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Sevillian medieval nobility: creation, development and character

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Abstract

This essay analyses the history of the different strata – both of *hidalgo* and *pechero* origin – within the elite of Seville. Ultimately, there emerged the group of *'caballeros'*, the true rulers of the city for many centuries. Our study is focused on the main features of this group from economic, social, political and ideological points of view and its evolution up to the end of the Middle Ages. An emphasis is put on its familiar structures and its relationship with the high nobility. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1.

The different social origins of the lineages in Sevillian medieval aristocracy are indicative of the profound changes that took place in the composition of this social group between the mid-thirteenth century and early sixteenth century.[1] Although it has often been stated that the late Middle Ages in Spain were characterised by a progressive process of aristocratisation of social structures and mentalities, this does not mean that the process did not suffer ebbs and flows according to the particular circumstances of the time, not to mention the individual ups and downs which had such a powerful effect on lineages, causing expansion and recession, the rise and fall of families and relations. This forced the surviving lineages and those who came to form part of the ruling class to adapt their way of life and the means available to reach their permanent goals of greater honour, wealth and power.

Thus, a renovation process of the elite took place at such a pace that only the most skilful or lucky lineages managed to form part of the select nucleus within the nobility itself. While this process seemed to be linked to political changes or socioeconomic crises, it was also greatly influenced by biological and generational factors. As Vilfredo

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[1] On this matter, R. Sánchez Saus, 'Los orígenes sociales de la aristocracia sevillana del siglo XV', in: *En la España Medieval* (Madrid, 1986), V, 1119–1139.

Pareto stated: 'Aristocracies do not last. For whatever reason, it is undeniable that after a certain amount of time, they disappear. History is a graveyard of aristocracies.'[2]

Aristocracies disappear and are replaced by others, a process which, towards the end of the Middle Ages, served only to reinforce the characteristics of the group, constantly increasing its political influence and economic predominance, its social hegemony and cultural attraction. This was mainly due to the fact that the medieval aristocracy created an instrument which was perfectly adapted to the historical circumstances and their own idiosyncrasy, namely lineage.[3] Also, in the particular case of Seville and by extension, Andalucia, this aristocratising phenomenon was intensified thanks to the continuing existence of a military frontier against Islam which kept chivalrous ideals alive, ideologically legitimised aristocratic predominance and gave additional splendour to the prestige that wealth and power already bestowed upon them.[4] The natural consequence of the slow but irrepressible process of social confluence, genealogical renovation, cultural synthesis and definition of lifestyles which we shall discuss below, was the appearance of the chivalrous class in the bosom of late medieval Sevillian society. This was a middle-ranking aristocracy, far removed from the splendour of the *ricoshombres* and the titled nobility, yet clearly distinguishable from the downtrodden *hidalguía* of the region, a group which had no demographic influence, and soon afterwards, no sociopolitical standing.[5]

2.

This process began the day after the *repartimiento* and repopulation of the city by Alfonso X, and showed in the long term that the Alphonsine project did not establish any differences between the original two hundred noblemen of lineage and the rest of the urban elite, of *pechero* (taxpaying) origin.[6] In many cases, any link with the former group was no more than the genealogical reference that all the Sevillian aristocracy aspired to, whether or not it was well-founded, but this had no effect on the real importance of lineage in the city.

It is certainly true that many of those who received land from Alfonso X in 1255 did not go on to consolidate their situation in Seville. One case which is of particular interest owing to the fact that we can clearly see the repercussions of private circumstances

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[2] V. Pareto, *Forma y equilibrio sociales. (Extracto del Tratado de Sociología General)* (Madrid, 1980), 70

[3] On lineage as an aristocratic family structure and as a response to the new conditions of the late Middle Ages in Spain, M.-C. Gerbet, *La noblesse dans le royaume de Castile. Etude sur ses structures sociales en Estrémadure de 1454 à 1516* (Paris, 1979), 203; Beceiro, Pita, I. and R. Córdoba de la Llave, *Parentesco, poder y mentalidad. La nobleza castellana. Siglos XII–XV* (Madrid, 1990); R. Sánchez Saus, *Caballería y linaje en la Sevilla medieval* (Cádiz-Sevilla, 1989).

[4] This relationship is dealt with in R. Sánchez Saus, 'Aristocracia y frontera en la Andalucía medieval' in: *III Jornadas Hispano-Portuguesas de Historia Medieval. La Península Ibérica en la Era de los Descubrimientos (1391–1492)* (Sevilla, 1991).

[5] C. Quintanilla, and M. Asenjo, 'Los Hidalgos en la sociedad andaluza a fines de la Andalucía', in: *Las ciudades andaluzas (siglos XIII–XVI). Actas del VI Coloquio Internacional de Historia Medieval de Andalucía* (Málaga, 1991), 419–433, discuss the complex diversity of personal situations of the Sevillian *hidalgo*, thereby confirming our assertion.

[6] J. González, *Repartimiento de Sevilla* (Madrid, 1951), vol. 1, 291–293.

which have such an impact on small groups, is that of the descendants of Per Ibañez, *repostero* to the king and the second son of another Per Ibañez, lord of the Tower of Ibañez in Badona, half a league from Mondragón in Guipúzcoa. This knight took part in the conquest of Seville in 1248, and in the *repartimiento* he received a minor *donadío* consisting of forty *aranzadas* of olive groves in Pilas, in the Aljarafe, and six yokes of wheatland in Alocaz, to the south of the city[7]. He married the sister of Remondo, the first archbishop of Seville, settled down in Segovia, the family seat of his wife's lineage, and had three children. Only his youngest child, Juana Ibañez, lived in Seville in about 1292, married to Garci Martínez of Segovia, a knight who, although he was mentioned in the Sevillian *repartimiento*, also had close links with Segovia and its city council. Juana Ibañez founded the chapel of Saint Barnabas in the cathedral of Seville, endowed by her uncle the archbishop, but this is the last trace of her family that is found in the city. There is no more information about her husband or her son, Fernando Sánchez.[8]

Similar circumstances must have affected other families, and all the more so in the upper echelons, as it seems extremely unlikely that a northern lord would break off family ties and abandon patrimonial interests in his home region simply because he had inherited land in Seville. The extraordinarily difficult circumstances that Andalucia underwent from 1264 onwards, such as the Mudejar uprising, civil and frontier wars, and the virtual failure of the Alphonsine repopulation programme, only served to accelerate the erosion of the *hidalgo* sector that the monarch had tried to promote in the city, either because they left the city, or because they were derogated, or because the family died out.

The role of a person or a family in the resulting urban system was determined by a different set of criteria, particularly a sound economic base in which commercial and tax-collecting activities were not scorned, but whose foundation had to be land-based. This should be combined with a role that traditionally defines ruling minorities everywhere – governmental functions in the widest meaning of the term, as well as military and moral leadership. Daily life, joint participation in military campaigns and political undertakings, created the necessary framework and conditions which favoured the process of social confluence, but it was more than anything else the administration of the city, the intense coexistence in the city council and its institutions that brought about the osmosis, gradually eliminating the differences between the elite of noble origins and those of more humble background. As has been shown on many occasions, the *caballería cuantiosa* was fundamental in the inclusion of the upper echelon of *pecheros* in the tasks which defined the ruling minority,[9] but it was not enough simply to belong to this group. Integration in the most select group of the local oligarchy was reserved for those who were also outstanding in municipal administration, in service to the crown or to the most influential magnates, those who triumphed in the frontier war, or who made the greatest fortunes and employed them wisely.

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[7] González, vol. 2, 243

[8] An anonymous manuscript buried in codex 64-7-123 of the Biblioteca Capitular y Colombina de Sevilla.

[9] This institution is dealt with in the classic work of C. Pescador del Hoyo, 'La caballería popular en León y Castilla', *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, Buenos Aires, XXXIII–XL, 1961, 101–138; 1962, 56–201; 1963, 88–198; 1964, 169–200. In the case of Andalucía, M. González Jiménez, 'La caballería popular en Andalucía. Siglos XIII al XV', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, Barcelona, 15, 1985, 315–329.

During the final decades of the thirteenth century and the first decades of the fourteenth, this emergent group, which was gradually becoming more and more clearly defined, began to take over all the aspects of urban power. The laws dictated by Alfonso XI between 1327 and 1346, which gave the oligarchy exclusive rights to the post of *regidor* in the city council, are indicative of this.[10] In this way, government of the city was given to the group which had, in fact, been controlling the urban institutions for some time and which had, in 1318, managed to exclude the *ricoshombres* from the *venticuatrías* (the name given to the Sevillian *regidores*), by taking advantage of the difficult situation during Alfonso XI's minority. At the same time, with what soon proved to be excessive caution, a formula was being worked out to anticipate previous confrontations by dividing the seats evenly between *hidalgos* and *ciudadanos*. Seville was the only city in lower Andalucía to include this precautionary measure in its by-laws.

It is well known that medieval social theory is based on the concept of function and is not influenced by abstract considerations. Appearance is what counts – one is what one seems to be. For this reason, the moralists clamour at the confusion caused by sumptuary mimicry. When something is no longer visible, it loses its reasons for existence in a social sense. Thus, as the differences between *caballeros hidalgos* and *caballeros ciudadanos* in the city council were imperceptible owing to the process of social fusion that we have been discussing, there was no reason not to put an end to the fiction. Therefore, although in 1351 Peter I insisted on the comparison between *hidalgos* and *ciudadanos* being maintained, it is true to say that *se ve acabado en los años muy próximos a éste*.[11] As far as we know, in Seville no voices were raised in protest against the measures taken by Alfonso XI, or against the rapid changes that took place in the heart of the oligarchy they established. On the contrary, towards the middle of the fourteenth century, the development of the new class was such that those who would normally have protested, the level superior to the commoners who would otherwise have enjoyed the privileges of the seats reserved for commoners, were precisely the ones who would benefit from this comparison which would give them the chance of ennoblement in similar conditions to those of their colleagues of more illustrious origins. It is not surprising to note that wherever the integration of the local oligarchy did not take place in the described way, as was the case in Jaén, to give an example in the Andalucian context, the Alphonsine decrees encountered harsh resistance. In western Andalucía, however, and especially in Seville, the prospects raised by the municipal policy of King Alfonso were so great and its effects so widespread that even Jewish families who had recently converted to Christianity, such as the Martínez of Medina, or the Marmolejo, soon forgot their origins and merged with the nobility in the most prominent circles of

[10]The institutional evolution of the Andalucian city councils is dealt with by M. González Jiménez, 'Gobierno urbano', in: *Las ciudades Andaluzas*, 13–30 and 'Los municipios andaluces en la Baja Edad Media' *Archivo Hispalense*, Sevilla, 210 (1986), 63–83. The measures taken by Alfonso XI are discussed by M. García Fernández in *El reino de Sevilla en tiempos de Alfonso XI (1312–1350)* (Sevilla, 1989), 144–152.

[11]"It was soon to come to an end". D. Ortiz de Zúñiga, *Anales Eclesiásticos y Seculares de la Muy Noble y Muy Leal ciudad de Sevilla* (Madrid, 1795), vol. 2, 128.

the local aristocracy.[12] The increase in *ciudadano* lineages during the second quarter of the fourteenth century was such that members of this group were the main supporters of Peter I in the city during his reign.[13]

3.

Naturally, the *caballeros* were not the only aristocratic group in Seville at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries. The high nobility of the kingdom, the *ricoshombres*, had been present in the city since the *repartimiento*. Families such as Ponce de León, Guzmán, Mendoza, and Haro, lived there for generations, although it was always minor branches of the respective families who established themselves in Seville, as they were the only ones who would benefit from uprooting themselves from their northern homelands.

This high nobility played an important part in the political life of the country, and was therefore one of the main protagonists in the period of unrest that began at the end of Alfonso X's reign and continued until Alfonso XI came of age in 1325. At this time, Seville was the main city of the kingdom and its dominion was vital for the fighting factions. The Sevillian nobility was therefore persistently courted by the different *bandos*, causing divisions which on many occasions put the stability of the whole region in danger.

The reaction of the city council, which was similar to that of the rest of the Andalucians who were beset by the same problems, led to the signing of pacts and *hermandades* with neighbouring towns. In 1297, the *Hermandad General de Andalucía*[14] was created as an arbitrator to stop the region becoming involved in the wars of succession and to weaken the influence of the magnates who instigated them. The climax of this period of resistance on the part of the municipal institution – and the groups from which it was formed – to the pressures exerted by the high nobility, was the municipal agreement of 25 January, 1318. According to this agreement, all the great lords who were considered responsible for the disturbances in public order that the city

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[12]The origins and careers of these families are discussed in R. Sánchez Saus, *Linajes Sevillanos Medievales* (Sevilla, 1991), 162 and 181. These protoconverts did not arouse such suspicion as did their fellow Jews a century later. The analyst Ortiz de Zúñiga states that hallándose todas las Veyntiquatrías en la primera nobleza... se esfuerza la conjetura de que introducidos nobles en todos los oficios, la costumbre los perpetuó en ellos, como también en los oficios de Jurados, to such an extent that it became customary to demand el requisito de nobleza en todos estos oficios en los tiempos siguientes, *Anales*, vol. 2, 128.

[13]Miguel Angel Ladero emphasizes the tendency of this monarch 'to look to the producing classes of society, especially the emerging urban commercial and financial groups, for support', *Historia de Sevilla. II. La ciudad medieval* (Sevilla, 1976), 29.

[14]The management of the *Hermandades* in Andalucía, with a comprehensive appendix of documents, can be found in M. Nieto Cumplido, Origenes del regionalismo andaluz (1235–1325) (Córdoba, 1978). Also M. García Fernández 'La Hermandad General de Andalucía durante la minoría de Alfonso XI de Castilla, 1312–1325', *Historia. Instituciones, Documentos*, Sevilla, 12 (1985), 351–375; 'Las hermandades municipales andaluzas en tiempos de Alfonso XI', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, Barcelona, 19 (1989), 329–343; 'Algunas consideraciones sobre los objetivos políticos de la Hermandad General de Andalucía', *Medievalismo*, Madrid, 2 (1992), 61–65.

was suffering were forbidden access to the *regimiento*. However, the enormous power of the aristocratic clans in Seville was revealed when they immediately took control after the death in battle of the infantes John and Peter, the regents of Alfonso XI. The collapse of the *Hermandad General* following the withdrawl of Córdoba in order to support the pretensions of Juan Manuel to the regency was another indication of this. With strong family ties and similar political interests. the Guzmán, Ponce de León, and La Cerda on one hand, and the Biedma, Rojas, Manzanedo, Tenorio, and Coronel, on the other, supported the pretensions of the various candidates for the regency, finally favouring the infante Philip after Ruy González de Manzanedo's failed attempt to hand over the city to Juan Manuel in 1320. The consensus among the Sevillian high nobility allowed the supporters of Philip to dominate the situation under the strict vigilance of the *alguacil mayor*, Alonso González de Biedma. This situation continued until 1325 when Admiral Alonso Jofre Tenorio rebelled against the city thanks to the help of the second of the clans mentioned above. María Alonso Coronel, the widow of Alonso Pérez de Guzmán, "The Good", her son Juan Alonso, Luis de la Cerda, Alfonso Fernández de Saavedra, and other knights were expelled from Seville. The admiral enjoyed a short period of personal goverment that he unsuccessfully tried to extend to the neighbouring town of Jerez, and which was only brought to an end by the coming of age of Alfonso XI. This political experiment probably served as inspiration to the less fortunate instigators of the various rash attempts at republicanisation in the Italian style that can be traced throughout fifteenth-century Sevillian history.[15]

We have included this brief account of events in order to show how the process of social fusion which formed the Sevillian medieval oligarchy did not take place without the knowledge and participation of the high nobility. On the contrary, in the decisive years which led up to the effective reign of Alfonso XI, this group established the basis of its subsequent local dominance, which was to reach its height after the dynastic change in 1369 and especially during the fifteenth century.

Before this, however, the Sevillian nobility as a whole was to experience the effects of two very different historical periods. The reign of Alfonso XI constituted a time of growth and splendour for this group. It was characterised by collaboration with the monarch, the raising of the status of the city to that of the real capital of the Crown, the conciliation of the dominant groups' interests, the unhindered development of the oligarchy and the inclusion in the elite of new families who had gained their wealth thanks to trade and the large-scale purchase of land at low prices. Records of the Pineda, Peraza, Fuentes, Martel, Las Casas, and many other families date back to this time. The unexpected death of Alfonso in 1350 and the immediate fall from grace of his concubine, Leonor de Guzmán, who was from Seville, led the way to the reign of Peter I. This not only put an end to most of the favourable circumstances we have described, but also saw the introduction of repressive measures which almost wiped out the noble class. The Aponte, Tenorio, Biedma, Guevara, and Coronel, and also perhaps the Rojas and the Manzanedo, disappeared from the city or were never able to recover fully, while the La Cerda, Guzmán, Ponce de León, and Bocanegra lost a few of their most outstanding

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[15]Ladero Quesada, 37.

members.[16] Others managed to escape death but not the confiscation of goods, banishment from the Court and city life, or the revocation of rewards. As Miguel Angel Ladero has pointed out, 'From 1353 onwards, the policy of Peter I which aimed at eradicating rebellious nobles, created victims and stirred up hatreds which subjectively justified the attitude of the nobility in the coups of 1353–1355, and 1360, and in the civil war of 1366, in opposition to Peter I and particularly to his destruction of the political power of the nobles.'[17]

The Trastámara triumph in Montiel had immediate effects on the shores of the Guadalquivir. Some families who were supporters of Peter paid dearly for their faithfulness. The Monsalve sought refuge in Portugal and Granada, the Tello lost their honours and were forced into exile in Portugal. The Saavedra suffered prison sentences and banishments. None of these families, however, was definitively ruined, and some years later they were able to recover and in some cases even to extend their influence in the city.

But it was doubtless the high nobility that most benefited from the new situation. Juan Alonso de Guzmán obtained the earldom of Niebla, and other families, such as the Ponce de León, Pérez de Guzmán, and La Cerda consolidated their possessions in Lower Andalucía. Many other lesser families received rewards of various types and some, such as Per Afán de Ribera, Guillén de las Casas, or Alfonso Fernández de Fuentes, were able to use their service to the new dynasty as a means of social promotion for their families. Finally, the fabric of Sevillian aristocracy was renewed by the incorporation of a whole new group of families, including the Barba, Cerón, Roelas, Lando, Segarra, and Tous.

4.

This period of generalised increase in power in all the echelons of the nobility, which continued until the reign of Henry III, included an increasing involvement in municipal institutions on the part of the high nobility. In spite of the legal prohibition, from 1369 onwards the *regidores* and other officials became accustomed to receiving *acostamiento* from the great lords.[18] This link between the patriciate and the high nobles not only had the political consequences that we shall see below, but also activated and reinforced the mimicry of the latter group by the former. This contributed to the supremacy of the chivalrous mentality among urban groups which would otherwise have adopted a bourgeois outlook. In fact, the local oligarchy became more and more involved in the aristocratic world and its particular interests. As these interests often differed from one noble family to another, conflicts arose into which the whole urban system was drawn. Thus, before the close of the turbulent fourteenth century, the city lived through periods

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[16]See the chapters dedicated to these lineages in Sánchez Saus, *Linajes Sevillanor Medievales*.

[17]Ladero Quesada, 30.

[18]Pedro Sánchez de Morillo, 'a learned and serious person from the time of King John II', in a letter addressed to Alvaro de Luna, the powerful favourite of the monarch, discloses the origins of this practice and the dangers of its generalised use. Ortiz de Zúñiga, *Anales*, vol. 2, 209.

of unrest in 1382, 1391–1394, and 1398, involving different people and due to various factors.

During the fifteenth century, these occasional outbreaks developed into a permanent structural element of the system. This gave rise to *bandos* of varying degrees of stability which were a particular and characteristic form of participation in public affairs by the urban aristocracy, as well as being a very effective way for the high nobility to take advantage of their large network of allies and relatives.[19]

From the mid-fifteenth century, when the high nobility had total control of municipal power, the Sevillian *bandos* became polarized around the two great houses of Niebla y Marchena, and Guzmán y Ponce de León. There were enormous financial and material losses and casualties resulting from the fierce conflicts between the *bandos* which took place in Seville, particularly as a result of the war which was waged throughout Lower Andalucía between 1471 and 1474. The harshness of these conflicts and the virulence of the hatreds and passions they roused should not, however, deceive us as to their real purpose. The confrontations between the *bandos*, which were never settled by the extermination or the total defeat of one of the factions, served to reinforce the control of *both* contenders over the object under dispute, solving the conflicts within the oligarchy and giving them an aristocratic ideology. The powers and people who were neutral or detached from the fighting clans, and therefore not under their control, tended to be drawn in by the dynamics of the *banderizo* system, supporting one or other of the leading families. These *banderizo* upheavals put an end to the possibility of an urban system which was independent of the interests of the great lords, and able to support its own alternative ideology.[20] The mechanisms of integration in the *bandos* acted firstly on the families belonging to the patriciate, hounding them under penalty of losing their seat in the government and local institutions, which was the key to their being regarded as members of the elite. Other urban groups were also recruited through links as clients, favours, proximity, as mercenaries, or simply for emotional reasons, based on the enormous popularity of the *caudillos*, the well-established prestige of their houses and the popularity which some of them took pains to cultivate among the masses by means

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[19]The best summary of this complex question is that of M.A. Ladero in '*Lignages, Bandos, et Partis dans la vie politique des villes castillanes (XIVème–XVème siècles)*', *Les sociétés urbaines en France Méridionale et en Pénisule Ibérique en Moyen Age* (Paris, C.N.R.S., 1991), 105–130. An Andalucian example can be found in M. C. Quintanilla, 'Les conféderations de nobles et les "bandos" dans le royaume de Castille au bas moyen-age. L'example de Cordoue', *The Journal of Medieval History*, 16 (1990), 165–179.

[20]'¿*Do son aquellos bravos regidores/ que nunca a Rico Ome doblan rodilla?*' (Where are those brave *regidores* who never bend their knee to powerful men?) asked the anonymous author of the poem transcribed by Ortiz de Zúñiga, which laments the end of the period when *Ponces e Guzmanes en tí residían/ mas yugo a tu cuello nunca lo ponían* (The Ponces and the Guzmanes lived here, and never placed such a yoke around the city's neck); Ortiz de Zúñiga, *Anales*, vol. 3, 43. The twenty four verses of this poem addressed to the sleeping city consciousness of Seville, curiously coincide with the number of *regidores* on the city council, and are irrefutable proof of the existence and maturity of civic ideals towards the middle of the fifteenth century, ideals which were thwarted by the prepotency and the seduction of the nobles. *¿Qué olvido? ¿Qué sueño e letargo fatal/somete tus gentes a tales baldones?/ Despierta Sevilla, e sacude el imperio,/ que face a tus Nobles tanto vituperio* (What forgetfulness, what fatal sleep and lethargy brings such shame on your people? Wake up, Seville, and shake off the tryanny which does such harm to your nobles).

of giving alms, being pleasant, and all sorts of demagogic practices. Not even the Church, into whose structure and hierarchy the aristocracy was closely integrated, was always able to avoid militant commitment.

Protected by all this, vertical ties emerged and became established, strengthening the system as a whole by covering up or substituting other types of social conflict. A large element of play – often tragic play – was involved, as can be seen in the transfer of rivalries to popular festivities. The jousts, parades and tournaments, the *juegos de cañas* and bullfights which were so popular in these frontier lands, all with their colourful pomp, exhibitionism and passion, fuelled and channelled *banderizo* feelings at times when a truce had been declared.[21]

Finally, the behaviour of the *bandos* justified royal intervention in the municipal government, firstly to regulate the tension created, and soon with more personal aims, designed to reinforce the authority of the monarchy and limit the far-reaching municipal autonomy. From the reign of Henry III (1390–1406) the *corregidores* or *asistentes*, as they were modestly known in Seville, were intensely active in the city, although not on a permanent basis. With this, the medieval urban system had turned the full circle of its stability, and was granted a moratorium, although the way had been opened for the unassimilable forces which would end up withering it.

5.

After this overview of the *bandos*, we shall now return to the first years of the fifteenth century which were so important in shaping the Sevillian aristocratic panorama. The resumption of the war with Granada and the presence in the city for long periods of time of the infante Fernando, brother of the deceased Henry III and co-regent of Castile, contributed to a definitive crystallisation of the values and ideals of the Sevillian oligarchy. At the same time, a series of important families began to play a role in the future of the city. They were attracted by the new prospects that this southern city offered to anyone arriving with legal knowledge, which was increasingly necessary in secondary royal and municipal administrative posts, with a chivalric ethos which would allow them to wield both the pen and the sword, and with noble origins. The Mosquera-Moscoso, Vergara, Jaén, Maldonado, Torres-Villarreal and, at a higher level, the Stúñiga and Sandoval, representatives of the Trastámara high nobility, all established themselves in the city during this period. The Stúñiga carried out a real infiltration policy of the city council and the local high aristocracy, which would have allowed them to dominate the city, had it not been for the conflicts between rival factions from 1414 to

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[21] An excellent example can be found in the incident which took place in Jerez in the presence of the Catholic Kings, during their visit in 1477. The *Juego de cañas* – an exercise in equestrian skill and military expertise which imitated the encounters with the Moors – which the city prepared for the Monarchs, degenerated into a fight between the Dávilas and the Zuritas. The king himself had to go down into the arena to calm things down. A full account is given in Alonso de Palencia, *Crónica de Enrique IV*. Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. CCLVII, CCLVIII and CCLXVII (Madrid, 1973–75), vol. 3, 63–64.

1421 which forced them to abandon the attempt. Despite this, the family always had a strong presence in Seville.[22]

These new arrivals partly made up for the continual losses suffered by the local elite in battle, as a result of misfortune and political adversity. The lack of male heirs, which could mean extinction or integration into other families through the marriage of female heirs, affected a large number of families, notably the Pérez de Guzmán, lords of Olvera; the Haro-Toledo, lords of Los Molares; the Mexía family, who obtained the seigniory on the extinction of the previous owners; the Martel-Peraza, lords of the Canaries, who depended on the Herrera; the Monsalve, integrated in the Tous; the Martínez de Medina; the Medina, lords of Los Palacios; the Arnedo; one of the main branches of the Cervantes; the main branch of the Esquivel, lords of the *mayorazgo* of La Serrezuela; the Marmolejo of Torrijos; the Villafranca, integrated in the Pineda family, and even such well-known houses as the Ribera and the Portocarrero of Moguer. This is not an exhaustive list, and a simple study of the family trees of these and other houses would give a good idea of what the lack of a male heir in a single generation meant for the destiny of dozens of Sevillian families.

These vacancies were not only filled by outsiders from the *hidalgo* class, but also by local families of more dubious lineage, some of Jewish descent. In fact, after the pogrom in 1391 had brought the Sevillian Jewry to ruin and forced many of them to convert, the presence of families of Jewish descent in the local oligarchy was intensified. In addition to the families which could be called protoconverts, i.e. who converted before 1391, such as the Martínez de Medina or the Marmolejo, who had long since joined the local elite, and who showed no apparent signs of awareness of their origins during the fifteenth century, a whole group of more recent converts was incorporated towards the middle of the century. These included the Cansino, del Alcázar, Almonte, Azamar, and Cabrera, among others. They were followed by other families of Hebrew origins, some of whom came from very low levels of the municipal administration, such as the Arauz, and others, like the Prado, Alemán, or Caballero, from the comfortable position which their ownership of land and prosperous business dealings permitted them. The ethnic-religious origins of these families was often the only thing that made them different, as the methods they used to make their way into the oligarchy, and their role within it, were similar to the other ascending houses. There was, however, a strong group spirit, which can be seen in their matrimonial ties, the joint activities they carried out in local politics and institutions, and their financial and commercial links.[23] It should be repeated that the public attitudes of these families during the fifteenth century in no way indicated a negative awareness of their origins, or any attempts to hide them. On the contrary, they paraded them unashamedly which, among less prosperous social sectors, must have caused ill-concealed envy and resentment, of their undeniable success in obtaining important posts in the royal and municipal administration, and their favour with the most powerful nobles.

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[22]The Stúñiga family and the difficulty they had in becoming integrated into the noble sector of Sevillian society is dealt with in Sánchez Saus, 'Los señores de Ayamonte y Lepe: Guzmanes y Stúñigas en el siglo XV (1392–1454)', in: *Huelva en su Historia* (Huelva, 1988), vol. 2, 161–174.

[23]This has already been demonstrated by Ruth Pike, including even later dates, when the effects of the Inquisition covered up or diluted such practices. *Aristócratas y comerciantes* (Barcelona, 1978).

The large increase in the Sevillian aristocracy during the fifteenth century did not depend solely on the arrival of outsiders and religious converts. It was the growth of family trees, with the emergence of new branches which ensured the survival of the lineage and their internal configuration, the renovation of a social group which relied on family structures and relationships to maintain its identity and guarantee its growth and perpetuation. The flourishing of secondary lines caused a loss of internal cohesion in many families, but even so, it indicates a tremendous explosion of vitality, wealth, faith in the power of blood and security in the aristocratic world. It also reveals a notable capacity for taking advantage of the favourable socioeconomic conditions and the changing political climate which existed in Castile at this time. A good example of this is the Ortiz family, which had only one branch in 1414 but had given rise to at least eight houses by the beginning of the sixteenth century.[24]

Thus, during the fifteenth century the aristocracy gained power, wealth and influence and increased its numbers on a par with other social sectors. The new lines did not weaken or dilute the old families, and the group as a whole became more compact than it had been a century earlier. This was possible due to the precautions taken by lineages to make sure that growth did not take place at the expense of the break-up of their patrimony and the dismantling of family structures. The adaptation of inheritance procedures, particularly the *mayorazgo*, became widely accepted after a century of hesitation and restricted use, and the influence of main members of the family in moral, spiritual, political and military spheres, was the best way to keep these intact.[25]

6.

By the middle of the fifteenth century, this social group already had a well-defined structure. This applied both to the group of families that constituted this social class and especially to its characteristic features. In the first place, being in possession of a fortune was an essential condition for belonging to the elite, but little importance was given to the way in which that fortune had been acquired. A functional balance between urban and rural assets was common among the oligarchy, although it was land ownership that held the most weight and provided the greater part of their income.[26] Secondly, the proceeds arising from *juros* and *mercedes reales*, whether granted on a personal or hereditary basis, the salary and *quitaciones* received for administrative posts at various levels, and the benefits gained from commercial and financial transactions were also important. Finally, the fruits of a military career were considerable, whether they were received on a regular basis, such as *tierra* for maintaining a certain number of cavalry units, or *pagas y llevas* for supplying and manning frontier posts, or whether they arose from the fruits of battle during the constant vigil against Islam.[27]

[24] Sáchez Saus, *Linajes Sevillanos Medievales*, 212–223 and 396.
[25] More details about this are given in Sánchez Saus, *Caballería y linaje en la Sevilla medieval*, 55–62.
[26] This was pointed out a long time ago by Antonio Collantes de Terán, and also confirmed by other studies, *Sevilla en la Baja Edad Media. La ciudad y sus hombres* (Sevilla, 1977), 286–291.
[27] The economic effects of frontier activities are discussed in Sánchez Saus, 'Aristocracia y frontera en la Andalucía medieval', *Estudios de Historia y de Arquedogía Medievales*, Cádiz, 11 (1996), 191–215.

If a healthy income was the starting point for any process of integration into the ranks of the patriarchy, that alone did not suffice. Successful social promotion depended on having a similar style of life to the rest of the aristocracy. This lifestyle was constituted by a series of habits and customs, calculated extravagance and ostentatious touches which formed the group image. A suitable, richly-furnished residence, expensive attire, numerous domestic staff, highly-priced mounts, and choice weapons are some examples of the trappings of a way of life that embraced chivalrous ideals with the consequent military and religious implications.

Wedding celebrations were one of the crucial moments in the private life of this oligarchy. On these occasions, the chosen alliance between families that weddings in traditional societies always entailed was manifest in full. Indeed, a list of the marital ties that took place can give us much information about the social evolution of a family over a given period of time. It is well known that in these social sectors marriage had far greater meaning than that of a simple private act. It fell to the parents to safeguard the family interests and the happiness of the bride and groom, which was achieved by choosing suitable marriage partners for their offspring. The financial, social and even political nature of these delicate operations explains why the guarantees offered, the dowry by the bride's family and the *arras* by the groom's, increased in value enormously during the fifteenth century and eventually became a faithful reflection of a family's status, and another reason for rivalry between aristocratic houses.[28]

In addition to the features we have already mentioned – a strong economic position, an aristocratic lifestyle, and a well-chosen marriage – the social ideal of the group was completed by the jurisdictional possession of a seigniory, however insignificant in territorial terms, as well as the benefit of a *veinticuatría* or a post of a similar rank in the municipal government, and the ownership of a funeral chapel in one of the numerous parish churches and convents in the city and its vicinity. Owing to its effect on the financial situation, prestige and authority of a family, great value was placed on being in the favour of a magnate and the consequent inclusion in his *bando*. Royal vassalage and entering the direct service of the Crown, or investiture in an order of knighthood were also highly valued. Honour, reputation and military glory combined with the more tangible, material realities mentioned earlier. Finally, the creation of a *mayorazgo*, which attempted to assure the future of the lineage in the satisfactory conditions enjoyed at that moment, meant a definitive consolidation within the urban aristocracy, always following in the wake of the group they modelled themselves on, the titled nobility.

7.

During the reign of the Catholic Kings, the ruling class in medieval Seville underwent a final period of renovation, although this was on a more limited scale than the changes we have already seen. In this case, senior officials of the royal administration – the

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[28]While the dowries of noble Sevillian ladies in the mid-fifteenth century reached about 500,000 *maravedíes*, by the end of the century they could easily be as much as a million. In the highest echelons of the aristocracy, it was not unusual to find dowries of several millions. Sánchez Saus, *Caballería y linaje en la Sevilla medieval*, 96–100.

Castilla, Pinelo, the Arévalo branch of the Tello, the Cortasa, among others, were attracted to the city by its dynamism after the fall of Granada and the discovery of America. It was now the time for characters who were more docile and manageable, although no less astute than the old adventurers who were still very well represented in the seventies by Fernán Arias de Saavedra, the marshal who rebelled against the Catholic Kings. In this sense, the monarchs were right to inspire a new sense of duty in nobles whose honour was all too closely linked to the defence of their own often very coarse interests and ambitions. They tried to give the nobles a sense of moral responsibility towards the rest of society, which they did not have before, and a purer spirit of service to the Crown and the State. The fact that this change took place among a generation of nobility brought up during the excesses of the final years of the reign of Henry IV makes the work of the Kings all the more praiseworthy and the change itself all the more significant. Perhaps the best example of this evolution in the Sevillian context is that of the marquess of Cádiz, Rodrigo Ponce de León, who was a violent *bando* leader in his youth and an efficient instrument of royal policy in his later years. Other examples can easily be found among high- and middle-ranking aristocrats. In spite of the fact that there were times when the political adventurism and *banderizo* tradition of the aristocracy seemed to have revived in the Sevillian and Andalucian context, we have no doubt that the most characteristic traits of the future nobility of the Empire – position in military life, as a public official or in the Court, became more and more clearly defined during this time.

8.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, the influence of the aristocracy on Sevillian society was continually increasing. As in the past, any newcomers who took part in the active economic, administrative, intellectual, and military life of the region modelled their aspirations on this aristocratic social group. The continuing frontier wars against Islam which kept the chivalrous ideal alive, the slow feudalisation of political customs in the kingdom of Castile and the uncertain legal position of the Castillian nobility, all promoted the constant renovation of the aristocracy, while allowing for the new protobourgeois mentality to be assimilated by them. This social group, firmly anchored in the medieval principles it sprang from, was therefore able to prepare itself for the future. Consequently, once the terms of its well-paid collaboration with the monarchy had been agreed, the long-standing political, social and ideological hegemony of the nobles was not pressurized by a hypothetical alternative. The enormous potential of Spain's, and by extension Andalucía's, new position in the world was therefore able to be fully exploited by them without their way of life or their ideals being affected.

Glossary

ACOSTAMIENTO - a sum of money paid by the high nobility to the *regidores* and other members of the urban oligarchy in return for being part of a *bando*.

ALGUACIL MAYOR - the head of the municipal police force, responsible for carrying out judicial sentences.

ARANZADA - an agrarian measure which differed slightly from one region to another, but was always around 4000m^2.

*CABALLERO - a nobleman could receive two different classes of knighthood. The *espuela dorada* (golden spur), which was only for the nobility, and the *privilegio* (privilege), which could be granted to a person who was not from the noble ranks but which was the first step on the way to nobility. All *caballeros* were exempt from paying most types of direct taxes.

*CABALLERO DE CUANTIA - an inhabitant of a city who had to possess a horse and suitable military equipment simply because he owned goods to the value of a sum set by the Crown (50,000 *maravedíes* in Andalucía around 1480). He was exempt from some taxes and formed part of the urban patriarchy.

BANDO - a party or faction of the nobility which disputed the control of the city with other *bandos*. There were usually two main *bandos* in each city, each structured around a lineage but which included people from diverse family and social origins, both noble and non-noble.

CORREGIDOR - a post appointed by the Crown which was created at the end of the fourteenth century in Castilian cities, firstly in an episodic and temporary way, and later on a more permanent basis, to control the muncipal governments. In Seville, this figure was called an *Asistente*.

*DONADIO - a large agricultural property, originally handed over by the king to an aristocrat or entity, often of an ecclesiastical nature.

*HIDALGUIA - untitled lesser nobility, which was, in theory, hereditary. However, the king appointed *hidalgos de privilegio* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was a way of being admitted into the true nobility with its attendant privileges (especially tax exemption), as an alternative to the *caballería*.

*JURO - a life or hereditary annuity which was received from a specific part of the Crown's income.

MAYORAZGO - the entailment of family estates, usually left to the first-born child.

*PAGAS Y LLEVAS - the provisioning of the towns and fortresses bordering the kingdom of Granada, and the wage received by their inhabitants for their military services.

*REGIMIENTO - a small, closed assembly made up of between six and twenty-four members, which replaced the general assembly in many towns in the kingdom of Castile from the mid-fourteenth century, to the benefit of the urban patriarchy. Its members were the *regidores*.

REPARTIMIENTO - the process of sharing out among the Christian colonists the urban and rural properties of a town captured from the Muslims.

RICOHOMBRE - a member of the high nobility, titled or untitled. Originally used to refer to those who could fly their own banner and had other knights as their vassals.

TIERRA - an annual allowance paid by the king to *caballeros* and *ricoshombres* for the upkeep of a certain number of *lanzas* or soldiers in the heavy cavalry.

* The definitions marked with this sign have been taken from the glossary published by Miguel Angel Ladero Quesada in 'Aristocratie et régime seigneurial dans l'Andalousie du XVe siècle', *Annales ESC*, 1983, 1364–1366.

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