

## 2.4 Property rights, social inequality, and agrarian change in southern Europe, I

Room 202

*Convener and Chair: Julie Marfany*

### 2.41 Rosa Congost and Sebastià Villalon – Studying social groups and social inequality in a world of small and medium family farms. The example of eighteenth-century Catalonia

The importance of medium-sized family farms – referred to since the middle ages and still today as *masos* – in the agrarian structure of north-eastern Catalonia is beyond doubt. But this landscape began to change from the second half of the eighteenth century as large extensions of woodland were converted, by means of emphyteutic land transfers, into small units of cultivation. In this new landscape, medium-sized holdings, owned since the middle ages on emphyteutic terms but cultivated mainly by tenant sharecroppers, co-existed with small holdings, often also held on emphyteutic contracts, but this time often as recent land transfers by the holders of the *masos*. The question is how this complicated web of property rights was mirrored in, and contributed to changing, the social structure of, and social differentiation within, rural society? Who were the poorest, the tenants who owned no land, but rented medium holdings or the smallholders who owned at least the use rights to small plots? An exceptional source, drawn up in 1795 as a result of the war against France, allows us to investigate this complex issue for some areas. This paper will present preliminary findings for more than 3,000 Catalan parishes.

**Rosa Congost** is professor of economic history at the University of Girona and a researcher at the Centre de Recerca d'Història Rural. She is the author of numerous works on landed property and social relations in rural Catalonia. In recent years, she has promoted a focus on comparative history. She is currently principal researcher for the Grup d'Història de les Societats Rurals (at the University of Girona) and on the project HAR 2008-02960/HIST *Dinàmiques socials i canvi històric en societats rurals: l'anàlisi des grups i les desigualtats socials*.

**Sebastià Villalon** is a PhD student at the Centre de Recerca d'Història Rural of the University of Girona. His thesis investigates the evolution of forms of credit in Catalonia from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, using notarial records and registers of property.

### 2.42 Bélen Moreno – Measuring inequality: inventories post mortem as a source for studying inequality in pre-industrial societies

Inventories *post mortem*, despite their limitations, are an excellent source for the study of social groups and inequality in Ancien Régime societies. Analysing consumption patterns within a population gives a direct window on to social differentiation and how this evolved over time. Consumption and social differentiation are connected by a two-way relationship: on the one hand, differences in wealth determined diet, clothing and the possession of goods and access to services that improved the comfort of families. On the other hand, forms of display and appearances were in themselves a means of marking social differences, independently of the levels of wealth that sustained such display.

This paper describes the characteristics of Catalan inventories and goes on to analyse their possible uses for the study of social inequality. It will also present findings for social differentiation between different groups of households – measured in terms of ownership of certain goods – at the end of the seventeenth and end of the eighteenth century. The methodology used leads to the conclusion that social differentiation increased over the eighteenth century, at least in some areas of rural Catalonia.

**Belén Moreno** is lecturer in economic history at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Her work has focused on Catalan rural society during the eighteenth century, particularly sharecropping contracts and living standards and consumption patterns of different social groups in the wine region of the Penedès.

### 2.43 Antonio López Estudillo – The evolution of inequality in the Campiña of Córdoba in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

The crisis of the Ancien Regime and the transformations related to the liberal revolution permitted in the Campiña of Córdoba a massive transfer of property and a slow, yet irreversible trend towards the direct cultivation of large estates by their owners. In the Upper Campiña these processes allowed easier access to land for tenants and agricultural labourers, while intensifying specialisation in olive-growing and viticulture. By contrast, in the Lower Campiña *cortijos*, large estates dedicated to grain-growing and pastoral farming combined, continued to dominate, resulting in a greater polarisation of the agrarian social structure.

This paper presents a first attempt to assess the evolution of inequality in this lower region. The dissolution of ecclesiastical and common lands and the erosion of noble property did not appear to reduce the dominance of large estates and large-scale ownership, and changes in crops and forms of production occurred later and were more limited. On the one hand, the paper will examine changes in the structure of property ownership and land tax, an important but not entirely sufficient method of measuring income distribution. On the other hand, it will also present calculations for different time periods of the distribution of the net product of the *cortijos* across owners, substantial tenants and labourers, using rents and wages as basic indicators. An imperfect indicator of the income of tenants will be calculated from harvest prices and rent series, imperfect because crop yields and shares remained fixed by custom during this period. Unfortunately, more precise information is not available.

**Antonio López Estudillo** is lecturer in economic history at the University of Girona and a researcher at the Centre de Recerca d'Història Rural. He has worked on various aspects of the agrarian history of Andalusia, particularly the transformation and economic backwardness of the region during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and more specifically, landscape and population in the Campiña of Córdoba.