Ageing and Economic Development in the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

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Abstract: After sketching in the main features of Galicia’s historical background from 1752 to 1887, the article then goes on to study the levels of population ageing and the social importance of Old Age in Galician society. An attempt is then made to ascertain how far this ageing process contributed towards this region’s idiosyncratic transition to Modernity and its maintenance by inertia of the production schemes handed down from the Ancien Régime.

Keywords: age, ageing of the population, economic development, rural world, peasantry.

1. Historical Background.

Galicia is a territory lying in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula with an area of about 30,000 km², i.e., nearly 6% of today’s Spain. From the socio-economic viewpoint it was a markedly rural society, as is borne out by the fact that there was no real urbanisation process, in the strict sense, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1787 seven percent of its population lived in built-up areas with over 2000 inhabitants; this figure had grown by only 1 or 2 percentage points by the beginning of 1900. Another telling sign is the fact that its industrialisation process was curtailed in 1830-1860 by its failure to reconvert its rural protoindustry and relocate it in the classic urban factories. Small wonder then that in the period running from 1787 to 1900 eighty percent of its active male population worked in the land, eking out a living by subsistence farming on small farms rarely exceeding 1.6-2 hectares and giving an average of two harvests a year (Table 1). The lack of the most minimum industrial fabric in this period is shown by the fact that only 6-7% of that active population was made up by artisans. At the end of the nineteenth century these artisans were employed in small workshops concentrated in the western part of the country, in the central part of its Atlantic coastline. This was the selfsame area were the bulk of its protoindustrial setup was located in the mid eighteenth century, comprising smiths, weavers, quarrymen, tanners, etc. The concentration of its protoindustry here is largely explained by the fact that these districts were the most densely populated and urbanised of Galicia, with 90-100 inhabitants per km² and containing eleven of Galicia’s twenty two towns and cities. At this level only Ferrol, one of the great military shipyards set up by the

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2 The poor quality of the available sources on the labour condition of women obliges us in most cases to reduce our observations to the male population. Nonetheless, the results obtained can be extrapolated with few reserves to the whole Galician population.
Bourbon monarchy in the second half of the eighteenth century, with a 25,000-strong population at that time, met the requisites for being considered an industrial city\textsuperscript{3}. Galicia’s urban network was hence sparse and disconnected, clustered in the west of the region in small enclaves that also became the privileged residences of the local elites, of the provincial justice and administration structures, episcopal sees or simple district towns. This factor, together with the rural character of Galicia’s economy, explains why most of the commercial exchanges at this time were conducted in the numerous countryside trade fairs that were held on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. Hence the fact that the number of people earning their living from commercial activities was less than 1% of the total male active population at the end of the eighteenth century and never exceeded 3% a century later. This increase was in any case due more to an improvement of the commercial network of each built-up area than any modification of the abovementioned system of traditional rural trade fairs (Table 1)\textsuperscript{4}. In this context the sharp fall of people employed in liberal professions and the services sector from 1787 to 1887 is explained in general terms by the measures taken by the successive liberal governments from 1820 onwards to reduce the social, political and economic clout of the old ruling classes of the Ancien Régime – the Clergy and the hidalgía (lower nobility) – and the knock-on effect on the employment sectors that depended on them, such as domestic service. This fall owed little to any change in Galicia’s production system. From this point on there was a gradual replacement of these ruling classes by a new elite of a different social background (lawyers, doctors, functionaries), caused by an amalgam of factors that gradually chipped away at the old class’s power, such as the progressive indebtedment of the lower nobility after the fall of agricultural prices at the start of the nineteenth century, the socio-economic effects deriving from the abolition of the seigniory in 1811 and the subsequent ratification thereof in 1820-21, the growing criticism of the rentas diezmales (tithes) paid by the peasants to the Church at this time until they were eventually abolished, the disentailments of Church property from 1836 to 1841 and the instigation of a new tax system in 1845. The peculiar feature of this process of renewal and replacement is that it took place thanks to the purchase by this new rising class of the right to collect the old farming revenue of a feudal nature and the real property generating this revenue while the effective tenure of the land remained in the hands of the peasants who worked it, for whom the abovementioned process only represented a change in the person to whom they had to pay the rent. In other words the old agrarian structures were not really affected by this series of reforms, as is borne out by the fact that old productive schemes


continued to prevail: predominance of small farms, labour-intensive farm work and the disproportion between cultivated land, scrub and pastureland.

On a social plane, however, this new social class of proprietors by no means imitated the old lifestyles of the clergy or hidalguía, while the abovementioned disentailments paved the way for the medium-term conversion of peasants into the owners of the land they worked, thereby prompting a slow and peculiar modernisation of Galicia’s socio-economic structure. Witness, for example, the growing criticisms from 1855 onwards of the communal land system by certain sectors of the peasantry, their struggle to obtain full ownership of the land or the social tension generated by the desire to eliminate the obligation of paying the feudal revenue inherited from the old agrarian contracts. Other signs of the same process are the livestock specialisation built up in some parts of Galicia as from 1860 on the strength of the systematic exportation of cattle to England, the subsequent modifications of the traditional crop systems in these areas to obtain more fodder and the improved prospects of selling Galician wine in Spanish markets after the advent of the railway. The upshot of all these factors was that Galician agriculture became stuck midway between archaism and market adaptation in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Table 1: Active Male Population in Galicia, 1787-1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1787</th>
<th>1887</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1887</th>
<th>1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Sector</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Sector</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Sector</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal professions and services</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number cases</td>
<td>342.267</td>
<td>517.126</td>
<td>582.539</td>
<td>5.581.945</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


7 The 1787 figures have been drawn up in line with the corrections suggested by A. Eiras Roel, “Sobre la distribución profesional de la población en la España de Carlos III. Examen crítico de las cifras censales”, en *Actas del Coloquio Internacional Carlos III y su siglo*, Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1990, t. II, pgs. 519 and ff. And in drawing up the information from the 1887 census, D. S. Reher, *España a la luz del Censo de 1887*, Madrid, I.N.E., 1993, pgs. 52 and ff.
In Galicia agriculture remained the main economic activity until the very threshold of Modernity. This does not mean that agricultural practices obeyed a single model throughout the territory. In general they can be broken down into four main variants.

The first was practiced in inland Galicia, a sparsely urbanised area lying at a height of over 500 metres. Until well into the nineteenth century its only two small towns, Lugo and Monforte, survived by drawing on the revenue of a feudal nature proceeding from a surrounding rural world with low population densities (1787: 28 per km$^2$; 1860: 40 per km$^2$), whose agriculture was based on single-harvest fallow-rye cultivation on farms with an average size of 2.7 hectares. To eke out a living on this basis it was necessary to accumulate a great amount of labour on these farms (hence the predominance in the area of the stem family), and top up the income by exploiting scrubland (where 25% of the total harvest come from), keeping large herds of livestock or emigrating on a short-term or seasonal basis to neighbouring Castile and carrying out all sorts of other complementary trades. In broad terms this same population and productive scheme was repeated in all the mountain districts of the rest of Galicia and, as such, would begin to change only after the relative specialisation in livestock raising from 1860 to 1880 fostered by the abovementioned exports of cattle to English markets. This activity encouraged a certain modification of the traditional cultivation systems to increase the profitability of a livestock business in which quantity prevailed over quality, judging from the lack of any cattle selection, specialised farms or forage plants for feeding them$^8$.

The second farming variant was practiced in the valleys and coastal areas of northern Galicia, an area containing 8 of the 22 towns and cities of the Galician urban network. Some of them, like Ferrol, A Coruña or Ribadeo, enjoyed moments of thriving industrial or commercial activity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The population densities here at the end of the eighteenth century were 37% higher than the inland figures, 44 inhabitants per km$^2$, while its farms were no bigger than 1.5 hectares. The smaller size of these farms in relation to inland Galicia was offset by a polyculture system of subsistence farming with ternary rotations guaranteeing at least three harvests every two years. Even so the population had begun to outgrow the productive capacity of this farming system by the middle of the eighteenth century. It therefore became normal for many sectors of the peasantry to top up their income by spinning, weaving and selling linen canvass. This economic activity helped to generate a certain sensation

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of wellbeing in the area until the 1840s. The slump of the canvass-related rural protoindustry led at first to a intensificación of seasonal emigration to Castile, in inland Spain, to work as day labourers. Later, from 1853 onwards, these same migratory flows would be redirected to the Americas.\(^9\)

The third of the farming variants was practiced in the coastal districts of southwest Galicia, an area containing one out of every two towns and cities in the whole region. Its high population density, about 90-100 inhabitants per km\(^2\), had been built up by dint of the agricultural transformations generated by the introduction of maize in the early seventeenth century. The productivity of this plant was responsible in the coming centuries for producing the patchwork landscape of minifundista farming, with a predominance of small farm ranging from 1.1 to 1.6 hectares. Even these tiny farms managed to turn out up to three harvests a year, thanks to a complicated system of rotations and integrated livestock farming. Nonetheless, by about 1760 the yield of this polyculture subsistence farming was no longer sufficient to feed the population of the southwest. Until the liberalisation of emigration to America in 1853, therefore, it was normal for the inhabitants of the area to migrate in droves to the cities of Castile, Andalusia or Portugal on a temporary and seasonal basis in search of complementary income for their households. For the same reason they were forced to carry out many different countryside tasks, sometimes even combining them with crafts of a protoindustrial nature. On general lines the agriculture of southwest Galicia was fairly efficient in productivity terms. The cereal yield for this area was comparable at various moments of the nineteenth century to the outputs being recorded elsewhere in Europe before the use of chemical fertilisers. The main difference between the methods here and elsewhere in Europe was that this yield was obtained on the basis of a huge amount of labour concentrated in the farms, a feasible policy in an area with such a high population density.\(^10\)

The last farming variant we need to glance at is wine production. Still a minority activity in relation to the rest, it was nonetheless of patent importance in the Miño and Sil river valleys on the border of today’s provinces of Lugo with Ourense, Ourense with Pontevedra and Pontevedra with Portugal. The ups and downs of wine production or the economic problems of the families producing the wine in the eighteenth and nineteenth century have been dealt with by authors, to whom we refer the interested reader.\(^11\)

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2.- Ageing of the Population and the Socio-Economic Significance of Age.

From 1787 to 1887 the ageing of Galicia’s population, expressed as a percentage of over sixties, ranged from 6.9 to 9.5%. These percentages were slightly higher than those recorded in the Iberian Peninsula as a whole at this period, lower than those of England and Wales up to the 1850s, overtaking them thereafter, and always lower than France’s in the whole period under consideration (Table 2). But a clearer idea of the social and demographic importance of old age in Galicia at this time can be gained by looking at the role played by over-sixties at the head of a household. To give an example, a sample of 23,058 household groups belonging to 311 of the region’s almost 3600 parishes in 1752 shows that 21% of Galician families were headed at this time by an elderly person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Galicia</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>England and Wales</th>
<th>France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1787</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860/61</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870/77</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881/1887</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There is no mid-nineteenth-century source covering the whole territory so, to make this comparison in time, we have to fall back on the figures for inland Galicia. From this particular vantage point we find that aged persons were playing a growing role as the head of a household, running 22% of households in 1752 and 30% by 1860. Contrary to what might be expected, the reason for this change is not to be found in an improvement in the general standard of living, the impact of emigration or a possible reduction of the death rate. The reason has rather to be looked for in a series of changes in the socio-economic circumstances that impinged in turn on the time-honoured forms of social and family reproduction. From 1820 onwards the successive liberal governments introduced a series of measures with the intention of dismantling the Ancien Régime. Without doubt the most important of these measures was the implementation of a new tax system in 1845. For the peasantry of Galicia, the biggest social class remember, this meant they were now bound to pay out a cash amount each year that was proportional to their taxable liquid wealth rather than the harvest obtained or their real cash-raising capacity. This was far removed from the old taxation formulae linked to the feudal income, paid in kind and related to the actual harvest obtained. The material cost to the peasantry of this new tax obligation would be aggravated in the following years by the soaring fiscal burden, a rise estimated to be over 200% from 1845 to 1876 and also due to the ability of the local high-ups to offload local tax
obligations onto the lower and middle peasantry. Things were further complicated by a rainy cycle that set in in the autumn of 1852, producing a general farming slump whose effects would linger on until 1857. This led to a social impoverishment of the peasantry. Its effects can be gauged from the fact that, by 1860, 16.3% of the households of inland Galicia were headed by day labourers, whereas in 1787 only 1.3% of the males censused in the area had owned up to such a condition.

Under these circumstances the peasantry elite began, from the mid 1840s onwards, to reorganise the traditional farming division of labour at a local level to their own benefit. To do so they acted on two levels. First of all they began to knowingly manipulate family and neighbourhood networks to gain cheap labour for their farms. Secondly, in their own interests, they accentuated the lower social and labour rank of the weakest peasant groups by dint of usury loans and the control they wielded over municipal life. The aforementioned manipulation of their networks of relationship involved, among other things, delaying the generational handover of their family farms in benefit of a person elected to inherit them, usually one of the married sons or daughters in the house. This explains, for example, why, in 1860, 31.3% of the peasantry household registered as proprietors were led by a person over sixty, against the 19.6% of tenants or the 10.6% of day labourers or that the percentage of multi-generational families headed by an elderly person was 62% among the proprietors and only 33% among the tenants and day labourers.

| Table 3: Size of the Households headed by Males over and under Sixty, Galicia 1752 |
|-----------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|
|                 | Number    | %Households | Size   | Size   | Total  |
|                 | Cases     | > 60 years old | < 59  | > 60   | Size   |
| Galicia         | 18.269    | 22.4          | 4.8   | 4.9    | 4.8    |
| Inland Galicia  | 2.752     | 23.4          | 5.7   | 6.2    | 5.8    |
| Southwest Galicia | 2.071   | 23.0          | 4.5   | 4.5    | 4.5    |

Source: Ensenada’s Cadastre of 1752. Drawn up by the author.

The sources studied for the mid eighteenth century give us only a fairly sketchy idea of the different degree of ageing shown by the heads of family of the various

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13 Information worked up from Floridablanca’s Census of 1787 and from the “Register that the Municipal Board of the Census takes from all persons who stayed overnight in the municipal district of Lugo on 25-26 December, according to the resident registration certificates given out and corrected”, Archivo Histórico Provincial de Lugo, Municipal. Censos y Padrones, legajo 421.

sectors of the peasantry in inland Galicia. We at least know that 25% of the households of the better-off peasants, i.e., those who employed servants, were headed by a male over sixty years old, while this figure falls to 22% for the non-servant-employing households. More interesting, however, seems to be the fact that, in a farming set-up whose profitability depended on a high concentration of labour, the household groups headed by males over sixty were slightly bigger than those headed by under sixties.

As shown by Table 3 this observation cannot be extended to the whole of Galicia or the situation in southwest Galicia, for in both of these cases the size of the households seems to bear no relationship to the age of the head of the family. In any case, and on general lines, all this seems to indicate that in Galicia of 1752 age was not in itself an impediment for heading a family farm. And the fact is that the tenure, and ipso facto the social ranking of the proprietors, was guaranteed in the different parts of the country by hereditary contrivances of the most varied nature, marital alliances included. Hence the fact that the percentage of households headed by males over sixty is very similar in all the different zones studied, despite the very different successory models used (Table 3)\textsuperscript{15}. This means that old men in Galician society had more than one way of enforcing their wills on the younger population and safeguarding themselves at the end of their lives without having to depend on other persons. Moreover, these hereditary contrivances formed part of a strategy of social and family reproduction that they themselves developed and guided thanks to the control they wielded over the real property. As already pointed out, the modifications to this strategy in inland Galicia brought about a change in the relationship between the number of co-residents (married sons and daughters, siblings, nephews and nieces, etc) in a household and the age of the head of the household. In 1752 the number of these co-residents in households headed by over sixties was twice as high as in the households run by males under 59; by 1860 this ratio had risen to three to one.


It will easily be appreciated from all the above that the social, economic and family importance of old age in the transition from the Ancien Régime to Modernity are not to be explained only by arguments of a demographic nature. Nonetheless analysis formulae of this nature can still be useful when trying, for example, to unravel the complex relationships established in the past between the ageing of the population and the economy. This is the case of the so-called potential active population (hereinafter P.A.P.), which gives us a good idea of these relations by showing, broadly speaking, the ageing propensity of a male potential workforce\textsuperscript{16}. This potentiality is partly based on


\textsuperscript{16} The potential active population has been established as the relation between the number of males in the 12.5 to 65 age bracket and the total male population. For more information on its nature and limitations,
the assumption that males over 65 are no longer counted in this workforce. As we have already seen, in a clearly rural society like Galicia’s, this assumption does not hold true. Even so, the use of this analysis formula will help us to understand the internal behaviour shown by a significant segment of the male active population in response, for example, to the impact of emigration.

This indicator has been rounded out by monitoring the percentage of males in the 41-60 age bracket forming part of this same P.A.P. The dependency of one and the other calculation on fertility trends and migration intensity in the immediate pre-census years convert both demographic phenomena into authentic variables to be taken into account in what should be considered an attempt to bring to light part of the labour context in which over sixties in the real male active population lived their lives. Before going down this path, it should be pointed out that we have first been bound to adjust the P.A.P. to the information contained in our sources. The results are shown in Table 4, including also the masculinity ratios of the 16 to 40 age bracket to ascertain how far emigration might be responsible for the possible ageing shown by males in the 41-60 age bracket. We have also included in this Table the Galician and Spanish emigration rates per thousand population to give us a better overview of the problem being dealt with.

### Table 4: Male Potentially Active Population, 1860-1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>GALICIA</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>SPAIN</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A.</td>
<td>B.</td>
<td>C.</td>
<td>D.</td>
<td>A.</td>
<td>B.</td>
<td>C.</td>
<td>D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A.- Percentage of male potentially active population: males 11-60 / total male population; B.- Percentage of males aged 41 to 60 contained in the potentially active population; C.- Masculinity ratios of the population aged 16 to 40; D.- Emigration rates per thousand population for the years 1836-60, 1871-80, 1881-90, 1891-1900, 1901-10, 1911-20

Source: Population censuses of 1860, 1877, 1887, 1900 and 1910. Drawn up by the author. Emigration rates per thousand in

These figures show that the intensity of transatlantic migration from the western and northern parts of Galicia in the period 1860 to 1920 by no means determined the


17 We found ourselves bound to consider this term as the relation between the number of males aged 11 to 60 and the total population and, within that relation, the medium term fluctuations in the percentage of males aged 41 to 60. Even so, it has to be acknowledged that this gives only a rough and ready idea of the potential workforce’s degree of ageing in a region like Galicia, where the nature of agricultural work means that it can be carried out without too many problems after the age of 60.
ageing of its potential active population (P.A.P.). This is proven by the slight fall of only 2.6 percentage points in the percentage of 41-60 year-old males making up said P.A.P. from 1877 to 1910. It is therefore safe to say that the migratory intensity in the years under study (columns B, C and D) bore no causal relationship to the internal ageing of the Galician P.A.P., even though emigration was continually at a high level in the period running from 1881 to 1920. Only in the period 1900 to 1920, when emigration to America peaked, could the cumulative effect of a massive twenty-year drain of youngsters to the New World have prompted a relative ageing of the P.A.P., as shown in the 1920 census (columns B and D). This regional picture is similar to the one shown at the same time for the Iberian Peninsula as a whole, even though the migration in the latter case had a much greater variety of destinations\textsuperscript{18}.

The negligible influence of emigration on the internal ageing of the potential active population is explained to some extent in Galicia by the rigidity of local labour markets, mostly of a rural nature and in the agricultural context as already described above. As the experts in this matter have pointed out, the contingents of emigrants who struck out on their American venture would largely be the workforce that Galicia’s economic system was unable to absorb. It should not be forgotten here that the transatlantic emigration was largely made up by young males of a rural origin, most of them single and falling in the 16 to 40 age bracket. This profile began to change at the start of the twentieth century, as family emigration came into its own, family regroupment in the New World became the new norm and the number of returning emigrants fell sharply on the figures being recorded at the end of the nineteenth century\textsuperscript{19}. This combination of factors helps to explain the ageing of the P.A.P. as shown in the 1920 census. At this level both Galicia and Spain as a whole performed very differently from France. There the weight of males over 35 in its P.A.P. grew slowly and surely from 1851 to 1911, in parallel with the percentage growth of over 60s in its total male population. The latter increase was caused by the lowering of marital fertility and the considerable rural exodus affecting certain French Departments at that time\textsuperscript{20}. Quite the contrary of what occurred in the northwest of Spain, where from 1877 to 1910 the number of males aged 41-60 tended to fall very slowly and the low fertility was due to the predominance of late marriages among the women, so emigration to America and the relatively benign death rate were the real causes of the rising percentage of males over 60 in the total male population\textsuperscript{21}.

\textsuperscript{20} P. Bourdelais, op. cit., pgs. 344 and ff.
The existence in Europe of two different models in the relations between Old Age and the economy is nothing new; neither is the complexity of this relation. In fact a study of these questions in France itself brought to light a plurality of regional models that differed not only from each other but also from the national model they all contributed to. No doubt similar findings will be made in relation to Spain when, in the near future, we make a more in-depth study of the whole country. This might well help us to come up with some sort of explanation of the complex situation whereby in Galicia the percentage of males over 60 in its real male active population as a whole underwent hardly any change at all from 1787 to 1887, only beginning to grow as the twentieth century approached (1787: 12.5%, 1887: 13.6%, 1900: 16.1%). By and large this explanation would be based on the aforementioned rigidity, the nature and operation of the local labour markets and the impact of emigration. Nonetheless, the geographical slant on this problem will have to be rounded out by considering other variables of a demographic and economic nature. Only then will we be able to understand the percentages of males over 60 in the male active population as shown in Maps 1 and 2.

Leaving aside the methodological difficulties in correctly working up the information contained in Floridablanca’s census in relation to the socio-professional structure of 1787, and having established its more than acceptable quality for Galicia, we have calculated the relation between males over 60 and the total male active population. Bearing in mind the labour conditions obtaining in late eighteenth-century Galicia, we believe that the percentage thus obtained can be taken as a fair indicator of the number of elderly men in the male active population. The mapping of these figures shows that the highest ageing levels of this population tended to occur in inland Galicia and in the areas closest to the Atlantic coast (Map 1). These two zones of the northwest of the peninsular showed two different models of the relationship between Old Age and the agricultural economy at the end of the eighteenth century.

As far as inland Galicia is concerned, where elderly men represented on average over 15% of the total male active population, this has to be set in the context of subsistence farming with a single harvest a year, which called for an intense concentration of labour to be at all profitable. Contrary to what might be expected, these high average values seem to bear little or no relationship to the preponderance of stem families in the area, representing from 35 to 40% of the total household. Neither do they seem to bear any relationship to the household heads’ determination to avoid the division of family wealth by resorting to non-egalitarian hereditary practices based on

22 P. Bourdelais, op. cit., pgs. 326 and ff.

23 The procedure was the following. First of all we added the 1787 figures at municipal level in the corresponding geographical units to the partidos judiciales of 1887. Then we used the age distribution figures of the 1797 census of Galicia for calculating the approximate percentage of males over 60 in the 1787 census. We then applied this percentage to the aggregated figures in said partidos judiciales mapping the results. On the validity of the information referring to the socio-professional structure of Galicia in 1787 and the quality of the demographic count, see A. Eiras Roel, “Sobre la distribución profesional…”, op. cit., pgs. 524 and ff.; of the same author, “El Censo de 1787 como fuente para el estudio regional de la estructura de la población y la familia”, in F. Chacón Jiménez, coord., La población española en 1787. II Centenario del Censo de Floridablanca, Madrid, I.N.E., 1992, pgs. 73-100.
post-mortem transmission. Witness the abovementioned fact that in the mid eighteenth century the number of households headed by a male over 60 as a proportion of those led by a male was 23.4%, not much higher here than in southwest Galicia, with 23.0%, or that the size of said households was not appreciably less than the size of those led by under 60s (Table 3). Greater explanatory weight here seems to be offered by those demographic variables defined on the basis of the degree of socio-economic development achieved by a population in the framework of a given ecosystem. A good example of this is the influence of the child mortality rate on the different birth cohorts in inland Galicia. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century about 40% of the children born in this area died before reaching the age of 7, and two thirds of the latter before reaching their first birthday. This death ratio was even higher a little further to the south, in the wine producing districts lying on the frontier of today’s provinces of Lugo and Ourense (Map 1)\textsuperscript{24}. The key role played by Old Age in inland Galicia, therefore, was not due to the seasonal emigration of young single men to Castile, in inland Spain, for carrying out harvesting work, and even less to the existing fertility levels. When all is said and done, the average 4.6 children of each married couple in the period 1750-1799 was hardly likely to offset the high child mortality rates\textsuperscript{25} and was in any case the result of a sociodemographic pattern in which women tended to marry late, 26-27 years old in 1787, and about 18% remained singles all their lives.

Against this, seasonal and temporary emigration to Andalusia, Castile or Portugal was one of the most commonly used resources by the peasantry of the Atlantic coastal areas to palliate the deficient output of subsistence farming carried out on tiny plots. This systematic migration to different parts of the Iberian Peninsula, together with a late marriage trend, whereby women got married at about 25 while 14% of them remained spinsters for life, were the factors behind the low fertility rates of the area during the second half of the eighteenth century and, ipso facto, the average 14% proportion of old men in the total male active population. Witness the fact that the married couples of southwest Galicia had an average of 3.8 children between 1750 and 1799, while the child mortality ratio was about 34-35%\textsuperscript{26}. It was therefore the combined effect of this migratory system, the late marriage pattern and child mortality rate, one of three children dying before the age of 7, that produced the high percentage of over 60s in the area’s agricultural economy. The average number of members in households headed by over 60s was four, the same number as those headed by under 60s, and all in a context where the stem family accounted for only 21% of the total households.

\textsuperscript{24} P. Saavedra, “Datos para un estudio da mortandade de “párvulos” en Galicia, fins do XVII-mediados do XIX”, Obradoiro de Historia Moderna, 1, 1992, pg. 90 and ff.

\textsuperscript{25} Result of the direct study of 12,986 baptism certificates and 2831 marriage certificates for 19 rural parishes of inland Galicia. Source: Baptism Books and Marriage Books corresponding to the Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Lugo.

\textsuperscript{26} Result of the direct study of 14,853 baptism certificates and 3948 marriage certificates for 9 rural parishes of southwest Galicia. Source: Baptism Books and Marriage Books corresponding to the Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Tui. In the coastal area of Salnés, out of a total of 7 parishes, this same ratio between baptisms and marriages was 4.1 between 1750 and 1809. For more information on this and child mortality, see J. M. Pérez García, Un modelo de sociedad rural, op. cit., pgs. 142 and ff., and Tabla 3.15.
One hundred and ten years later the changes that have occurred in Galicia are obvious. By 1887 emigration to America from the coastal territories was the established like alternative to the economy's structural limitations in the agricultural, industrial and commercial context. Telling results of these limitations are such factors as the early failure of industrialisation, the non-existence of any real urbanising process, the agrarian crises of the Ancien Régime that hit the area at different moments in the second half of the nineteenth century or the lingering importance of subsistence farming throughout the whole region. At the end of the nineteenth century the marriage pattern prevailing in Galicia was the same as the one prevailing one hundred years earlier, while falls in the child mortality rate since the 1770-80 decade now ensured the survival of most of the average 4.5 children engendered by each married couple in southwest Galicia from 1850 to 1899. In view of these two factors it is clear that the ageing of this area’s male active population in 1887 was caused by the systematic emigration of young single men to the New World\textsuperscript{27}. This helps to explain why, in such an environment, the levels of over 60s in this active population were about 15\% or even much higher (Map 2). This was the case, for example, in the rural parishes forming part of the partidos judiciales (judicial districts) of Pontealdeelas, Tui or Redondela, where old men came to represent 20\% of the total of said population, or in the partidos of Padrón and Ponteareas, where they were 17\% of the total. Only in the valleys close to the coast or the coastal districts of northern Galicia, with demographic, migratory, social and productive characteristics very similar to those of southwest Galicia, was it possible to find similar percentages. Worthy of particular note here are the partidos judiciales of Ortigueira and Ribadeo with 18\% each one (Map 2).

The abovementioned structural limitations of the Galician economy, seen in conjunction with the emigration-driven ageing of the male workforce, precisely in the most urbanised and dynamic areas of the region from a economic viewpoint help to explain why it was that productive schemes of the Ancien Régime were handed down with such inertia. Suffice it to say that 86\% of the males censused in 1887 in southwest Galicia were occupied in farmwork, while 17\% recorded an age of over 60. In other areas this ageing ratio was even higher, for example in the partidos judiciales of Caldas de Reis (19\%), Padrón (19\%), Redondela (21\%), Tui (22\%) and Pontealdeelas (26\%).

We already know that the agricultural model of southwest Galicia was characterised by small plots, traditional agricultural techniques, the investment of a growing surplus of labour and the combination of intensive and extensive farming practices. In the abovementioned context any attempt to modernise this agricultural model would obviously be hampered by the fact that at least one in five of the country-workers was

\textsuperscript{27} For more information on all this, see A. Vázquez, op. cit., pgs. 255 and ff.; J. Carmona, El atraso industrial, op. cit., pgs. 206 and ff.; I. Dubert, Del campo a la ciudad, op. cit., pgs. 389 and ff.; J. García Lombardero, “Transformaciones de la economía de Galicia, siglos XIX y XX”, in N. Sánchez Albornoz, comp., La modernización económica de España, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, pgs 272 and ff.; R. Rowland, op. cit. The number of children per married couple was ascertained by direct study of 8,005 baptism certificates and 1760 marriage certificates corresponding to 4 rural parishes of southwest Galicia. Source: Baptism Books and Marriage Books corresponding to the Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Tui.
an old man. The relative burden they represented for household economies and their reluctance or even refusal to introduce innovations into the farms they ran would certainly have hindered any modernisation drive in the sector. Small wonder then that at the end of the nineteenth century this agriculture concerned itself first with meeting the needs of its tenure holders without breaking the traditional production limits, instead of bringing itself into line with a more capitalist outlook. So it is that the historians of rural Galicia have generally agreed that the region’s agriculture came down to the twentieth century in a state midway between archaism and relative market adaptation. This productive position with one foot firmly planted in the past curiously coincides in time with a gradual ageing of Galicia’s rural male active population (1887: 14.2%, 1900: 17.3%). True it is that not all economic sectors of the southwest were so affected by the ageing of the workforce. In the industrial world, for example, employing 7-8% of the male active population of the area, the average proportion of over 60s barely reached 7% of the total. But the possibilities of this world acting as a driving force behind any possible economic development were curtailed both by the artisan character of most of the industrial establishments and the limitations of a market made up by low-consuming segments of the population. Little more expansion was possible, therefore, after covering the needs of the peasants and the inhabitants of the small urban enclaves scattered about the southern half of the Atlantic side of the region, most of which, except for Vigo, were small fishing towns, district towns or provincial capitals with a markedly administrative character.

In inland Galicia and Ourense the percentage of over 60s in its active population was lower, about 10-12% on average (Map 2). This can be largely explained by the lower population impact of transatlantic emigration on this area in 1887, the seasonal character of the movements of young males to work in Castile and Portugal, the abovementioned reduction in child mortality and the arrival in certain districts of immigrants from neighbouring provinces, drawn in by a relative prosperity produced by the improvement of communications with inland Spain since 1863. Nonetheless, this lower ageing ratio of the male active population did not in itself help the agricultural economy of inland Galicia in the medium term to shrug off the yoke of its limitations. There were other factors that hindered its development, such as the maintenance of a given structure of land ownership and agricultural work, the weakness of the economic sectors not linked to the land or the intrinsically low consumption of a largely un-

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urbanised and predominantly rural society. This is borne out by the existence of only four towns and cities in the whole region or the fact that 94% of the males censused here were employed in agricultural work, under a system that had hardly undergone any substantial changes in the last decades. In this context it is easy to understand why, notwithstanding the profits being chalked up by the marketing of Ribeiro wine in Spain or the exports of cattle to England and inland Spain, it still proved difficult to modernise Galicia’s farming systems in the last third of the nineteenth century. The fact is that these profits were never lasting and could never be properly harnessed in a world characterised by such a hidebound agrarian set-up 30.

In short, and by way of conclusion, the three factors explaining the slow and idiosyncratic socio-economic modernisation of Galicia’s rural world in particular and its society in general until well after 1877 were its old-fashioned productive structures, ageing of the active population and emigration to the Americas. Likewise, from a cultural point of view, this progressive ageing, together with the tactics elderly used to safeguard their future, explain the social pre-eminence of elderly people in Galicia both before and after 1877. We trust we will be able to deal with these questions in future works.