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<thead>
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<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>The noble company's itinerary from Namur to Milan in its logistical context</th>
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The noble company’s itinerary from Namur to Milan in its seventeenth-century logistical context

BENJAMIN J. HAZARD

The journey which Ó Néill, Ó Domhnaill and their followers embarked upon from the Low Countries to Lombardy in early 1608 corresponded to the route known as the Spanish Road.1 This article examines the party’s Lenten expedition in the context of this itinerary, focusing upon key points along the way in the light of contemporary Irish experience. An emphasis on politics and diplomacy is characteristic of historical writing about Ó Cianáin’s chronicle.2 This affords a new line of inquiry. In order to evaluate and understand the journey it must be examined in its immediate context. Concentrating on events witnessed in early 1608 reveals valuable findings which have hitherto passed unobserved.

A series of communication corridors were developed by European states in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.3 Linking the Habsburg ‘theatres of commitment’ in Italy and the Low Countries,4 the route for the Spanish Road came into existence between 1516 and 1519. Based on the peaceful foundations laid down by his family,

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1 Otherwise known as el camino español, le chemin des espagnols or la strada spagnola, the seminal work on the Spanish Road is Geoffrey Parker, The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659: the logistics of Spanish victory and defeat in the Low Countries’ Wars (Cambridge 1972; repr. 2004). See Benjamin Hazard, Faith and patronage: the political career of Fláithrí Ó Maolchonaire, c.1560-1629 (Dublin 2009), p. 57.


3 Parker, The Army of Flanders, p. 50.

Charles V inherited Spain and its Mediterranean dominions; Austria and parts of southern Germany; the Netherlands and Franche-Comté. This unprecedented development was subsequently reflected in the tour that his son Philip made from Milan to Flanders three decades later.

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the maritime strength of the Dutch, French and English in the North Sea and the Channel impeded the transfer of troops from the Iberian Peninsula. The Spanish Army of Flanders relied upon its military itineraries because so many of its officers raised their units outside the Netherlands. The sea route from Ireland remained one of four such arteries, though the strategy of Ambrosio Spinola, commander-in-chief of the Southern Netherlands, against the United Provinces made large-scale recruitment superfluous at the time of the flight.

By promoting close accord with those territories which separated her own from Flanders and ignoring the terms of its treaties with France, Spain was able to use land corridors for the supply of soldiers and large sums of money to the Army of Flanders. The Duke of Alba established the Spanish Road on this basis in 1567. Sent by Philip II to reassert Spanish authority in the Netherlands, Alba marched north from Lombardy with a force of 10,000. A distinction must therefore be made with the noble company who journeyed in a southerly direction to Italy.

Inspired by the Roman legions and the ancient influence of Greek and Latin texts, the Spanish had taken the lead from France by organising their infantry into *coronelías* of 6,000 men in the sixteenth-century. In 1534, these were reordered into

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8 Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, p. 52.
tercios of half that number. The name of each tercio originally depended upon where it was stationed in peacetime. Alba distributed the tercios of Sicily, Naples, Lombardy and Sardinia in various parts of the Southern Netherlands, while keeping his cavalry in reserve. From the last quarter of the sixteenth century, tercios took the name of their commander; e.g. that of the Ó Néill or the Ó Domhnaill.

As with the Ulster earls, Alba obtained free and safe passage through Lorraine. That is not to say the Spanish Road was one, distinct thoroughfare. There were three main routes during the Eighty Years War, reflecting the ever-changing military alliances at that time. The first route went west from Milan to Savoy, on to Franche-Comté and into the Netherlands. The second travelled north from Milan, flanking Lake Como, into Switzerland, then to the Bodensee and across the Rhine to the Netherlands. The third went through the Valtelline into Austria turning east at Lake Como. In addition to soldiers, these routes were used by merchants, postal services, bullion convoys, and journeymen printers. Due to political, military and weather conditions, the itineraries alternated and the use of staging posts along the way could vary from one journey to the next.

The Spanish Road was used only once every year or two. It was possible for 1,500 troops to cover the journey from Milan to Namur in approximately 48 days. Don Lope de Figueroa, Miguel Cervantes’ maestre de campo in Italy, led a reinforcement of 5,000 infantry to the Netherlands in February 1578 in the record

16 De Lamar Jensen, Diplomacy and dogmatism: Bernadino de Mendoza and the French Catholic League (Cambridge, Mass. 1964), p. 59. He completed his journey via Italy because Charles IX of France prohibited Alba and his army from entering French territory to avoid conflict with the Huguenots; Giménez Martín, Tercios de Flandes, p. 61.
17 David Sturdy, Fractured Europe, 1600-1721 (Oxford 2002), p. 47. The third route was used by Spanish troops from 1620-31. Its stages from Colmar in Alsace, through Basel and Luzern, onto Bellinzona and Como in Lombardy correspond to the route taken by the earls more than a decade earlier.
19 Parker, The Army of Flanders, p. 280.
time of 32 days.20 Ó Néill and Ó Domhnaill set out with thirty of their followers on horseback and a carriage for the women, completing the journey in 23 days.21 These figures are consistent for the period as the band of horse in Ireland at the close of the sixteenth century was usually fifty strong.22 The proportion of men to women on the Irish party also reflects the ratio expected for professional soldiers during this period.23 At Namur, we are told, they ‘put their women on horses.’24 Irish women rode side-saddle behind the men, on the right-hand side.25

Although he refers to horses and cavalry at regular intervals on the journey, Tadhg Ó Cianáin is often silent on details familiar to his peers.26 He does not say whether the earls brought their horses with them by sea from Ireland, for instance. Military operations in history have been successfully executed despite being considered contrary to orthodox logistics.27 Ó Cianáin repeatedly refers to the earls’ horses as their own, identifying them as ‘their good post-horses’ at Amiens.28 In port towns of continental Europe during this period, such as Quillebeuf-sur-Seine in Normandy, horses and mules were regularly sold for transport and traction.29 Those who could afford them on the Spanish Road obtained horses and pack-mules at supply stations along the way. These animals were hired by travelling parties as fresh horses were required for each stage.

In those days, horses could be hoisted up before being dropped into the hold of a vessel where stalls were ready for their safe-keeping.30 Yet, once at sea, horses were a liability in the event of an attack.31 According to the Ulster earls themselves, they

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20 González de León, The road to Rocroi, p. 131.
24 Ó Muraíle (ed.), Ó Cianáin, p. 133.
26 He makes an exception to describe the ornate tack on Jacques Nompar de Caumont’s horse in the French embassy’s procession at Rome; see Ó Muraíle (ed.), Ó Cianáin, p. 395.
29 Stradling, Spain’s struggle for Europe, pp. 235-49.
31 José Alcalá-Zamora y Queipo de Llano, España, Flandes, y el Mar del Norte (1618-39). La última ofensiva europea de los Austrias madrileños (Barcelona 1979; repr. Madrid 2001), pp 87-9; cited by
left their horses behind ‘on the shore with no one to hold their bridles.’ The earls and their followers departed on a ship of eighty-tons armed with sixteen pieces of ordnance. This description refers to a small, fully-rigged vessel called a carrack, kraeck in Flemish. Merchant ships of this size and type plied the pilgrim route from Ireland to Santiago de Compostela. Irish pilgrims came ashore at La Coruña: the intended destination of the earls’ sea voyage before they were swept back across the Bay of Biscay by a storm. In the second half of the fourteenth century, a Flemish master, identified as the goldsmith Willem vanden Cruce of Bruges, carefully produced an engraving of a carrack of 80-100 tons for Charles of Burgundy and Mary of York.

Sending horses out fully-equipped would have proved prohibitively expensive for the earls. Horses are creatures of habit used to following a set routine. Taking horses onboard in Atlantic seas for several days was impractical. This was especially the case in late autumn and early winter, when the earls left Ireland. Moreover, considering the military purpose of horses, license could be denied to a ship owner who passed them from one port to another. Consequently maritime expeditions took only saddles and obtained horses locally on arrival. This was borne out in plans by

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35 Ibid. When Christopher Columbus set sail on the Santa María in 1492, a vessel similar in size to that engaged by the Ulster earls on their voyage from Rathmullan, he did not take horses to the New World.
36 Enrique García Hernán, *Ireland and Spain during the reign of Philip II* (Dublin 2009), pp. 112-113; On the heavy swell and giant rollers of the Bay Biscay, see Stalley, ‘Sailing to Santiago,’ pp. 402-3.
38 Cfr. Falls, *Elizabeth’s Irish wars*, p. 36; Colin Martin and Geoffrey Parker, *The Spanish Armada* (London 1988), pp 43, 288. McGurk, *The Elizabethan conquest of Ireland*, p. 72. About 200 horses and mules for transport and traction were onboard the Invincible Armada of 1588 but as conditions worsened, they were lost at sea. In rough seas, horses are unable to vomit which leads to peritonitis, an inflammation of the abdomen.
39 Stalley, ‘Sailing to Santiago’, p. 400.
Flaithrí Ó Maoil Chonaire who, in 1627, advocated leaving horses behind in Flanders while taking ‘carbines, pistols, arms, saddles, bridles, boots and spurs’ to Ireland. 40

Contrary to the image of a wild horseman riding without stirrups and using the horse’s mane for control,41 the O’Neills made changes to their cavalry after losses on the battlefield. In his woodcuts, John Derricke depicted Irish horses equipped with a plain snaffle bit in the 1570s.42 Two decades later, Aodh Ó Néill could supply more than 400 horse with saddles and stirrups.43 Stirrups provided support for the foot and greater facility with weapons because the rider could stand and turn while controlling the horse with his knees.

The Uí Ágáin, Uí Chuinn and Uí Dhoibhlín were horsemen, lucht tighe or teaghlach, in the retinue of the Ó Néill.44 According to Sir Toby Caulfield, these families traditionally tenanted Aodh Ó Néill’s household lands between Tullahogue and Dungannon.45 Rather than being hired mercenaries, members of these families had hereditary obligations which included escort duties.46 Éinri Ó Ágáin, Ó Néill’s principal vassal,47 and Christopher Plunkett of Dungannon, Ó Néill’s master of horse, fulfilled this role on the earls’ journey from Namur to Italy.

Before crossing into the County of Flanders from France, Ó Cianáin took note of ‘a large troop on horseback with very good horses, coats of armour, and pistols.’48 Increasing use was made of light firearms in the early seventeenth century. Cavalrymen were armed with a sword at their side for personal defence, and with

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44 Katherine Simms, From kings to warlords: the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the late medieval ages (Woodbridge 1987), pp 86, 94, 124-6, 140.
45 Sir Toby Caulfield, receiver on Tyrone’s estates, 18 Dec. 1610 (Cal. S.P. Ire., 1608-10, p. 533). Tomás Ó Fiaich remarked it was sad that freemen from the Uí Ágáin and Uí Chuinn were among those to accept the Bill of Attainder against Ó Néill in 1615; Ó Muraíle (ed.), Ó Cianáin, p. 452; Hazard, Faith and patronage, pp 99-101.
46 Simms, From kings to warlords, pp 86, 94, 124-6, 140.
47 Morgan, Tyrone’s rebellion, p. 85.
48 Ó Muraíle (ed.), Ó Cianáin, p. 79.
pistols which were carried in the saddle bow.49 Although most Irish soldiers at home were inexperienced in the use of small arms on horseback, the English representative at Milan reported that the earls were ‘well armed with arquebuses and pistols’.50

Cavalry could travel further and faster in the seventeenth century, up to twenty leagues per day, though this was difficult to maintain on a lengthy journey.51 The earls maintained a consistent daily pace of about seven and a half leagues.52 This compares well with the average daily rate for infantry and pack animals.53 Pack-mules carried between 90 and 114 kilos for a small mule and between 136 and 180 kilos for a large one.54 Baggage trains were a significant hindrance to mobility,55 a point made clear by Ó Cianáin. When road conditions deteriorated and gradients increased, horses and pack mules were more suitable but the use of wagons and carts delayed journeys while adding to the cost of travel.56

Since more use was made of infantry than cavalry in the sixteenth century mounted troops only accounted for five to ten percent of Spanish forces.57 Better quality horses were used for heavy cavalry than for dragoons.58 Good horsemanship was regarded as a sign of nobility while obtaining command of a cavalry company was seen as a way to the eventual command of a tercio.59 Aodh (Albert) Ó Domhnaill, Rudhraighe’s son, provides an example of this point. After serving as a page to the

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50 Jennings (ed.), Wild geese in Spanish Flanders, p. 218; Ó Murchú, Imirce na nIarlaí, p. 144.
52 McCavitt, The flight of the earls, p. 107.
54 Parker, The Army of Flanders, p. 95.
55 González de León, The road to Rocroi, pp 70-1.
59 Albi de la Cuesta, De Paviá a Rocroi, pp 140-1. As a sign of his commitment to the cause after the siege of Arras, Eoghan Ruadh Ó Néill pledged that he would sell all his horses in support of the Irish war which broke out in 1641. See his letter to F. Luke Wadding OFM, del campo, 8 Jul. 1641 (UCD-OFM, D.01, pp 409-11).
Infanta Isabel he was first appointed captain of his own light horse company, before being granted licence to raise his own tercio.60

The horseman was better paid than the infantryman in order to feed his animals and support at least one servant who foraged for supplies and cleaned the arms and armour.61 On a daily basis, a horseman accounted for 18 kilos of hay with nine litres of oats and water.62 In the opening decade of the 1600s, 100 kilos of hay on the Spanish Road cost three florins while each measure of oats was one florin.63

Although compelled to leave the Habsburg Netherlands during the winter, conditions did favour the party to a certain extent. During peak seasons, the main roads would have been filled with carts and mule trains transporting goods while summer temperatures made roadside grazing too sparse for convenient travel.64 In terms of recognised positions,65 the journey of 1608 began at Namur. Located above the confluence of the Sambre and the Meuse rivers, the fortress at Namur protected Liège while helping to secure communications between the Low Countries, the Rhine and the Moselle.66 It was from Namur that Ó Néill and Ó Domhnaill were advised to return to Leuven in November 1607, and three months later, Éinri Ó Néill accompanied his father and uncle to Namur with a cavalry escort.67 Palatin de Namur was among the hereditary titles of the king of Spain since the reign of Charles V.68 Part of the old imperium of the Germanic empire,69 this key staging post and administrative focal point for the Army of Flanders came to prominence during the Eighty Years War when the governor-general, Don Juan de Austria, seized the town in July 1577. The following January, the Spanish routed the Dutch at nearby

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63 Ibid., p. 507.
64 David Vassberg, The village and the outside world in Golden Age Castile (Cambridge 2002), p. 37.
65 Childs, Warfare in the seventeenth century, pp 192, 194 200. Philip II had stayed at Namur in May 1549 before meeting his father, the Emperor Charles V, at Brussels; Fernández Álvarez, Felipe II y su tiempo, p. 708.
66 Ó Muraíle (ed.), Ó Cianáin, pp 111, 521.
Gembloux. From this time on, the northern and southern Netherlands differed increasingly on matters of religion.70

The arrival of the party in Namur sets somewhat of a precedent in the historical record. A noticeable Ulster presence only becomes apparent from the second decade of the seventeenth century onwards.71 In the summer of 1614, the infantry company of Captain Art Ó Néill, a nephew of Aodh Mór, was billeted at Namur. Thereafter, Irish soldiers were regularly mustered and billeted in the town where they were also confirmed in their promotions, assigned chaplains, granted their pay and licensed to return to Ireland.72 When Irish troops withdrew from Flanders without licence to serve the Confederation of Kilkenny, their pardon was issued from Namur by the governor of the Habsburg Netherlands, Don Francisco de Melo, in August 1643.73 In a militarist culture where politics was regarded as ‘a spiritual fight’, strong ties of kinship contributed to the social cohesion observed between soldiers and clergy from Ireland. Aodh Mac Aingil, guardian of St Anthony’s College and capellan mayor to Irish troops, was commended to the bishop of Namur in 1619 with a request to vouch for him with the abbots of the Namur diocese.74

The noble company continued south through neighbouring Liège, a regular stopping-off point on the march.75 The backbone of European enterprise ran at the time from the Low Countries to northern Italy.76 Well-known for the supply of small fire-arms, gunshot, cannon balls and gunpowder to the Spanish monarchy, the prince-bishopric of Liège was a small, independent state.77 Historians have remarked on the slow progress made at this stage of the journey.78 The mapping of fixed frontiers from Picardy to Burgundy was difficult due to disputes over jurisdiction which regularly

72 Brendan Jennings (ed.), Wild geese in Spanish Flanders, 1582-1700: documents relating chiefly to Irish regiments, from the Archives Générales du Royaume, Bruxelles, and other sources (Dublin 1964), pp 143, 184, 274.
73 Ibid., p. 359.
74 Ibid., p. 167.
75 Ibid., p. 241.
76 Domenico Sella, European industries, 1500-1700 (London 1970), p. 64.
78 Kerney Walsh, Destruction by peace, p. 74.
occurred on the eastern frontiers of France. In 1608, ‘to introduce some order into this confusion’, Henri IV sent an engineer-cartographer to survey the area.79

The earls and their followers may have consulted maps during their three month stay in Leuven. Guido Bentivoglio, papal nuncio to Brussels, reported than he had three meetings with an Irish Franciscan friar in which they discussed the prospective journey into Italy. The nuncio was acquainted with the Spanish Road and with the diplomatic arrangements which kept it in tact.80 Travel, exploration and migration led to increased demand for accurate information.81 Ó Cianáin’s narrative reflects the growth of such literature since the second half of the previous century.

Advances in cartography, centred upon the Netherlands, catered for this demand.82 While still in short supply and at a comparatively early stage of development, new maps enabled prospective travellers to test courses of action on sheets of printed paper.83 On early-modern military routes, army officers responsible for lodgings and supplies produced maps to help them in their task. In the absence of maps for his route to the Low Countries, Alba commissioned a cartographer to cover the area of operations but considered the map of Franche-Comté too detailed and delayed its publication.84 This raises an important point relevant to the earls in 1608. Regional topographical maps were being made for the first time but detailed, accurate cartography also represented a military and commercial risk.85 Maps were obtained as much by spying and theft as by direct observation and survey.86

Armies on the move supplemented the information they obtained from maps with first-hand knowledge updated daily by field-scouts or professional guides. Among the numerous people employed to service each stage, cart drivers were paid to

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83 Nicholas Crane, Mercator: the man who mapped the planet (London 2002), p. 91.
86 Crane, Mercator, pp 206-12.
guide troops on the Spanish Road. By relying on the skills of local guides, the noble company avoided stopping between inns, taking side-roads or visiting places in valleys which led nowhere. Expeditions often employed an advanced party to reconnoitre the route and gather news of possible dangers. The activity of professional guides can be detected when travelling parties, such as Ó Cianáin and the earls, describe places, summarize past events, or list information which they could not have acquired independently.

The earls were helped by their faith and motivated by hopes of redress from Spain. In the 1600s, travel was often seen through a biblical metaphor as a means to improvement on the journey of life. Concerns about plague, civil unrest and robbery were uppermost in unfamiliar territory. In the words of a contemporary litany for Lent: ‘From plague, famine, and war – deliver us O Lord.’ Priests on the Lenten journey into Italy would have realized the need for pastoral texts printed as Gaeilge. Adhering to orthodoxy in line with the reforms of the Council of Trent remained a priority for seventeenth-century clergy. Therefore, it is significant that the Irish Franciscans’ first printed catechism appeared after the flight of the earls and not before.

In June 1606, two Irish infantry companies led by Captain Conchobhar Ó Drisceoil, including a significant number of Ulster troops, made their way overland from Galicia to Flanders. Nine members of the earls’ party which departed from Namur in 1608 had some experience of routes to and from the Low Countries and

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87 Hudry, ‘Conflans, ville d’étape’, p. 508; Gutmann, War and rural life in the early-modern Low Countries, p. 47.
88 Cfr. C. J. Woods, Introduction, Travellers’ accounts as source material for Irish historians (Dublin 2009) p. 22. On handwritten sea-charts, updated daily, which were more highly regarded in 1612 than printed ones, see Brown, The story of maps, p. 141.
89 Parker, The Army of Flanders, p. 86.
91 For their regular visits to cathedral churches and the relics of saints on the road to Italy see, for instance, Ó Murále (ed.), Ó Cianáin, pp 137-41, 161.
92 Plague map of Galicia with zones marked by epidemic, La Coruña, 4 Apr. 1598 (Archivo General de Simancas [hereafter AGS], MPD, LI-11, Guerra Antigua, legajo 514); María del Carmen Fernández Gomez (ed.), Mapas, planos y dibujos (Valladolid 1990), pp 217-8.
Spain. Flaithrí Ó Maoil Chonaire made his way from Valladolid to the Habsburg Netherlands in December 1606 with Ó Domhnaill’s secretary, Matha Óg Ó Maoil Tuile. In 1605-6, Éinrí Ó hÁgáin served as an envoy on the continent for Aodh Ó Néill. Educated at Salamanca, Roibeard Mac Artúir travelled with Ó Maoil Chonaire to meet the noble company at Douai and later became part of the theology faculty at St Anthony’s, Leuven. The Dundalk merchant Richard Weston conducted trade with Spanish ports. Merchants had more ready access to money than others on long journeys which made them essential travel companions. The Franciscan Fr Thomas Strong of Waterford trained for the priesthood in the Iberian Peninsula, before accompanying the party to Rome. Pedro Blanco, ‘the anonymous Spaniard of the flight of the earls,’ had served Aodh Ó Néill since surviving the Invincible Armada of 1588. Captain Seán Ó Conchobhair had fought with distinction at the Ostend siege which ended in 1604. Donnchadh Ó Briain, lord of Cloundaun, went to Spain and on to Flanders at the end of the Nine Years War, before sailing from Rathmullan with the noble shipload.

In January 1608, James I’s ambassador to Brussels notified Whitehall that Aodh Ó Néill had sought and obtained authorization to pass through the independent duchy of Lorraine on his way to Italy. Travelling across the frontiers of Luxembourg, the party approached Lorraine along the northern section of the Spanish Road. This extended from Arlon to Saint-Dié. As the accompanying map to this article shows, the Spanish Road separated into a number of parallel itineraries

97 Ó Muráile (ed.), Ó Cianáin, p. 414.
98 Hazard, Faith and patronage, p. 56.
101 García Hernán, Ireland and Spain during the reign of Philip II, p. 4; Kerney Walsh, Destruction by peace, p. 140; Hiram Morgan, Tyrone’s rebellion: the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland (Woodbridge 1993), p. 106.
103 Kerney Walsh, Destruction by peace, pp 254-5.
104 Mary Ann Lyons, ‘‘A garden in the very centre of Christendom’: the earls’ sojourn in the duchy of Lorraine’, in David Fimnegan, Éamonn Ó Ciardha and Marie-Claire Peters (eds.), The flight of the earls: Imeacht na nIarlaí (Derry 2010), pp 59-66: 61.
meeting only at certain staging points. The easterly route in Lorraine went over the Jura and Vosges highlands.\textsuperscript{105} Crossing into Lorraine via Longwy, the earls and their followers stayed at Fillières before continuing south-east through the supply station of Conflans.\textsuperscript{106}

Ó Cianáin’s record reflects prevailing alliances between Spain, its allies and rivals. The Treaty of Lyon, signed between France and Spain in January 1601, made the eastern Alpine corridor dependent on French favour.\textsuperscript{107} The estates of the duke of Savoy, Charles Emmanuel I, linked the Spanish dominions of Milan and the Franche-Comté. The unpredictable Savoy ‘sat upon the Alps as upon a rail, and circumstances decided the side of his descent.’\textsuperscript{108} On this occasion he took full advantage, hoping that he could annex some lands in Lombardy belonging to the Spanish.

The noble company knew they could not count upon the friendship of territories within the French sphere of influence, such as the enclave bishoprics of Metz, Toul and Verdun. In avoiding the duchy of Savoy, the party also kept away from the Franche-Comté which had regularly been part of the Spanish Road.\textsuperscript{109} Conversely, this reduced the number of contingents into which their journey was divided and lessened the risk of trouble along the way. The wisdom of this decision was proven within a year. Habsburg garrisons were ousted from Savoy in 1609 before Charles Emmanuel I and Henry IV signed the Treaty of Bruzolo against Philip III.\textsuperscript{110} After the death of Henry IV, Flaithrí Ó Maoil Chonaire advocated \textit{entente} between Spain and France, revealing that, to maintain the impasse, Spain’s enemies secretly paid Savoy 200,000 ducados for the upkeep of his cavalry.\textsuperscript{111}

The provision of accommodation and supplies was an accepted part of the seasonal rhythm but the authorities also intimidated people into paying special taxes

\textsuperscript{105} Parker, \textit{The Army of Flanders}, pp 84-5.
\textsuperscript{106} Conflans was a gateway to the Savoyard Alps. See Laurent Perrillat, ‘La Savoie au coeur de l’Europe du XVIe siècle, d’après une lettre de Jacques de Savoie, duc de Genevois et de Nemours’, in \textit{Actes du Congrès de sociétés savantes de Savoie} (Moutiers 2002), pp 149-74.
\textsuperscript{109} François Pernot, \textit{La Franche-Comté espagnole: à travers les archives de Simancas, une autre histoire des Franc-Comtois et de leurs relations avec l’Espagne de 1493 à 1678} (Besançon 2003), p. 187.
\textsuperscript{111} Hazard, \textit{Faith and patronage}, p. 106.
to avoid billeting liabilities for soldiers. On those parts of the Spanish Road without the constant circulation of merchants, special arrangements had to be made for the approach of a military expedition. To avert the risk of theft and pillage by armies on the move, established practices had to be followed in towns which accommodated and fed soldiers coming and going from Milan to Flanders. Confronted with hundreds of troops on their doorstep, certain towns would shut their gates and direct them towards villages nearby. From 22 August until 12 December 1602, three companies of Spanish troops were garrisoned at Conflans. While Conflans provided their lodgings, eighteen neighbouring parishes paid for the condiments or utensils. Minimal utensils consisted of firewood and candles, bedding, a food bowl, salt, pepper and spices. Householders were reimbursed by the local chamber of accounts. The Spanish Road therefore provided a ready market for the vineyards and fields of wheat, the seven salt mines and numerous woods described by Ó Cianáin from Lorraine to Lombardy.

The Ulster earls were feted by Spínola and other dignitaries during their sojourn in the Habsburg Netherlands. In seventeenth-century Europe, it was customary for nobles to treat guests to a great feast at no expense before sending them on their way. Apart from the welcome they subsequently received in Lorraine, Faido and Milan, the earls lodged in accommodation provided to officers in towns the length of their route overland to Italy. Despite Ó Cianáin’s comments on ‘the humble hostel’ in ‘the poor little town’ of La Boissière, inns providing board and lodging every night in France and Italy were more readily available than the Iberian Peninsula where raw food at taverns often had to be provided by the guest themselves.

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112 Hudry, ‘Conflans, ville d’étape’, pp 504-5; Gutmann, War and rural life in the Low Countries, pp 46-51; Briggs, Early modern France, pp 116, 118; Stradling, Spain’s struggle for Europe, pp 43-5.
113 Parker, The Army of Flanders, p. 91.
117 Gutmann, War and rural life in the Low Countries, p. 38.
118 Ó Muraíle (ed.), Ó Cianáin, pp 136-55.
121 Ó Muraíle (ed.), Ó Cianáin, p. 75; Marcelin Defourneaux, La vie quotidienne en Espagne au siècle d’or (Paris 1973), p. 12.
Extant sources record the daily *regimen* of soldiers in Spanish service, including details of their diet. Whereas full rations were provided at sea,\(^{122}\) bread was regarded as the staple requirement for land forces. From the 1590s onwards, fifteen florins were deducted from each soldier’s wages to offset the cost of a year’s supply of his ‘munition bread’.\(^{123}\) In return, each soldier received a loaf of rye and wheatmeal bread per day. For armies on the move, this required ovens on the march.\(^{124}\) Every other foodstuff had to be paid for by the troops and their followers. In the wake of an army passing through territory supply trains provided essential goods, giving rise to a black market in northern France and parts of Germany.\(^{125}\) On Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 170g pork or salted meat and 56g rice were available; on Mondays and Wednesdays, 170g cod or cheese. On Fridays and Saturdays a soldier could get 170g tuna or sardines. Once a month, 85g beans or chickpeas with oil, vinegar and salt were available. In a single year, nearly one-third of a military unit could die for want of proper quarters or provisions.\(^{126}\) During the Thirty Years War an Irishman commented that his compatriots were: \(^{127}\)

> [...] strong enduring people, contented with plain (or little food); when they have no bread, they can endure hunger for three or four days, feeding instead on water, cress, roots and grass; when necessary, they can walk more than twenty miles a day; apart from their musquets they have their bows and long knives.

A generation of continentally-educated clergy had preceded the noble company on the route to Rome. On Wednesday 5 March, the party reached Pont-à-Mousson where Irish priests belonging to the Society of Jesus maintained strong links with the university founded by the duke of Lorraine in the 1570s. Pont-à-Mousson quickly became recognised as ‘one of the great power-houses of France’s spiritual

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\(^{123}\) Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, p. 163.

\(^{124}\) Julio Albi de la Cuesta, *De Pavía a Rocroi. Los tercios de infantería española en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Madrid 1999), pp 140-1. In the absence of bread, Spanish soldiers ate a type of biscuit called *bizcocho*.


Following his studies in Rome, the Jesuit Fr James Archer was sent to study theology there, along with his English confrère, the future martyr, Henry Walpole. Archer and Walpole subsequently served as chaplains to the infantry regiment of Colonel William Stanley in Flanders. Another Irish Jesuit, Richard Fleming, was chancellor of the university of Pont-à-Mousson where Stephen White SJ of Clonmel taught theology from 1622-7.

From Pont-à-Mousson, Ó Néill and Ó Domhnaill sent messengers to Charles III of Lorraine, notifying him that their arrival at his court was at hand. Ó Cianáin’s statement that the noble company stayed for two nights in Pont-à-Mousson followed by a further two nights at Nancy directly reflects a special clause in formal treaties of neutrality which permitted the transitus innoxus of troops provided they did not stay more than two nights in one place. Apart from its neutrality and the religious zeal of its Catholic rulers, the duchy of Lorraine offered contracts to soldiers and merchants with carters who secured expeditions an uninterrupted transport supply the entire length of the Spanish Road.

Nancy lay on the latitude which divided Lorraine in half. In the south-east, the military route crossed the Jura and Vosges. Studying the terrain of south-east Lorraine reveals that the noble company travelled through a gap in the Vosges near Saint-Dié, where they stayed for one night. Considering the regular references Tadhg Ó Cianáin makes to religious sites on the route, it is intriguing that he overlooks this town founded in the eighth century by Deodatus, reputed to have been a disciple of two Irish monks. Subsequent Irish experiences in the duchy of Lorraine underscore the peripatetic lives of Irish clerics and soldiers. Irish officers registered as serving with infantry companies of Lorraine in the 1630s. A decade later, after taking the oath at the Ludovisian College in Rome, one John O’Clohessy secured a benefice in the.

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129 Ó Murafé (ed.), Ó Cianáin, p. 137.
130 Parker, The Army of Flanders, p. 61; Joseph Bergin, ‘The Europe that the earls encountered’ in Thomas O’Connor and Mary Ann Lyons (ed.), The Ulster earls and Baroque Europe (Dublin 2010), pp 5-17: 8.
131 Parker, The Army of Flanders, p. 96.
duchy. Catholic exiles regarded the duke of Lorraine as a prospective protector of Ireland from 1649-53 and for a brief time the Irish Franciscans had a friary in the duchy at Boulay.

The party’s next staging posts at Saint-Dié, Le Bonhomme pass, Kaysersberg and Colmar followed the exact road taken by soldiers from Spain, Italy and the Tyrol who crossed over the central Alps before reaching the Habsburg Netherlands via Alsace and Lorraine. Yet, in contrast to the numerous infantry troop companies which passed this way, the small size of the Irish party made it more vulnerable, explaining Ó Cianáin’s fears of ‘conspiracy by the heretics’ of Colmar and Basel.

The portrayal of mountain ranges in cartography conveys ‘the ideal of political divisions marked out by nature’. The true eastern frontier of France was, therefore, the Alpine chain. From 1601 until 1610, the vigilance of François de Bonne Lesdiguières, Constable of France, sentinel of the Alps and an ally of Savoy, kept the peace in south-eastern France. Beyond his reach, Ó Néill and Ó Domhnaill went, albeit briefly, into Colmar and Basel after leaving Lorraine. As Ó Cianáin points out, Basel was ‘the main entrance to the land of the Swiss called Helvetia’ where it was usual to demand custom ‘for the horses of strangers and travellers who cross through the country’. At one time the armies of Charles V and Francis I recruited both Protestant and Catholic troops, but after Protestant incursions in the second-half of the sixteenth century, Catholics in the Alpine valleys began to barricade their passes. The Swiss cantons were prominent among a number of mountainous areas which provided

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136 Parker, The Army of Flanders, p. 55.
139 Armstrong, ‘The Constable Lesdiguières’, p. 456; Briggs, Early modern France, p. 92, where he is referred to as ‘the virtual ruler of Dauphiné’.
140 Ó Muraíle (ed.), Ó Cianáin, p. 147.
trained soldiers to the armies of Europe. Seasonal employment on the land was readily available during harvest time. The offer of enlistment money and wages to follow was appealing at other times of the year. It is noteworthy in this context that twenty three of the party joined the Army of Flanders during the winter of 1607, rather than making the journey to Rome. After accompanying Rudhraighe Ó Domhnaill to Rome, four more of his followers were employed by the Spanish in later years to serve as soldiers. This occurred during the twelve years’ truce with the Dutch, a time when military units were otherwise disbanded. In December 1608, Philip III recommended that Ónrf Ó Ceallaigh should receive a post in Flanders commensurate to the nobility of his kinsmen. Gerald Fitzmaurice, grandson of the baron of Lixnaw, submitted a petition in Madrid to join up with the Ó Néill tercio the following year. While serving with Thomas Preston’s infantry company in 1612, Ó Domhnaill’s Scottish butler, David Craffort, sought licence for England. Two years later, Seán Crón Mac Daibhéid was granted fifty escudos by the Spanish ambassador to Rome to assist Seána Ó Néill.

The Catholic cantons of the Swiss confederation controlled an uninterrupted passage of territory between Lombardy and Alsace. In 1604, the Spanish governor of Milan, Don Pedro Enríquez de Acevedo, Conde de Fuentes, re-negotiated Spain’s treaty of friendship with the Catholic cantons. This included a condition providing for the movement of small groups of soldiers which was benefitted the noble company four years later. Alsace was what Geoffrey Parker has termed ‘the hinge’ of this

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144 Ó Muraíle (ed.), *Ó Cianáin*, p. 407, 412-18, 427-31. Of Ó Néill’s people, these were: Seán na bPunta Ó hÁgáin, Donchadh Ó hÁgáin, George Ichingham, John Bath, Stephen Bath, Muirchearteach Ó Coinne, Pádraig Ó Coinne, George Moore, Peter Preston, Patrick Rath, John Rath; and of Ó Domhnaill’s people: Neachtan Ó Domhnaill, Aodh (mac Domhnall) Ó Gallchobhair, Cathaoir (mac Art) Ó Gallchobhair, Cathaoir (mac Toimilín) Ó Gallchobhair, Tóirdhealbhach Corrahach Ó Gallchobhair, Tuathal Ó Gallchobhair, Aodh Óg Ó Gallchobhair, Donnchadh Mac Suibhne, Seán Mac Plib, Aonghus Mac Dhuibh Shithe, Uilliam Ó Loinsigh, Cathal Ó Broin.
146 Hazard, *Faith and patronage*, p. 87.
147 Jennings (ed.), *Wild geese in Spanish Flanders*, p. 139.
148 Don Francisco Ruiz, Conde de Castro, to Philip III, Rome, 29 Jan. 1614 (AGS, Estado, Roma, legajo 1000, 243-4). His name is recorded in this document as ‘Juan Daveto’.
military corridor. The new route was used successfully by Spanish expeditions in 1604 and 1605. In those years, three and a half thousand troops were sent to the Netherlands via Alsace. In return, Fuentes diverted the convoys of merchandise which plied between Italy and the Netherlands to pay tolls to the Catholic cantons. In keeping with this aspect of the journey, each of the five tolls that the party paid for their horses occurred on the road from Basel onwards. Although shorter than the Savoy route referred to earlier, the party’s route through the Swiss cantons was more dangerous and less comfortable.

With the Alps all around them, the earls reached Flüelen at midnight. Mountain crossings were organised by the inhabitants of Alpine villages who transported travellers and goods both north and south. Along each route, villagers cooperated by settling the stages among them, undertaking to ensure safe passage. Continuous transport day and night was provided on payment of a supplementary sum.

As early as 1603, Fuentes could see that the Valtelline - the Alpine valley of the Adda, north of Lake Como – was the essential pass between the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs, connecting northern Italy to both Brussels and Vienna. The Valtelline was an equally important passage for troops on their way to the Low Countries. To guarantee communications between Milan and the Tyrol, therefore, Fuentes established garrisons in the region of the upper Adda. This enabled Habsburg troops under the duke of Feria, governor of Milan, to occupy the Valtelline in July 1620. That year, Spain’s best commander, Spínola, took control of the Rhine passages by occupying the Palatinate. Irish soldiers fought in both these actions and in so doing, helped consolidate the Spanish Road from Milan to Flanders until 1631.
The winter crossing of an Alpine pass as described by Ó Cianáin was a major exploit because of the lateness of the season when snow and icy conditions were a menace.\textsuperscript{160} Europe was faced with a ‘Little Ice Age’ and despite improvements in temperature at the turn of the century, the climate remained capricious.\textsuperscript{161} The Saint Gotthard pass which led the noble company from Lake Luzern to Bellinzona via Airolo in Lombardy was known to Roman armies only as far as Andermatt beyond the summit.\textsuperscript{162} Until the Schoellenen Gorge on the Swiss descent was spanned by a bridge, it was impossible to reach the northern exit of the pass. The first Devil’s Bridge, where Ó Néill suffered the loss of a pack-horse laden with £120,\textsuperscript{163} was built above the abyss in the 1200s by Milanese merchants. According to Ó Cianáin, the roads were ‘laden and filled with snow’ and ‘ruggedness of ice’,\textsuperscript{164} so it was difficult to tell in what state they might be in. Experienced local guides gave good advice to the earls without which the route across the Alps could not have been traced.

The Saint Gotthard pass benefited from its central location in the Alpine arc, offering access to either Genoa or Venice.\textsuperscript{165} Though prevented from reaching Spain by sea the previous year, the earls could have crossed the Mediterranean via Milan from Genoa to Barcelona in 1608. Genoa and Milan were known as ‘the gate and the key for keeping and controlling Italy’.\textsuperscript{166} Otherwise, Venice offered a fleeting prospect of safe haven. Only after his arrival in Milan was Aodh Ó Néill advised against entering or passing through Venetian dominions.\textsuperscript{167}

In the year of the earls’ expedition from the Low Countries to Lombardy, Ottavio Codogno, the deputy postmaster general of Milan, stated that no new methods

\textsuperscript{162} Woodburn Hyde, ‘The Alpine passes in nature and history’, p. 324.
\textsuperscript{163} Ó Muraíle (ed.), Ó Cianáin, pp 150-1.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., p. 151.
\textsuperscript{166} James Tracy, \textit{Emperor Charles V, impresario of war: campaign strategy, international finance, and domestic politics} (Cambridge 2002), p. 27.
\textsuperscript{167} Ó Muraíle (ed.), Ó Cianáin, pp 542-4.
transport and communication had been developed since the Roman imperial period.\textsuperscript{168}
A letter from Paris to Rome, for instance, still took ten days. Until the early 1600s, swift communications were ‘maintained only for brief periods for privileged users at great economic and political-administrative cost.’\textsuperscript{169}

Almost a month had passed since Ó Cianáin and the earls had set out for Milan. By now, the worst of the journey was over. Between Faido and Bellinzona the mountains recede, the valley widens and the flow of the River Ticino turns south for several miles. They waited three weeks in Milan, within easy reach of Genoa where troops and money poured in from Spain. Charles V settled the duchy of Milan and the kingdom of Naples on his son Philip in 1540, to mark his marriage to Mary Tudor, thus placing Rome and the papal state between two Spanish-ruled territories.\textsuperscript{170}

From the accession of Philip II until the end of the Thirty Years War, the principal communication routes of Europe resembled a four-sided figure with Madrid, Naples, Vienna and Brussels on each corner – interconnected by Milan at its centre.\textsuperscript{171}

The Milanese was a vital plaza de armas, dedicated to a policy of aggression indistinguishable from a policy of defence.\textsuperscript{172}

Successive kings of Spain prudently ensured that land tenure, the exercise of law and religious matters remained in the hands of the local patriciate.\textsuperscript{173}

Apart from its links to the Low Countries and to Austria, Milan served as a bulwark against a French advance into central or southern Italy.\textsuperscript{174}

Ó Cianáin’s references to the castles of Bellinzona and the ‘fine, strong, compact’ garrison of Lodi confirm that the towns of Lombardy and the frontiers of the duchy were also well fortified.\textsuperscript{175}

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\item\textsuperscript{168} Ottavio Codogno, \textit{Nuovo itinerario delle poste per tutto il mondo} (Milan: Girolamo Bordoni 1608), p. 73; Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum, \textit{History of the hour: clocks and modern temporal orders}, translated by Thomas Dunlap (Chicago 1996), p. 325
\item\textsuperscript{169} Dohrn-van Rossum, \textit{History of the hour}, p. 325.
\item\textsuperscript{171} Alcalá-Zamora y Queipo de Llano, \textit{España, Flandes, y el Mar del Norte}, p. 48.
\item\textsuperscript{173} Hanlon, \textit{The twilight of a military tradition}, pp 48-54; Stradling, \textit{Spain’s struggle for Europe}, pp 43-5.
\item\textsuperscript{174} Charles Petrie, \textit{Philip II of Spain} (London 1964), p. 51. For detailed accounts of Milan’s place in seventeenth-century Spanish foreign policy, see Domenico Sella, \textit{Lo stato di Milano in età Spagnola} (Turin 1987); Davide Maffi, \textit{Il baluardo della corona. Guerra, esercito, finanze e società nella Lombardia seicentesca, 1630-60} (Florence 2007).
\item\textsuperscript{175} Ó Muraíle (ed.), \textit{Ó Cianáin}, pp 155, 169.
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Milan was renowned for the making of weapons and armour. This is reflected in the gift of rapiers and fine daggers presented to Ó Néill and Ó Domhnaill by the governor, Fuentes. An ornate sword and an excellent horse were regarded as customary reward for worthy service in the seventeenth century. In the words of the Huguenot noble Henri de Rohan, ‘anyone who wishes to secure exquisitely wrought arms’ must seek them in Milan.

The Spanish Army of Lombardy was second in size and importance only to that of Flanders. Tadhg Ó Cianáin noted in his narrative that the city’s vast Sforza Castle was armed with 500 cannon and guarded by 1,000 soldiers. The absence of corroborative archival evidence suggests his claim that Spaniards and Irish alone were allowed into the castle is overstated. Only later did a small number of Irish veterans from the wars in Flanders obtain a place in the Army of Lombardy where they received a retainer from the military treasury. The most recent research about the composition of the Army of Lombardy reveals that no Irish troop units were stationed at Milan in 1608. Ó Cianáin may have intended to nurse the bruised ego of Irish exiles. Even so, Milanese garrisons of the early 1600s were routinely formed by Spanish units which alternated with Swiss and Italian troops.

An Irish military presence in the Italian Peninsula emerged in the second decade of the seventeenth century with officers requesting the transfer of their salary to Sicily and others in receipt of a retainer in Naples. In 1612, ‘in virtue of an honoured career of twenty-two years in Flanders with the Army of the Catholic king,’ an Irish captain named ‘David Scelis’ received 15 scudi per month to serve at the side

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176 Fernández Álvarez, Felipe II y su tiempo, p. 107.
177 Ó Muráile (ed.), Ó Cianáin, p. 169.
179 Sella, European industries, 1500-1700, p. 10.
184 Hazard, Faith and patronage, pp 87, 102.
of Juan Fernández de Velasco, governor of Milan. During the same decade Phelim Ó Néill served in Italy and Germany as a cavalry officer and a captain of Burgundian and Walloon infantry, before promotion to the rank of major. In 1624, on the cessation of hostilities in Lombardy, Ó Néill made his way to the archducal court in Brussels where he was granted licence to travel to Spain.

There are several reasons for a scarcity of Irish soldiers in Italy at the start of the seventeenth century. While Spain and England were at war from 1585 until 1604, Irish Catholic émigrés were often mistaken for their English counterparts who were suspected of heresy and espionage. The first Irish tercio was established in Flanders in 1605. As stated earlier, traffic along the Spanish Road moved from south to north, from the Mediterranean across the Alps and on to the Low Countries. This limited the catchment area for the recruitment of troops in Milan to Spain and Italy, southern Germany and Switzerland. Troops quartered in the duchy of Milan were moved north across the Alps. Expected to raise troops for the archdukes to secure Flanders in 1601, Fuentes recruited 12,000 in southern Germany, Naples and Switzerland. When Spínola assumed command of the forces besieging Oostende, he did so with a reinforcement of 8,000 raised in Milan.

Furthermore, a posting in Italy was coveted by soldiers otherwise acquainted with the hardships of serving in northern Europe. According to Farnese, commander of the Army of Flanders from 1578 to 1592, ‘a Spanish soldier who had never breathed the air of Italy served better in the Netherlands than two who had, because they never lost the desire to return.’ According to the inspector general of the Army of Lombardy, this remained the case in 1635. That summer, 4,000 Lombards, Neapolitans, and Spaniards deserted the ranks of the Cardenal-Infante Don Fernando to return to Italy.

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185 ‘Relación de los servicios de algunos capitanes italianos, irlandeses y alemanes entretenidos cerca la persona del gobernador de Milán’, 1612 (AGS, Estado, Consejo de Italia, Secretaría de Sicilia (visitas y causas), legajo 1302, doc. 106).
186 Jennings (ed.), Wild geese in Spanish Flanders, p. 207.
187 Ibid.
188 Schüller, ‘Special conditions of the Irish-Iberian trade’, p. 468.
189 Hazard, Faith and patronage, pp 47-50.
193 Parker, The Army of Flanders, p. 213.
194 Alcalá-Zamora y Queipo de Llano, España, Flandes, y el Mar del Norte, p. 342.
The first Irish unit at Milan was stationed there in 1655, consisting of 400 men commanded by Lucas Taaffe of County Sligo. Taaffe’s troops arrived from Catalonia via Naples and remained in Milan until the reform of the 1660s. When military numbers in the duchy were reduced to 3,450 soldiers in 1661, Irish troops accounted for approximately 14% of infantry in the field. During the following decade, an Irish infantry company served with the State of Milan where one Captain Kavanagh was called to serve in 1677. Hundreds of Irish troops recruited by Aodh Baldearg Ó Domhnaill returned to Milan during the war of the League of Augsburg, remaining until 1695-6 when they were sent to Catalonia.

A military career was seen as the most appropriate calling for nobles to display physical courage, pride and endurance, risking much in the hope of great gain. These qualities were shown on the journey across the Vosges and the Alps in March 1608. The Alpine crossing can be regarded as the spine of Ó Cianáin’s narrative before the party took the road to Rome. The earls’ departure from Ireland forced their plight back onto the political agenda across western Europe. Their land route to Lombardy reflects the reappraisal of foreign policy commitments by Spain in the early 1600s.

The path from Namur to Milan marked an important milestone in the history of exiles from Ireland. Apart from Catholic clerics who went before, the Irish abroad had previously been concentrated in the Habsburg Netherlands and the Iberian Peninsula. As the example of Lorraine shows, Ó Néill and Ó Domhnaill had to rely upon states independent of the Spanish Habsburgs to facilitate their journey. By the end of 1636, the Count Duke Olivares believed that conditions were too unfavourable to transfer troops by land corridors. This was alleviated by operating the sea-route
via the Bay of Biscay and the Channel which was comparatively safe since Spain made peace with England five years earlier. After recovering from its civil wars of the previous century, French political power was in the ascendant. The overland corridors which permitted Spain to mobilise its armies and provided the Army of Flanders with its foreign troops were subsequently disrupted. On resuming a foreign policy of aggression, control of vantage points into Italy and Germany became a priority for the French, which spelt the end for the Spanish roads.

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