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What is This?
Elderly, Family, and Age Support in Rural Galicia at the End of the Ancien Régime

Isidro Dubert

Abstract

The attempt to ascertain the form and nature of familial age support in the past or, what comes to the same thing, the real degree of dependence or independence of the elderly vis-à-vis their families, relatives, and close ones, has led to a huge controversy among historians. But, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in rural areas otherwise as disparate as those of Galicia, inland Spain, Navarre, south Italy, preindustrial England or rural Belgium, the social, and economic functions in relation to age support within the household showed themselves capable of adapting to suit the particular needs of the different type of families prevailing in each one. This adaptation capacity in turn bore a close relationship to the greater or lesser role played by elderly household heads in the social and familial reproduction processes occurring in their home areas.

Keywords

elderly, old age, family and age support, social and family reproduction

Galicia is a region lying in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. Its area of 30,000 km² accounts for 5 percent of the Spanish territory. Its coastal and inland regions have always differed greatly throughout history in terms of population trend, types of agriculture, family patterns, or degree of urbanization. From 1787 to 1877, 90–93 percent of the population settled in rural areas and only 7–10 percent lived in the twenty-two small town and cities scattered unevenly around the territory. In this context, eight of the ten households in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were headed by a peasant farmer; these families usually ran smallholdings with an average size of 1.3 hectares, made up in turn of several plots of land often a fairly long way from each other. The leading social and family role played by smallholders in Galicia’s history is obvious; they managed to survive by means of subsistence farming backed up by complementary activities and a practice of seasonal or multiannual labor migration.

The rural regions of inland Galicia are located more than 500 m above sea level and from 1750 to 1870 they included only one city (Lugo) and one small town (Monforte de Lemos). The rural world surrounding them was characterized by low-population densities (27 inhabitants per square

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kilometer in 1752; 40 in 1860), and a scattered settlement pattern made up by small hamlets. Its inhabitant farmers practised a type of agriculture based on the cultivation of rye interspersed with fallow periods on farms with an average size of 2.5 hectares; this agriculture produced only a single harvest each year. To survive on this conditions, it was necessary the exploitation of scrubland, where 25 percent of the total harvest came from, the care of a large number of livestock and carrying out seasonal or short-term labor migrations to neighbouring Castilla plus top-up trades (rope-making, clothes-making, pottery, etc.). The technical backwardness of this agriculture and the tiny patchwork farms, made up by an average of forty plots, together with the social implications of a nonegalitarian inheritance system, in part explain the traditional importance of stem family. Between 1752 and 1860–1869, 40–45 percent of families in the heartland of inland Galicia took this form, although in inland Galicia as a whole this figure fell to about 30–33 percent.²

Agricultural practices were different in the coastal areas, in the intermediate valleys and the regions leading to the uplands plus the current province of Ourense. For example, along the Miño and Sil rivers, lying to the north of the abovementioned province of Ourense, there was a predominance of viticulture. In the western and northern coastal territories, a subsistence polyculture was practiced, based on a complex rotation system on farms of between 1 and 1.5 hectares, which guaranteed at least three harvests every two years. Although the absence of any fallow stages and keeping of livestock on the farms made them more productive than those of inland Galicia, the reality was that the farm tenure holders and their children were forced to eke out their income by working on the most varied clutch of complementary activities and also embarking on seasonal or long-term labor migration to the cities of inland Spain, Portugal, and Andalusia. After 1730, this labor migration began to increase as the smallholding system hit its productive ceiling. This led to a progressive harshening of the living conditions and continued to worsen as the end of the eighteenth century approached.³ Even so, this part of the region remained the most densely populated, (87 inhabitants per square kilometer in 1787; 114 in 1860), and the most highly urbanized of Galicia, containing as it did seventeen of the region’s twenty-two towns and cities. All in all, despite the growing economic problems in the area as from 1730, or perhaps precisely because of them, between 1752 and 1860, the complex-type households—that is to say, the sum of extended and multiple family households—rose from 23 percent to 30 percent of the total. Elderly household heads played a key role here, redesigning family reproduction strategies to suit their needs.⁴

From 1752 to 1860, the number of people aged 60 years or above in Galicia made up 6–7 percent of the total population. This figure tallies with that of England, Portugal, and Italy at the same time but is lower than that of France, which was the oldest of the whole continent with a figure of 8–11 percent of the total population.⁵ Despite their fairly modest share of the total population, however, the Galician elderly played a key role in their families and in society as a whole. In the mid-eighteenth century, one of the every five Galician households was headed by a person aged sixty or over; only one hundred years later, this proportion had risen to almost one in four (23.4 percent in 1752; 24.8 percent in 1860).

The general classification of the persons aged sixty or over as “elderly” at that time is no arbitrary decision. A study of the information contained in historical sources of the most varied nature bears this out. For example, the Diccionario de Autoridades of 1726–1739, the fiscal criteria used by the officers of the Secretaría de Hacienda (Finance Ministry) in charge of drawing up the 1752 Catastro de Ensenada, nineteenth-century hospital- and hospice-admission rules and the criteria used in drawing up the population census of 1920, all confirm that the contemporaries of that time took an elderly person to be someone of about sixty.⁶ This sociocultural perception of old age was no doubt closely bound up with the fact that the average life expectancy of the Spanish had always been below 40 until 1920.

In the following pages, we will study the whys and wherefores of age support arrangements in Galician rural society at the end of the Ancien Régime, ascertaining how they worked and the
implications thereof. To do so, we will tap into the information contained in the 20,721 households from the 311 parishes that were chosen in a random and systematic sampling of the almost 3,660 rural parishes that existed in Galicia in 1752.\(^7\) We will also draw from the information on the residents in 1,941 households belonging to 37 rural parishes in the current municipalities of Lugo, Arzúa, and Ordes during the 1860s, which were chosen on the basis of the regional results obtained in 1752. In this specific case, the limited size of the sample is more than made up for by the considerable improvement in the quality of the information it contains, giving a greater depth to our analysis. This body of documents, together with the data offered by Floridablanca’s 1787 census and the population censuses of 1877 and 1887, will allow us to study the form, effectiveness, and implications of the age support arrangements in rural Galicia between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and compare them with other European regions of the time.

The Family as Age Support

The historical study of familial and social age support was tackled by European researchers in the 1980s and 1990s, coinciding with a moment when population ageing was looming as a real socio-demographic problem in the researchers’ respective countries. For example, people aged sixty and over in France at this time were about 17–18 percent of the total population, in England about 16–17 percent, in Spain 19 percent, and in Italy 20 percent.

The attempt to ascertain the form and nature of familial age support in the past or, what comes to the same thing, the real degree of dependence or independence of the elderly vis-à-vis their families and close ones led to a huge controversy among English-speaking historians. Authors like Peter Laslett, Richard M. Smith, and David Thomson based their theories on the historical predominance of nuclear families, a postmarriage neolocal residence pattern, a late-marrying age, and institutions such as the life cycle servant, drawing the conclusion that family bonds in preindustrial England were fairly lax in terms of caring for elderly parents and dealing with their problems. To put it another way, they argued that, once married, children who left the family home at an early age seldom returned to the household to live with and look after their elderly parents. Neither, they claimed, did these emancipated children take in their parents in their own homes when age enfeebled them critically. They therefore concluded that most of the English elderly had lived out the last part of their life span on their own in their homes. Under these circumstances, they insisted, it was the local community that took care of them under the various arrangements set up the Poor Laws of 1601, such as parish-based relief or sending them to workhouses or similar asylums.\(^8\)

This historical interpretation was replied, among others, by B. Reay, who in the mid-nineties argued that the familial age-support claims of Peter Laslett or R. M. Smith were based on an over-estimation of the percentage, size, and makeup of nuclear families recorded in the English list of inhabitants. The structural character of these sources and their results, as well as the exclusive focussing on information relating to the members of households headed by the elderly, had led them to overlook in their analysis the importance that in care terms of social and family relations of a horizontal character that the elderly themselves maintained with the relatives, close friends, and acquaintances living in neighbouring households or in the more or less immediate area.\(^9\) These relations, moreover, served as the fabric for social networks that had contributed to the historical constitution of the English society as a whole.\(^10\) Merely by taking this into account, the aforementioned Peter Laslett and R. M. Smith would have avoided to associate a specific family type, the nuclear family, with given some social and economic functions in terms of family support, especially when these functions had shown themselves to be flexible and adaptable to the specific needs of the various types of family existing in the different historical European contexts.

Thus, despite the predominance of nuclear families in the English rural world, the truth is that the elderly were rarely alone. As well as living with their own children or respective spouses—or even
when living completely alone—they were always backed up by a network of aid, support, and fellowship born from the close bonds of kinship and neighbourliness they had forged throughout their lives with everyone living around them. This network did not generally feature in the list of inhabitants used in studying the history of the family. A telling point here is that throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, 82 percent of the household heads of various rural parishes of the County of Kent had most of their relatives living within a radius of 9 km. Likewise, in the mid-nineteenth century, 60 percent of the household heads of the small village of Terling bore some sort of kinship with each other; this percentage was 50 percent in the rural parish of Claybrooke in 1841.¹¹

We have just mentioned the flexible way in which social and economic age support systems within households were changed to suit the needs of different types of families in the most varied European historical contexts. There is no more telling instance of this than in rural northwest Spain during the eighteenth century. Take the example of Tierra de Montes, a region in the southwest of Galicia, where 45 percent of the young people who got married in the 1740s continued to live in their home parish afterward, and only 4.3 percent of the household heads had no married son or daughter living within the same parish.¹² Much the same could be said of the Galician district of Celanova, on the western border of the current province of Ourense, where 61 percent of married daughters and 55 percent of married sons settled down just after their marriage in the same village in which their parents lived.¹³ When young Galicians left their parental home, therefore, this did not necessarily entail a breaking of family bonds as a result of distance, nor did it entail excessive distances from their parents. This suggests that the parents’ relationships with their emancipated offspring would have been quite intense.

Nonetheless, the intensity of parent–children relationships can hardly be explained solely in terms of a specific civilizing trait proper to societies of southern Europe and its particular materialisation in the pattern of social and family life in rural Galicia.¹⁴ In this case, on the contrary, these intense parent–children relationships would seem to bear a close relationship to the prevalence in Galicia’s socioproductive system of a peasantry lifestyle closely linked to the vicissitudes of smallholding-based farming during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The quit-rent tenure and productive shortfalls—intensive subsistence polyculture and seasonal and temporary labor migrations included—encouraged a form of social and family reproduction based on the accumulation of family labor within the farm as the head of the household aged.¹⁵ This explains such predominant features as the late-marrying pattern of the children, the high rate women’s never-married, the relative importance of the complex-type households, the importance of postmortem hereditary transfers or the central role built up by the elderly in the strategies of land accumulation and assignment to the members of the younger generations.¹⁶

Along the same lines, the age support arrangements in the countryside of Murcia—in southeast Spain—during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also seemed to owe little to a specific overall civilizing pattern. Rather did they seem to be clearly the result of the ad hoc response of individuals and their families to the factors arising from a given land ownership structure and a type of farming bearing very little resemblance to the Galician one. Southeast Spain, after all, was characterized by an agricultural system of extensive dryfarming with low yields per hectare based on a huge workforce of exclusively day laborers. At the end of the eighteenth century, 2.2 percent of the households employed on their land 82 percent of the local families. This social majority were smallholders so they had to eke out their income with complementary work on common land, seasonal agricultural work, or the most varied assortment of auxiliary crafts. In this situation, social and family reproduction developed in the context of high rates of mortality, a low female marrying age (22-23 years old in 1787–1881), a neolocal postmarriage residence pattern, a relatively egalitarian inheritance system among the offspring and the exclusive predominance of nuclear family forms (86–87 percent of total households from 1752 to 1887). As is know, that simple family accounted for percentages of over 80 percent among household heads aged sixty and over, who, for their part, hardly averaged two persons per household.¹⁷
But we should not run away with the idea that people who lived to an old age ended up alone and aidless. At this level, the family-based age-support situation in southeast Spain must have been very similar to the general care picture in other Mediterranean areas, such as the Balearic Islands or central and southern Italy. The dearth of complex-type households among the great mass of Murcia’s day laborers, only 2.2 percent of the total, and also of solitary households, 10 percent of the total, shifted the responsibility of care provide to elderly parents on the residential proximity of their married children, neighbours, and close ones. The fact that these children, relatives, and friends lived so close to them meant that these parents could live with outright residential independence for quite some time. This situation differed greatly, as we will see below, from the close cohabitation that most of the elderly household heads in northwest Spain kept up with their children, children-in-law, and grandchildren.

This adaptation of family-based age-support arrangements to the particular situation arising from the land ownership structure or predominant type of agriculture was not exclusive to the Iberian Peninsula. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century examples have also been unearthed in various rural areas of Belgium, the central and north of Italy, the Austrian Alps or in agricultural regions of eastern Europe on the Baltic seaboard. In all these sites, it has been demonstrated that the nature and form of the cohabitation between elderly parents and their children was closely related to the particular pattern that in each case sociofamilial reproduction carried on. The medium-term development of this situation was heavily influenced by the decisions and strategies pursued by the elderly household heads to ensure their full residential, familial, and social independence.

Dependence and Independence of the Elderly in Rural Galicia

From the mid-eighteenth century to the last third of the nineteenth century, 80–82 percent of the elderly in the various rural areas of Galicia remained at the head of their own households (82 percent in 1752; 80 percent in 1860–1869). Of these, 50–54 percent lived with their spouses (49.5 percent in 1752; 54.0 percent in 1860–1869), while only 7–8 percent of the elderly lived alone on a day-to-day basis (8.2 percent in 1752; 7.0 percent in 1860–1869).

These figures bear out the high degree of residential autonomy of people aged sixty and over in Galician society of the time. Mutual husband-and-wife care was considered at that time to be par for the course, just as natural as marriage itself, so care proffered by spouses is not strictly comparable with the support provided by a relative or friend. Nonetheless, both husband and wife would often remind their offspring of their duty to look after them in their old age. Whether strictly comparable or not, however, the fact is that mutual interspouse support afforded them, *prima facie*, an independence vis-à-vis the family and the community at large; this form of independence has been dubbed by some authors as “self-help.” A good idea of its significance and importance can be gained from the mutual-benefit provisions laid down by husband and wife in testaments, donations, agreements, or assignments, to which Galician historians have paid no little attention. Over and beyond this specific fact, however, the really striking feature is that the degree of residential autonomy and independence of Galicia’s elderly bore such a close similarity, at least from the statistical point of view, to the recorded situation of the elderly of rural Belgium and preindustrial England. In the latter, for example, 80 percent of them headed their own households, living with their spouses on 52–55 percent of the occasions and alone in 9–10 percent of the cases. Everything would therefore seem to suggest that in rural Galicia, as in the abovementioned cases of England and Belgium, such arrangements as the rotation of the elderly around the houses of their children to guarantee them a minimum level of care, or the children living on with them for one, two or three years postmarriage for the same purpose, would have had only anecdotal significance.

It is clear that in all these countries, the prevailing social norm in the family sphere was that the elderly should live in an independent way, alone or in company, but at the head of their own...
households. Despite the differences that existed among the aforementioned countries on a demographic, productive, or family level, it is obvious that in their respective societies old age by no means the social demise of the elderly, given that it was customary for them to remain at the head of the household. In the particular case of Galicia, theirs households comprised an average of 4 to 5 people. At this level, the differences between Galicia’s situation and that of England, for example, resided in the unequal intensity of children’s cohabitation with their parents. The figures available for three rural parishes of the County of Kent in the second half of the nineteenth century bear this out: 45–56 percent of those over sixty-fives had children still living with them, while 28–37 percent of them lived alone or only with their spouse. In Galicia, instead, in six parishes of the current municipality of Trazo in 1869, 84 percent of those over 65 lived with their offspring or a relative and only 16 percent lived alone or with their spouse. Further inland, in nine Galician parishes of the municipality of Arzúa, the relevant figures were, respectively, 94 percent and 6 percent in 1860, and for this same year in twenty-two parishes of the municipality of Lugo, the percentages were 97 percent and 3 percent.

This figures show that in rural Galicia, the responsibility for maintaining family-based age support for elderly parents fell first and foremost on the children and, to a much lesser degree, on relatives such as nephews and nieces, grandchildren, or siblings. Evidenced by the fact that at least 80 percent of the households headed by those over 60 in 1752 or in 1860–1869 (23–24 percent of the total) included at least one son or daughter (80.3 percent in 1752; 85.6 percent in 1860–1869). In the mid-eighteenth century, 85 percent of these offspring were single with an equal sexual breakdown between men and women. One hundred and ten years later, singles represented 77 percent of the resident offspring and the equal sexual breakdown held steady.

Figures 1 and 2 show how the number of single offspring in households tended to fall once the head of the household had passed the fifty-year threshold, whereupon the married offspring with their spouses and own descendants began to take over the reins. The gradual abandonment of the household by the single offspring is explained basically by their desire to get married and start their own families. Nonetheless, we should not be misled by this apparent substitution of one kind offspring by another, as ostensibly shown by these figures, since the normal situation was for the married sons and daughters and their respective descendants to live under the same roof as the single sons and daughters. Calculation of the family space occupied by both inside the households based
on the age of the head of the household, shows us that their relative importance increased beyond the age of 55 to 59 years, until they ended up accounting for 58–67 percent of said family space (Figures 1 and 2). True it is that, as from a head-of-the-household ages of 55 to 59, the married sons and daughters, their spouses and own offspring took on a more prominent role within the households, but it is no less true that, taken as a whole, the household heads aged 60 and over always had with them more than one single child (mean of 1.64 in 1752; mean of 1.61 in 1860–1869). This situation was possible thanks to the combined effect of low adult mortality rates, a late age at marriage for parents and children—delaying the moment of the latter leaving the household until the former had reached an advanced age—and the moment at which the last child was born, as a general rule when the mother had reached the age of 40.\textsuperscript{27}

In this context, it is understandable that the average age of single offspring still living with their sixty and over parents in 1860–1869 was 23 years old. In other words, on the assumption that the head of the household and his spouse reached the age of 60 at the same time, these children would have been engendered when they were both 37. Furthermore, the figures for 1860–1869 shows that once the parents had clocked up sixty, these single offspring normally started to get married three years later, if they were women, and about six years or more later if they were men. In any case, the above mentioned figure of 23 years old is seven years more than those reported by young single persons still living with their elderly parents in certain rural parishes of preindustrial rural England.\textsuperscript{28}

The logical conclusion to draw, therefore, is that, as the progenitors aged in rural Galicia, the presence of single offspring of both sexes in their households was beneficial to them in terms of support and also economically, particularly, in helping to increase the output of the smallholdings they ran. Between 1752 and 1869, the growing trend of married children, their own spouses and children living in households headed by over sixties (28.5 percent of the total in 1752; 46 percent in 1860–1869) meant, logically, that they took up a larger family space as the head of the household aged (Figures 1 and 2). By the mid-eighteenth century, parents showed a clear preference for cohabiting with their married sons rather than their married daughters; this preference also increased with the years (58.4 percent of cases in 1752; 79.4 percent in 1860–1869).

The growing importance of this sort of cohabitation arrangements during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century is closely bound up with the leading role played by the elderly in the reorganisation of the peasants’ traditional social and familial reproduction strategies to deal with the
agricultural-cattle crises happened at the end of the Ancien Régime and adverse weather conditions experienced in Galicia from 1852 to 1858.\textsuperscript{29} Peasant families and their makeup were heavily affected by the successive disentailments of church mortmain property from 1836 to 1854, the setting up of the new taxation system in 1845 and the cycles of heavy rainfall from 1852 to 1858. The upshot was the further delaying of the already late age of generational takeover of married children at the head of the farms, as well as boosting the sixty and over parent’s preference for keeping with them their married sons rather than their daughters. Likewise, the increasing importance of this type of cohabitation is bound up with the greater inclination of the inhabitants of inland rural areas of Galicia to resort to the use of patrilineal succession arrangements than those situated on the coastal districts.\textsuperscript{30} Hence, the fact that in the 1860s in the parishes of the current municipality of Trazo, to the north of the city of Santiago de Compostela, 64 percent of the parents preferred to keep their married sons in their homes rather than their married daughters, whereas the percentage was 77 percent a little further inland in Arzúa, and 85 percent deep inland in Lugo.

In any case, a good idea of the productive potential of this coresidence arrangement between elderly parents and married offspring is given by the fact that in 1860–1869, the mean reported age of the latter was 37.5, and also that the 2.5 children they had on average provided crucial labor support for running the farm successfully. Although we have no hard information on the age of married sons and daughters living at home in 1752, the few figures to hand suggest that both their age and family situation probably did not differ much from the situation in the 1860s, judging from the fact that each of these couples now had an average of 2.2 children.

The married children living on at home, broken down into sons and daughters, show a very different distribution among the different sectors of the peasantry. The coresidence with their progenitors also took different nature. Witness the fact that in rural Galicia of 1860, among copyholders aged sixty and over, living-in sons outnumbered daughters by 79–21 percent, whereas among the leaseholders this figure rose to 99.5 percent, dropping right down to 30 percent among the day laborers. This concern of the elderly household heads of the least favored social groups of the peasantry to keep their married daughters at home with them into old age, indicates to us the nature of welfare this particular sort of cohabitation would have taken on. This was largely due to the effects of the prominence achieved by the presence of women as household heads among those groups: 44 percent of the total cases as against 17–18 percent of the women who took on this responsibility among copyholders and leaseholders.

If we look at the difficult material circumstances of the unfolding life of the laborers, we will easily understand how hard it was for them to muster a dowry to marry off their daughters. This factor, together with the modest scale of their farms, tended to bring forward the age at which the young males left the household, with a concomitant delay in the departure age of the young women. That is was so is indicated by the average of single daughters with respect to the total children of the same state living in the households of sixty and over year-old heads in 1860–1869: 57 percent among the day laborers and 47–48 percent among the copyholders and leaseholders. It is also this systematic abandonment of the household by the young males at an early age what helps us to explain the fact that the joint presence of single sons and daughters in the families of the day laborers was only 1.3 individuals per household, while among copyholders it was 1.8 and among the leaseholders 1.5.

Despite these differences, nothing seems to suggest that the elderly were alone or isolated either at the peak or base of the social pyramid of rural Galicia. There is also nothing to suggest that the phenomenon described by some researchers in certain countries in the north and northwest of Europe as “the empty nest syndrome” occurred with the passing of the years. This syndrome, as we know, arises from the systematic abandonment of the household by the children, either to work in domestic service or to get married and start their own family, in accordance with neolocal postmarriage residence patterns.\textsuperscript{31}
As against this 80–82 percent of elderly peasants living at the head of their own households in rural Galicia, hardly 18–20 percent of them went to live in the home of a child or relative, in 5–6 percent of the total families counted in 1752 or in 1860–1869.\textsuperscript{32} Seventy percent to 72 percent of those taken in were women and, despite common claims to the contrary, their presence inside the households was far from being a direct consequence of the pressure wielded by descendants to take over control thereof. This is borne out by the fact that in 1860–1869 only 49.3 percent of these women were mothers or mothers-in-law of the head of the household, this figure rising to only 54.7 percent if fathers and fathers-in-law are brought into the equation. This means that little less than half of the coresident elderly bore a relationship with the head of the household other than parental or maternal. Thus, and continuing to delve into this 1860 decade, we find that 27.6 percent of these coresidents were collateral relatives of the same generation as the head of the household, seven of the ten of whom were male. Some way behind come the 5.1 percent who turned out to be collateral relatives of the former generation, that is, uncles or aunts, women outnumbering men here by three to one, while 10 percent of these elderly persons bore no direct relationship to the person running the household.

Percentages aside, the appearance of these elderly persons in the households was irregular, to be explained both by their successive and gradual death and also the classic development of the family formation cycles. The subsequent generational changeover, with the sons taking over the reins of the farm, and the eventual decease of the elderly coresident, explain the presence of these taken-in elderly in 8.5 percent of the families headed by people in the 30-35 age bracket and in only 2.4 percent of those run by 50 to 59 year olds. Similarly, the taking in and systematic demise of uncles, aunts, siblings, and siblings-in-law, explain the fact that they featured in 9.3 percent of households run by heads aged 65 to 69 and only in 2.8 percent of those who had reached the age of 80.

In sum, as household heads or dependents, Galicia’s elderly were supported by a kin network make up, first and foremost, by the close ties that bound them to their offspring. This network arose largely from the strategies designed to maintain the viability of a smallholding in a subsistence farming economy. The tenure holders developed different formulae of social and familial reproduction that encouraged the widespread cohabitation of individuals from different generations under the same roof. In most cases, these individuals were submitted to the authority of an elderly petrucio (head of the family).

\textbf{Intergenerational Cohabitation: Intensity and Implications}

Bearing in mind that between 1787 and 1887, the age at marriage for women in rural Galicia was 25 to 26 years and the men’s ranged from 26 to 29, it then turns out that the three to four parents that on average were present at 45–53 percent of the weddings of their respective firstborn child were aged between 55 and 60 at the time of the marriage, with an average 11 to 12 years left to live.\textsuperscript{33} Under these conditions, as in other European regions where a late-marrying pattern was prevailed, there should also be here a clear cohabitation between individuals of different generations.\textsuperscript{34} The childhood, adolescence, and early youth of minors who managed to stave off the various pitfalls of death, this cohabitation were clearly marked by the paternal and maternal presence, given that about 50 percent of the marriages reached 25 years of unbroken duration.\textsuperscript{35} Taken together with the importance of complex-type households in northwest Spain, that cohabitation was marked by the narrow relationship that it existed among grandparent–grandchildren. In fact, their coresidence tended to intensify over the years: in 1752 grandparents and grandchildren coincided in 13.5 percent of the households, whereas this figure had risen to 18.5 percent by the 1860s.

This long-standing presence of the progenitors at the helm of the households had a great influence in all areas of development of family life. For example, the children experienced, to a greater or lesser degree, paternal influence on the choice of their spouses, especially the young people belonging
to the wealthy sectors of the peasantry. Furthermore, the life together of parents and children often ended up as intergenerational cohabitation, affording significant advantages to the former. We have already mentioned the case of married children and their own offspring helping out on the smallholdings until very late ages of the household heads and this arrangement also guaranteed them age support as old-age beckoned. As might be expected, therefore the elderly had a strong capacity to influence the social and familial reproduction processes in the Galicia of the time.

As regards this intergenerational cohabitation, the normal situation from the mid-eighteenth to last third of the nineteenth century was that individuals from three or more generations were living together in 16.3 percent of Galician households. From a statistical point of view, this percentage doubled, and even tripled, the figure recorded in other zones of northwest Europe, quintupled the figures recorded in certain regions of southeast Spain and it is three or four times lower than the percentages registered in eastern Europe (Table 1). Broadly speaking, these differences are explained by a particular combination of demographic and socioeconomic factors. In eastern Europe, for example, the effects of a high-pressure demographic model, an early age at marriage and a patrilocal postmarriage residence pattern in a context of prevailing Feudalism impinged directly on the peasants’ forms of social and familial reproduction, thus favoring the appearance of households harboring individuals from at least three generations in one of the two or three occasions. In the regions of northwest Europe, conversely, the existence of a low-pressure demographic model, a late-marrying pattern and a neolocal pattern of family formation in a socioeconomic context of late Feudalism made it much more unlikely to find persons from three different generations living in the same household (Table 1).

In the regions of western Europe, however, the weight of ecological factors on the development of agriculture and farming practices, or aspects such as the sociodemographic response of the population to the predominance of this or that landowning structure, could give rise to changes in the rules of family formation that affected the likeliness of different generations living together under the same roof. Obvious examples are to be found in northwest Europe, southeast Spain, rural Galicia, or the small peasant communities of the Alps or Pyrenees. Furthermore, the two above-mentioned factors—the weight of the ecological factors on the development of farming practices and the sociodemographic response of the population—help us in turn to understand the events at this level in eastern Europe (Table 1).

These variations in the intensity of intergenerational cohabitation were also recorded even within the same European region. Take the example of mid-eighteenth-century Galicia. We have already seen that the inland rural communities, where 45.1 percent of the families were stem family and survived from and agricultural economy based on cultivation of rye interspersed with fallow periods on farms of an average size of 2.5 hectares, the exploitation of scrubland, the care of a large number of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percent complex</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>10–17</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: For Galicia, Catastro de Ensenada, 1752, and Municipal Registers of Arzúa, Lugo, Trazo, 1860-9. Drawn up by author. For Murcia, Martínez Carrión et al., 1989, 80. For Latvia (Daudzewas), Plakans, 1975, 30. For England, France (Longuenesse and Hallines) and Russia (Mishino), Laslett, 1977, 23. For northwest France see also A. Burguière, 1993, 30.
livestock and carrying out seasonal or short-term labor migrations to neighboring Castilla plus top-up trades. Here, 23.3 percent of the households contained individuals from three or more generations. This percentage owes much to the prevailing forms of patrilocal inheritance formulae in the area, especially among the medium and high sectors of the peasantry, with the intention of safeguarding the unit and viability of the peasant farm, la casa. The same did not obtain in the other parts of the region, whose farming, family, and succession models had very little resemblance to those holding sway inland.

Such was the case, for example, of the Galician southwest rural communities. Here, only 22.9 percent of the families were complex and they ran smallholdings with an average size of 1.1–1.5 hectares. Although these farms, on the strength of a multicrop subsistence farming system, produced up to three harvests a year, from the 1730s onward they proved incapable of satisfying the population’s staple needs. As the eighteenth century progressed, therefore, the local residents were forced to fall back on an increasingly varied clutch of complementary peasant activities while also emigrating to Castilla, Andalusia, or Portugal on a temporary or seasonal basis and resorting to succession arrangements that enabled them to give form to their social reproduction strategies in each different economics situations. Small wonder in this context, therefore, that the number of households in 1752 with individuals from three or more generations represented only 13.3 percent of the total, fully ten percentage points below the figure for inland Galicia.

In sum, the different levels of intergenerational cohabitation found in the various Galician rural areas in the mid-eighteenth century are to be broadly explained by the combined effect of the different types of farming practices in each geographical context and the particular demographic and familial responses that the population came up with to deal with the constraints arising therefrom. On the other hand, it should be noted that the intensity of this cohabitation and also the number of complex and stem families were both affected by the social variable.

A good example of this is to be found in the different incidence of individuals from three or more generations living under the same roof in the 1860s when we break down the peasant society into copyholders, leaseholders, and day laborers (Table 3). As we have already shown in previous studies, these differences were fruit of the materialization of social and familial reproduction strategies in which the elderly played a decisive role, even though these strategies differed in each class of the peasantry considered. In fact, the intensity of intergenerational cohabitation tend to decrease as we move from the better off sectors of rural society, the copyholders, to the most disfavored, the day laborers (Table 3).

Galicia’s was a markedly peasant society with a predominantly oral culture, so the intergenerational cohabitation is also a crucial factor for understanding the medium- and long-term changes and constants in the transmission of roles, values, and sociocultural behavior patterns. Much of the information passed down from the grandparents to their grandchildren in the course of this cohabitation formed part in turn of a collective memory of time-honored customs to do with land boundaries, farming techniques, rights of way, and other customs of social life, whose custody, by tradition, was the responsibility of the elders. If disputes ever came to court it was their word that prevailed, since they could cast their minds back two or three generations to the origin of the dispute, invoking their own memory of what their fathers, grandfathers, or older working companions had told them in their childhood and youth. The values passed on by the grandparents to their grandchildren included the keys to the family memory, which are known to underpin the social and working personality of the individual concerned. A crucial role here was played by the various references their grandchildren would have received in their childhood and adolescence about the causes and consequences of kinship, marital alliances, or personal and occupational affiliations that their families and relatives had maintained or established with the other members of the community.
Studies and the facts to hand have shown that family memory in rural Galicia was broad in the horizontal plane (due to the close cohabitation between relatives of the same generation in the small peasant communities), deep in the vertical plane (given the abovementioned ability to delve back in the past), and lasting (giving there an aspect over the passing of memories on, thanks, for example, to the hard and fast relationship between grandparents and grandchildren; Tables 1 and 2). Perhaps, the best and quickest way of grasping this breadth, depth, and forward projection is to look at the number of individuals living in households of three or more generations as a percentage of the total population. In 1752, these individuals were 20 percent of the total inhabitants of rural Galicia, highlighting in this regard the inland areas, where the figure rose to 29 percent of the total, whereas in the rest of the Galician’s regions their share ranged from 14 percent to 21 percent of the total. By the 1860s, on the other hand, they represented 26 percent of the Galicians, without the incidence having changed over the one-hundred-year period in inland districts, still with 28 percent of their inhabitants living in households of three or more generations.

It seems clear that the factors that helped define the nature of the family memory in Galicia since 1752 tended to strengthen in the medium term. We know this from the fact that the number of people residing in households of three or more generations rose from 20 percent of the population in 1752 to 26 percent by 1860–1869. This development owed much to the aforementioned leading role of the elderly in the changes made to the social and familial reproduction strategies. Along the same lines, the figures recorded in Table 3 remind us that, as elsewhere in Europe, the aforementioned degree of breadth, depth, and forward projection of family memory depended also on the social position of the person involved. In a peasant society like Galicia’s this was normally bound up with the depth and breadth of the roots thrown down by the households in the rural communities.48

### Table 2. Number of Generations Living Together in the Households of Rural Galicia, 1752

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generations</th>
<th>Galicia</th>
<th>Inland</th>
<th>Cantabrian</th>
<th>Ourense</th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>Southeast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td>20.721</td>
<td>2.919</td>
<td>2.785</td>
<td>5.153</td>
<td>6.623</td>
<td>3.241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% complex households</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Catastro de Ensenada of 1752. Drawn up by author.

### Table 3. Number of Generations in the Households of Rural Galicia, 1860–1869

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generations</th>
<th>Copyholders</th>
<th>Leaseholders</th>
<th>Day Laborers</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>18.3</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 of cases</td>
<td>1.447</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>1.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% complex households</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Old Age, Life Phases, and the Family Cycle

The fact that cohabitation between individuals of three or more generations involved from a fifth to one-quarter of the Galician population between 1752 and 1869 reminds us once more that solitude by no means went hand in hand with old age in northwest Spain. A study of household size in terms of the ages of those who lived in them throughout the 1860s shows that in rural Galicia the over sixties lived in families numbering 5.6 on average, whether as household heads or in a situation of open dependence on their children, relatives, or more or less close members of the community. These families, moreover, were only slightly smaller than those in which these elderly members had grown up during their childhood and adolescence (Figure 3). As already pointed out, this was largely due to the combined existence of a late-marriage pattern, the high-rate people never-married, the relative importance of patrilocal postmarriage residence patterns, and low mortality rates.

At the same date, in the rural regions of inland Spain or northern Europe with a prevalence of nuclear families built up on a neolocal basis thanks to a late-marrying model—as for example in rural Belgium—, individuals aged sixty and over lived in households whose average size was less than that of their childhood homes (Figure 3). This reason is none other than the gradual abandonment of children from the parental home to get married once the head of the household had exceeded the age of 50. At this level, that abandonment contrasts sharply with the social and familial logic prevailing in Galicia. Here, for the reasons already pointed out, these family sizes tended to grow slightly once the household head passed the age of fifty, as a direct result of the intense and growing coresidence between household heads maintained with their single children and their married son or daughter living at home with their own offspring (Figures 3, 5, and 6).

In Galicia, as in any other part of Europe, the different demographic circumstances and variables already referred to—marrying age, rate people never-married, mortality rate—impinging on the size and makeup of the family in a different way depending on the social class involved. Hence, the uneven size of the households in which the elderly spent their old age among the various classes of the peasantry. Even so, it is a curious fact that, broadly speaking, all of them saw their size household grow once they had passed sixty, and likewise the fact that these sizes were only slightly lower than those they had had in their own childhood (Figure 4). Tenant farmers are the exception to this rule. In their case, the over sixties lived in households on average two members fewer than those they

Figure 3. Average household size during the lifetime of individuals in Inland Spain, Rural Galicia, and Rural Belgium. Source: For Rural Galicia, municipal registers of Arzúa, Lugo, Trazo, 1860–1869. Drawn up by author. For inland Spain, D. S. Reher, 1996, 137. For Rural Belgium, Neven, 2003, 168–9.
spent their youth in, while their size also tended to shrink as the over sixties aged further. Even so, they still lived in these households with an average of five individuals (Figure 4).

Despite the clear differences between the evolution showed by the average size of the households in which the elderly lived in rural Galicia and in inland Spain, it does not necessarily follow that the elderly of inland Spain lived the last moments of their life in utter solitude; even at advanced ages, their households were still made up by more than 2 individuals (Figure 3). Furthermore, in a world dominated by nuclear families, if the inhabitants of inland Spain got married at the age of 24 to 26 and the women’s maximum child-bearing age was 40, then the parents would be about 65 to 69 by the time the last of these children left the parental home.50 The family fellowship deriving from this parent–children living pattern would therefore in all likelihood be similar to the situation in those parts of the north and northwest of Europe where the nuclear family also enjoyed a prominent role.51 This means that the elderly of inland Spain would have enjoyed, as it were, a network of support and solidarity that prevented them from having to suffer the worst hardships arising from abandonment and poverty. They hence benefited from the care and attention of their married sons and daughters, relatives, neighbours, friends, and other members of the community that lived in the immediate vicinity of their homes, thus remaining at the head of their families in a situation of residential independence that gave away only to advanced age.

In any case, as in other European regions with a clear predominance of the nuclear family, such as rural England, the countryside of Murcia, the south of Italy or rural Belgium, there are very few recorded cases of elderly people living completely alone in inland Spain. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century in many of this geographical regions, only 10 percent of these over sixties are recorded as living alone; this percentage did however increase in all these areas as the age increased even more. In rural Belgium, for example, from 20 percent to 35 percent of over seventies were living alone at the head of their households, albeit with the support and care of children, relatives, friends, or neighbours.52 In short, nothing here resembled the close cohabitation maintained in their homes by the elderly of rural Galicia with their single and married children and respective sons- and daughters-in-law and grandchildren (Figures 1 and 2).

The relative intensification of this supposed “solitude” as one aged in the abovementioned regions bears a close relationship to the development in many of them of a family cycle in the 25 to 49 age bracket of the head of the household that determined the existence of up to 90 percent of the nuclear-type cohabitation formulae with respect to the total number of households falling in this age bracket. Nonetheless, these formulae lost relevance fairly quickly after the age of 50, so that
by the time the household heads had passed the sixty-year barrier they were only 60–62 percent of the total. In parallel, the solitary and “no family” type households gradually increased in importance, adding up to 30–32 percent of the total among the over seventies. In a family context of this nature, the complex households (extended plus multiples), no more than 5–10 percent of the total, possessed at once a residual and circumstantial character, arising as they did from a temporary cohabitation by recently married couples with their parents while they looked for somewhere to live, or the taking in by these newly married couple a progenitor widow/widower disabled, who could no longer fend for themselves because of his or her advanced age.53

In mid-nineteenth-century rural Galicia, on the contrary, the nuclear families accounted for only slightly more than 60 percent of the total households with heads aged 25 to 54, while the complex families, always representing percentages of over 20 percent of the total in each age bracket, loomed larger as from 45: they accounted for 28.2 percent of all households at 50, 46.2 percent at 60, and 71.8 percent after 70 years. This shows once more that in northwest Spain individuals rarely confronted old age alone. As if these figures were not enough, they are backed up by the fact that only 2.3 percent of people in the 60 to 69 age bracket lived alone or only 4.5 percent after the age of seventy. This bears no resemblance, therefore, to the 20–35 percent of solitary elderly to be found living in rural Belgium at the same date. At this level, the situation of the Galician countryside in the 1860s had changed very little over the previous century. A rough estimate of the situation in 1752 tells us that no more than 4–5 percent of the over sixties lived alone, even though we know this solitude in any case to be relative.

The percentage of individuals living in the various types of household broken down by age of the head of the household bears out this picture. In 1752 or 1860–1869 no more than 1.5 percent of the total population in rural Galicia lived in solitary type households. Over the nearly one-hundred-and-ten-year period, this living arrangement involved mainly household heads aged under 30.

Against this exceptional case, the great bulk of Galicia’s people have spent their lives, first inside nuclear family formations and then in complex families, since once the head of the household reached the age of 55 to 59 the complex families swelled to receive new members. From the mid-eighteenth century to the last third of the nineteenth century, this capacity for taking in other family members soared (Figures 5 and 6). The series of modifications that the sixty and over

**Figure 5.** Percentage of individuals living in the different types of household broken down by the age of the head, rural Galicia 1752. *Source: Catastro de Ensenada, 1752. Drawn up by author.*
household heads introduced in the traditional social and familial reproduction strategies of their households, in an attempt to keep their descendants with them for as long as possible, was directly responsible for this phenomenon. By this stratagem, the elderly household heads managed to swell the family’s labor force and make it more feasible to run the family smallholdings during the hard times that hit Galicia between 1840 and 1858.\(^{54}\) Only this development would explain the fact that complex households headed by over sixties should contain 48 percent of the total Galician population in 1752 and 68 percent by the 1860s (Figures 5 and 6).

This picture bears very little resemblance to those parts of Spain where the dominant social and familial pattern was the stem family. Such is the case, for example, of the rural communities of the northern half of the Kingdom of Navarre during the second half of the eighteenth century. In contrast to Galicia, in Navarre 70 percent of the families led by a head of sixty and over took a nuclear form, so the number of their members as a percentage of the total population was far lower than in northwest Spain. This was also largely due to fact that the stem families began to emerge only after the farm owner had transferred the holding to a son or daughter. This guaranteed the ongoing survival, feasibility, and integrity of the peasant farm, \textit{la casa}, in its entirety, while also ensuring them minimum care and support in their old age.\(^{55}\) This modus operandi contrasted sharply with the tactic pursued by most Galician peasants, who, in the immense majority of cases, handed on the farm to their married, living-in children only postmortem.

Bearing this in mind, it is easy to understand how, from a merely statistical viewpoint and somewhat paradoxically, the percentages of nuclear households run by heads aged sixty and over in rural Navarre should resemble the figures for central and southeastern rural Spain. In other worlds, they tallied with those regions where the social and familial norm was dictated by the importance of nuclear living arrangements in each and every one of the social classes.\(^{56}\)

**Conclusion**

In view of the events throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in rural areas otherwise as disparate as those of Galicia, inland Spain, Navarre, south Italy, preindustrial England, and rural Belgium, it is clear that the social and economic functions in relation to age support within the household showed themselves capable of adapting to suit the particular needs of the different type of households.

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\(^{54}\) Source: Municipal registers of Arzúa, Lugo, Trazo, 1860–1869. Drawn up by author.

**Figure 6.** Percentage of individuals living in different types of households broken down by the age of the head, rural Galicia 1860. Source: Municipal registers of Arzúa, Lugo, Trazo, 1860–1869. Drawn up by author.
families prevailing in each one. This adaptation capacity in turn bore a close relationship to the greater or lesser role played by elderly household heads in the social and familial reproduction processes occurring in their home areas. It was during the course of these processes that these elderly household heads came to define and develop their own age-support strategies; this normally happened once the 45 to 50 age barrier was passed. That said, the constraining factors of the type of farming practised, the landowning structure or the class position within rural society all determined the possibilities of these strategies ending up as this or that family form, generating a more or less hefty safety net of vertical and horizontal age support from the family and the community or giving rise to an intergenerational cohabitation of greater or lesser degree.

From this point of view, and in light of our findings, it is clear that old-age solitude is not a defining trait of rural Galicia at the end of the Ancien Régime. Conversely, despite received opinion to the contrary, the fact that single and married children did in fact keep up a close coexistence in the households until the death of the elderly head had little or nothing to do, historically speaking, with any across-the-board civilizing trait pertaining to all the regions of southern Europe and deriving from or related to a given family life cycle.57 This is borne out by the overriding importance in that cohabitation of the predominance of running smallholdings under a subsistence farming system and the role played by the elderly household heads in defining the social and familial reproduction strategies in northwest Spain. The same argument applies when trying to explain the whys and wherefores of the form, nature and intensity of the relations of the elderly with their descendants, relatives, and neighbours in the community of the rural areas of central and southeast Spain, southern Italy, preindustrial rural England, Navarre, or rural Belgium.

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Notes


7. In fact the number of households we start with in the 1752 source is 23,058 but 10.1 percent have to be discarded because the officers in charge of carrying out the Catastro de Ensenada left out the age of the head of the household.


14. Many authors seem to be over fond of comparing the age-support and general assistance and population situation in England with the countries of southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Portugal), when the former was a protestant, class-based country well on the way toward capitalism by the end of the eighteenth century and all the latter were Catholic countries still deeply marked by a late feudal set-up until well into the nineteenth century. This knee-jerk Weberianism affords us few insights. See, that is, David S. Reher, “Family Ties in Western Europe: Persistent Contrasts,” Population and Development Review 24 (1998): 203–35.


16. In Galicia, the mean male at marriage age were 25.5 in 1787 and 29.7 in 1887, while the mean female at marriage ages for the same dates were, respectively, 25 and 26. The rate women’s never-married, for its part, rose from 16 percent in 1787 to 24 percent in 1887. In 1752, the complex family forms, that is to say,
1752. The figures of elderly persons living with their respective spouses in 1752 have then been calculated on the basis of this statistic.


25. This same arrangement of the children living on with the parents postmarriage has been recorded in areas as different as the rural world of La Rioja, Cuenca or the abovementioned preindustrial England although we would opine that this option was also taken up only marginally and never overrode the predominant care system mentioned in the text. Pedro Gurría García, “La estructura familiar en la Rioja. Cellorigo, 1743-1833,” in II Coloquio sobre historia de la Rioja (Logroño: Colegio Universitario de la Rioja), 204; David S. Reher, La familia en España. Pasado y presente (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 120; Peter Laslett, Family life and illicit love in earlier generations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 113.


32. As regards the figures for 1752, always to be taken as merely indicative, see note 20.


35. This contrasts with the rural areas of inland Spain. Take the case of La Rioja, for example, where only 35 percent of marriages lasted for 23 years or more. Gurria García, “La estructura familiar en la Rioja,” 202.

40. Sobrado Correa, Las tierras de Lugo, 114 and ff.
43. Dubert, “Vejez, familia y reproducción social,” 115–117.
44. Isidro Dubert, Cultura popular e imaginario social en Galicia, 1480-1900 (Santiago de Compostela: Universidade de Santiago, 2007), 56–87.
45. Maurice Halbwachs put forward the concept of collective memory for the first time in 1920, but it was Marc Bloch who, five years later, cottoned onto its usefulness for historical analysis. Despite the mistrust originally aroused by its organic nature, he did not hesitate to use it to explain the peculiar logic of change obtaining at all levels in the Ancien Régime. Maurice Halbwachs, Los marcos sociales de la memoria (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2004), 175–200. Marc Bloch, “Memoire collective, tradition et coutume”, Revue de Synthèse Historique 4 (1925).
46. A good example of this is the declaration made by Domingo Varela, 60 years of age and resident of Redondela, in the dispute of 1684 between the Real Audiencia de Galicia (provincial royal court) and the sailor’s guild of that town with the residents of Santa Adrián de Cobres over certain fishing rights. Domingo remembered that this right had belonged to Redondela people for more than 40 and 50 years, “... and besides having seen this with my own eyes I’ve also heard it from Bartolomé Pérez, father of the witness, who died sixteen years ago at ninety years of age, and from Estebo do Campo, who died thirty years ago at the age of eighty ...,” Archivo del Reino de Galicia, Real Audiencia, leg. 9742-1. On the role of the elderly at this level in Galician society, see Pegerto Saavedra, La vida cotidiana en la Galicia del Antiguo Régimen (Barcelona: Crítica 1994), 323 ff.
52. Neven, Individus et familles, 130–1.

Bio