United States was reworked through the shifting character of the Saint Patrick's Day rituals and features under three separate occasions: initially, in 1853 when it undertook a "spiritual rhetoric" notion, then when it became known as a "reformulated memory of an Irish past couched in terms of vengeance against Britain" to, finally, adopting a "sectarian catholic nationalism" attitude in the 1870s and 1880s. These ritual practices represent the molding tools people turn to in order to build a national identity.[[1]](#footnote-1)*** Furthermore, incorporating "the analysis of commemorative rituals" becomes a valuable element "in the context of broader historical studies" as such analysis reveals much about the collective conscience of the Irish-American community.

There were already numerous evidences of a national identity present in the Irish Catholic laboring classes prior to the settlement of an Irish-Catholic community in America. Despite the longing memory of a loved lost Ireland, ***the main factor that contributed to creating a clear "sense of group unity" in the Irish-American community really came with the hatred sentiments that were felt towards "British oppression and resistance"***.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Furthermore, there is a turnover in perspectives towards the causes of the Great famine in the mind of the Irish-American that can be traced: one that varies from a **"mourning religious view"**, seen in Archbishop Hughes' sermon, to **a perspective that shifts the blame towards the British monarchy for its indifference and greed**, seen in Cahill's speech in 1860.[[3]](#footnote-3)

From that point on, all the following commemorative speeches on Saint Patrick's Day invoked nationalist themes such as "British hatred" and "heroic struggle" and led the way for the creation of a "new parade" which gained in adherents and absorbed "elements of American patriotism and full-fledged nationalism".***The end result was such that the Irish-American community came to regard itself in the 1870s as a community that defined itself by dual loyalties on one hand, and in another as "a unified common organism," which gathered in strength on the basis that they had a common past, "not a religious one but one that centered on the common Irish experience of British oppression and suffering"***.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In other words, this goes to show that the shifting character of commemorative rituals experienced during the Saint Patrick's parade have influenced the development of American culture in a larger sense, since it contributed to enriching its heritage and making of its Irish-American Diaspora a prideful concept to be celebrated and admired.[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. Kenneth Moss, "St Patrick's Day Celebrations and the Formation of Irish-American Identity, 1845–1875," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 29, No.1 (1995): pg. 130 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Moss, pg. 127 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Moss, pg. 133 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Moss, pg. 137-139 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Moss, pg. 126 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)