
The Purchase of Nobility in Castile, 1552-1700

I. A. A. Thompson
University of Keele

The sale of patents of nobility (*privilegios de hidalguía*) was one of the many arbitrary fiscal devices resorted to by the Habsburgs in their endless search for funds in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries. The fact of the sales is well known; their significance is more questionable. Most often the purchase of *hidalguía* is seen as an expression of an all-pervading 'lust for nobility' and a reflection of a dominant, non-economic (even anti-economic) orientation in the Castilian mentality.¹ It is represented as a significant element both in the diversion of capital from productive investment and in the debourgeoisification of Castilian society,² drawing attention, incidentally, to the importance of

¹ ANTONIO DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, "La desigualdad contributiva en Castilla durante el siglo xvii", *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, 21-2 (1951-2), pp. 1262-3; J. H. ELLIOTT, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716* (1963), p. 305, writes of the 'universal hunger for titles of nobility', and p. 104, 'an object of universal desire'; JUAN REGLÁ, "Spain and her Empire", *New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 5 (1961), p. 370, and *Historia de España y América social y económica*, ed. J. Vicens Vives, vol. 3 (1961), pp. 53, 219, 244 (HEASE).

² Most recently, for example, by RALPH DAVIS, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies* (1973), pp. 150-1, and JAN DE VRIES, *The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis 1600-1750* (1976), p. 218; REGLÁ, *HEASE* iii: 13, 53, 249; ANTONIO DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Orto y Ocaso de Sevilla* (1946), p. 55.

state action and the impact of war (via the means required to finance it) in distorting the social structure and as agents of social mobility.³ By exacerbating the gross disequilibrium in the burden of taxation between rich and poor, the sale of noble exemptions is said to have contributed to rural depopulation and the collapse of agricultural production.⁴ The sale of nobility, therefore, by adding to the numbers, reinforcing the social and economic attitudes, and pandering to the universal appeal of the *hidalgo* has had to share part of a fundamental responsibility for Castile's economic decadence.⁵

This kind of view is based largely on the repeated but very generalized complaints of the Cortes about the number of *hidalguías* sold and the need for a consequential reallocation of taxation, and it has not been entirely endorsed by some of those most expert in the social and financial history of the period (Carande, Ulloa, Domínguez Ortiz). Even they, however, have lacked precise information on the chronology, the extent, the value and the beneficiaries of the sales, and it has, therefore, been impossible to make anything but an impressionistic assessment of their significance either as a fiscal device or as a social and economic phenomenon.

The evidence that would permit a detailed and reasonably exact resolution of these issues exists both in the general correspondence of the Councils of State and Finance and in the accounts of the royal treasury. What the purchaser actually bought was a patent, a *carta de privilegio*, according him the status and privi-

³ RAMÓN CARANDE, *Carlos V y sus banqueros*, vol. 2 (1949), p. 503; DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Desigualdad contributiva*, p. 1263; RUTH PIKE, *Aristocrats and Traders. Sevillian Society in the Sixteenth Century* (1972), p. 23.

⁴ GONZALO ANES, *Las crisis agrarias en la España moderna* (1970), p. 109; De Vries, pp. 219, 217.

⁵ 'El hidalgo es el responsable fundamental de la decadencia económica', JOSÉ MARÍA DIEZ BORQUE, *Sociología de la comedia española del siglo xvii* (1976), p. 296; JOSEPH PEREZ, *L'Espagne du XI^ele Siècle* (1973), p. 32; JAIME VICENS VIVES, *Historia económica de España* (3rd edit. 1964), pp. 380-1; Elliott, p. 305.

leges enjoyed by the customary and hereditary nobles of the realm (*hijosdalgo notorios de sangre y solar conocido*). The instrument opened with a recapitulation of the petition and statement of services and merits submitted by the recipient in justification of the grant. Here were set out the man's family history, the services to the Crown of himself and his predecessors and close relatives, the genealogy and origins of his house and its connections by blood and marriage with established noble lineages, together with any details of offices held, membership of confraternities, exemptions from taxes or levies, the existence of chapels, chantries or arms sculpted over the portals of the family home, and previous grants or court judgements that might support his claim to noble status. The justification was frankly propagandist and therefore has to be examined with considerable scepticism, but it does make possible at least a partial analysis of the kinds of persons who were buying *hidalguías*. The justification was followed by the formal grant of nobility by the king, expressed in a variety of legal formulae which in principle distinguished carefully between the creation of new nobility, the declaration of a nobility deemed already to exist, the ratification, restitution or confirmation of a previous grant or court judgement. The remaining sections of the document consisted of standard-form chapters setting out the detailed privileges and exemptions of *hidalguía*, dispensations and abrogations of the laws, guarantees against revocation, and instructions to the courts and local authorities to recognize and observe the rights to which the grantee was now entitled.

Theoretically, copies of all the *cartas de privilegio* should have been kept in the *contaduría de la razón* in order to maintain a central record of tax exemptions.⁶ What copies there are now to be found in the section Dirección General del Tesoro, Inventario 5, of the Archivo General de Simancas, the first two *legajos* of which contain 154 patents issued in the XVIth and XVIIth

⁶ Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Dirección General del Tesoro (DGT), Inventario 5, legajo 1, no. 1, R.C. Monzón, 6 Sept. 1552.

centuries.⁷ This source is supplemented for the XVIIth century by two independent lists; one, an account drawn up in 1661 of the *hidalguías* sold since 1629 for which the purchasers had not yet proved full payment;⁸ the other, a list dated 4 September 1710 of grants and confirmations of *hidalguía* issued by the *secretaría de la Cámara y Estado de Castilla* since 1623.⁹

Grants of nobility had been issued by the hundred by the Catholic Kings in the last quarter of the XVth century, but these had been made for military and personal services, not for money.¹⁰ After 1495 these grants petered out, and though it has been argued that some *hidalguías* were sold at the start of Charles V's reign the evidence probably refers to a continuation of grants of patents by the Crown rather than sales.¹¹ In either event the practice was short lived, and successive instructions of Charles V to his regents forbade them to make grants of *hidalguía*, *caballería* and naturalization 'as I do not grant them, because they are greatly prejudicial to the kingdom'.¹² The possibility of putting

⁷ AGS DGT 5, leg. 1, ff. 71 (71 for 1552-1600), leg. 2, ff. 84 (83 for 1600-99; f. 35 is missing). Subsequent references to specific patents and grantees will be designated CP 16 for legajo 1, CP 17 for legajo 2, followed by the folio number.

⁸ AGS DGT Inventario 24, leg. 332, transcript of a statement given to the Consejo en Sala de Cobranças, 1661, 'de lo que por este libro constava en raçon de las hidalguías bendidas cuyos compradores no havian presentado pagos de los precios dellas', and 'Relacion de lo que se deve de Conpras de Hidalguías', Madrid, June 1661.

⁹ 'Documentos inéditos para la Historia Nobiliaria', *Revista de Historia y de Genealogía Española*, vol. 1 (1912), pp. 40-3, 85-7, 133-5, 180-3, 'Relación de las hidalguías que se han despachado por la Secretaría de la Cámara y Estado de Castilla, cómo consta por los libros que hay en ella, desde el año de 1623 hasta la fecha de esta (4 Sept. 1710) en conformidad de la orden que S.M. se sirvió expedir para que se formase' (henceforth 'Relación de 1710'; the manuscript source is Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, Colección de Grandezas, vol. 1). The fact that these patents were issued by the *Cámara* does not mean they were not sold. There is a considerable overlap among the three sources and 46 of the 116 patents listed here for 1625-1700 are known to have involved some direct, cash payment.

¹⁰ MARIE-CLAUDE GERBET, 'Les guerres et l'accès à la noblesse en Espagne 1465 à 1592', *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, 8 (1972), pp. 295-326; Elliott, p. 104.

¹¹ Carande, ii: 502-3.

¹² MANUEL FERNÁNDEZ ALVAREZ, ed., *Corpus Documental de Carlos V*, vol. 1 (1973), pp. 153, 416, 533, 544, vol. 3 (1977), pp. 29, 310.

hidalguías up for sale, however, was mooted as early as 1524,¹³ and again in 1547,¹⁴ but none seem actually to have been sold until the autumn of 1552 when, with preparations for the Metz campaign occupying all Charles V's resources in the north, the Council of Finance, faced with the cost of defending Spain and North Africa against the threat from the French and Turkish fleets, found all the Crown's ordinary revenues, the *servicios* of the Cortes, the rents of the Masterships of the Military Orders, the *cruzada* and the clerical subsidy mortgaged into 1555.¹⁵ Five years later, in 1557, Philip II ordered 150 *hidalguías* to be sold in Castile in the hope of bringing three-quarters of a million ducats into the treasury;¹⁶ but the expedient was a total failure. Only ten patents are known to have been sold between 1552 and July 1559 when Philip II called a halt to the sales. Two more are recorded prior to 1565 but the likelihood is that these were grants and not sales. Throughout the next decade, a decade that encompasses the relief of Malta, revolts in Granada and the Netherlands, Lepanto and the Holy League, and the third 'bankruptcy' of the reign, sales were continuous, with no less than

¹³ Charles V was said to be thinking of selling 500,000 ducats worth in 1524, Carande ii: 502.

¹⁴ AGS Estado leg. 75, Philip to Charles V, 1 June 1547; *Corpus Documental*, vol. 2 (1975), p. 511.

¹⁵ AGS Consejo y Juntas de Hacienda (CJH), leg. 13 (old number 23), f. 59, 'lo que parece al Consejo de la Hazienda que V. Alteza deve escribir a Su Magt' (1 Sept. 1552). FERNÁNDEZ ALVAREZ, *Corpus Documental* iii: 432, tentatively puts the date of the original decision in May 1552, but as it was taken in the presence of Don Juan Manrique just before his departure for the Netherlands, it must have been prior to 29 Mar. 1552 (Carande ii: 123). Copies of the royal orders authorizing the sales, dated Augsburg, 18 Sept. 1552, and Béthune, 1 Sept. 1554, are to be found in AGS DGT 5, leg. 1, no. 1. The measure was intended to raise 100,000 ducats, MODESTO ULLOA, *La hacienda real de Castilla en el reinado de Felipe II* (2nd edit. 1977), p. 95, and also *Corpus Documental* iii: 604, Charles V to Philip, 12 Aug. 1553, indicating that there had in fact been a previous attempt to sell *hidalguías* without much success, but it is not clear when that was.

¹⁶ Carande iii: 450-1; AGS CJH leg. 23 (36), f. 205, Pedro Niño to Princess Juana, Toledo, 24 Mar. 1557. Carande's belief that 150 were to be sold in each province is symptomatic of the exaggerated importance attributed to the sales.

seventeen in 1567 alone, and another twenty by 1575. After 1575 no more were marketed until 1583, and, despite the recommendation of the *Junta Grande y de Arbitrios* and the Council of Finance late in 1591 to revive the sales,¹⁷ only eight *hidalguías* are known to have been sold in the twenty-year period 1576-95. Another fourteen followed in 1596-1600, but, opposed by the Cortes and prohibited by the *millones* contract of 1618, only fourteen more were issued in the next twenty-eight years, a dozen of them by 1615. The sales were then revived as one of a number of emergency measures into which Olivares was driven by the loss of the plate fleet and the opening of the Mantuan war in 1628. In 1629 the Cortes was asked to lift the conditions of the *millones* to allow the king to sell 100 *hidalguías* at 4,000 ducats each.¹⁸ A second 100 was proposed in 1635 as part of a grant by the Cortes of nine million ducats over three years, and another 100 in 1643, but neither proposal was given effect.¹⁹ In the latter case the Cortes refused its consent, making a grant of 300,000 ducats instead, and further general sales were prohibited by the conditions attached to subsequent regrants of the *millones*.²⁰ However, the Cortes did permit individual grants to be made in contravention of these conditions on a number of occasions, and several *hidalguías* were issued to courtiers and officials for resale as *mercedes* or in settlement of debts and salaries.²¹ In the

¹⁷ AGS CJH 202 (292), *consulta* of Council of Finance, 5 July 1592; Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan (IVDJ), envío 43, f. 316, Junta en Valladolid, 10 July 1592.

¹⁸ ANTONIO DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Política y hacienda de Felipe IV* (1960), p. 43; AGS DGT 24, leg. 332, Philip IV to Council of Finance, 4 July 1630. DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ in *La sociedad española en el siglo XVII*, vol. 1 (1963), p. 182, says this issue was halted in 1632 at the request of the Cortes, but the records of the sales show this cannot have been so.

¹⁹ MANUEL DANVILA, 'Nuevos datos para escribir la historia de las Cortes de Castilla en el reinado de Felipe IV', *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* (BRAH), 16 (1890), pp. 72, 88.

²⁰ *Actas de las Cortes de Castilla* (ACC), vol. 55, pp. 297, 338; Danvila, BRAH 16: 86; FRANCISCO GALLARDO FERNÁNDEZ, *Origen, progresos y estado de las rentas de la Corona de España, su gobierno y administración*, vol. 1 (1805), pp. 184, 198.

²¹ AGS DGT 24, leg. 332, the marchioness of Leganés was given three *privilegios*

reign of Charles II, *hidalguías* were again sold sporadically by the Crown, but, ostensibly at any rate, these were claimed to be still part of the 100 granted in 1629.

The total of the patents listed by the three sources is 272; 87 of them issued 1552-1615, 185 in 1625-1700.²² The number actually sold was rather less than this, although the precise figure remains uncertain, partly because some of the term sales, which were the norm in the seventeenth century, may not have been completed, partly because it is not always clear whether a particular patent was sold or granted as a *merced*. Of these 272, 185 were certainly sold and the likely figure lies between 233 and 252.²³ When it is possible to check them against other documentary evidence, the figures compiled from the lists are generally slightly on the high side. A statement drawn up in 1629

in 1634 for her nominees, on account of 3,000 ducats a year pension granted to her as a *merced*; the secretary, Don Francisco de Calatayud, was given an *hidalguía* which he sold to Captain Lorenzo de Padilla González of Cieza in 1637, to cover 3,800 ducats owed him for five-years salary as secretary of the Junta de Competencias; ACC 55: 338, the Monastery of San Lorenzo el Real was granted two *hidalguías* for its nominees in 1638 to compensate it for the decline in its rents.

²² The 185 excludes two patents withdrawn and four 'ceremonial' *mercedes* to royal wet-nurses and on the occasion of the king's wedding. There were in all 301 male and five female recipients, together with all their dependent children, thirteen married or independent sons, six nephews, seven wives and two sisters. Five of the patents were legitimizations, and three others reissues, reconfirmations and restitutions of *hidalguía*.

²³ For the purpose of analysis all grants apparently initiated from below have been included. Apart from the impossibility of drawing any meaningful distinction between direct, money 'services' and grants made for 'services' like the surrender of an *encomienda* in the Indies worth 1,000 *pesos* a year (CP 16, f. 52), the loan of 200,000 florins free of interest for a year (CP 16, ff. 47, 12, 13), or the free grant of *hidalguía* to Diego de Alburquerque of Seville soon after he had undertaken a large financial deal with the king (Ruth Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure. The Genoese in Seville and the opening of the New World* [1966], p. 96; CP 16, f. 6, 17 Mar. 1585), all the grantees had a common need for a royal declaration to establish a nobility which they had not been able to prove in any other way. None of the conclusions of this article would have been substantially different had analysis been limited to the minimum number of sales for which the evidence is unequivocal — the proportion of recipients presenting strong evidence of pre-existing nobility in their families, for example, would have been only about 5 per cent less, see below pp. 341-343.

from the registers of the *contaduría de la razón* lists only seventeen of the twenty-two sales made 1591-1609,²⁴ and in September 1637 only eighty *hidalguías* of the 100 granted in 1629 were said to have been sold,²⁵ against 87 shown in the lists. All in all, therefore, the maximum figure of 272 in 148 years is, if anything, likely to be a slight overestimate of the *hidalguías* sold in Castile during the Habsburg period.²⁶

There was then no mass sale of nobility in Habsburg Castile. An average of less than two a year points, on the contrary, to a surprising slackness in the demand for *cartas de privilegio*. All the evidence indicates that, with the exception of the one year, 1567, it was very difficult to sell *hidalguías* in the XVIth century, and in some parts of the country virtually impossible. When the first *hidalguías* were put up for sale in 1552, only five were bought in one and a half years, realizing a quarter of the 100,000 ducats the Council of Finance had expected.²⁷ In March 1557, the king ordered the sale of another 150, but economic conditions were not favourable, in particular the bad harvests and high prices around 1557, and from practically all the cities the response was the same — ‘no a hablado en ellas’ (Guadix), ‘ninguna persona a tratado dellas’ (Murcia), ‘no ay persona que ponga en precio ninguno de las’ (Toro), ‘ninguno se mueva a dar un real por la hidalguia ni yo creo que avra persona en este lugar que le de ny trate deste negocio’ (Toledo); there was a possible buyer in Utrera, two in Granada, but nobody in Seville, nor in Palencia, Guadalajara or Málaga,²⁸ and in July 1559 Philip II

²⁴ AGS DGT 24, leg. 332, *relación* of Contador Tomas de Aguilar to President and Council of Finance, 27 Nov. 1629.

²⁵ AGS DGT, leg. 332, *Carta de privilegio* of Captain Lorenzo de Padilla González, 18 Sept. 1637.

²⁶ The uncertainties in the upper estimates of these figures can in part be offset against other known sales about which these sources are silent, the sale to Pedro Marcos of Getafe in 1618, for example, ACC xxxi: 247-8, 268, 298.

²⁷ Ulloa, p. 95; AGS CJH leg. 13 (23), f. 59; *Corpus Documental* iii: 629.

²⁸ AGS CJH leg. 55 (82), Don Íñigo de Córdoba to Philip II, Guadix, 29 Apr. 1557, and to Juan Vázquez de Molina, Guadix, 8 May 1557; AGS CJH leg. 23 (36),

ordered the sales to stop, 'since we have seen how little fruit and profit has resulted'.²⁹ Despite the complaints of the Cortes, which historians have too readily accepted at face value, the evidence fully supports the king in his reply to a petition of 1566 that 'few' patents of nobility had been issued to that date³⁰ — only sixteen in fact since 1552. Ironically, more were to be sold in 1567 than in the previous fifteen years; but it was impossible to maintain sales at that level and only twenty were disposed of in the next eight years. Thereafter there was never much confidence in official circles that there was a great deal to be got from *hidalguías*, as indeed there had not been on Charles V's part at the very beginning.³¹

Philip IV was somewhat more successful than his grandfather. Between 1629 and 1633 as many transactions were negotiated as in the whole of Philip II's reign. However, these *hidalguías* were being sold at a price little more than half of that demanded in the 1590s, and despite the reopening of the market after some twenty-five years during which there had been little opportunity for new men to buy their way into the nobility, demand was slow, got slower from 1633, and after 1640 largely dried up. As early as February 1630 the king had written to the *corregidores*, to whom, as in 1557, the negotiation of the sales had been entrusted, ordering them to try to get the money in more quickly than from the rather dilatory responses

f. 200 (Murcia), f. 206 (Toro), f. 205 (Toledo); AGS CJH leg. 21 (32), Ortega de Melgosa to Philip II, Seville, 25 June 1557 (Utrera and Seville); AGS CJH leg. 49 (74), Don Melchor de Guevara to Princess Juana, Guadalajara, 7 Apr. 1557; Carande iii: 450-1 (Granada, Palencia and Málaga); Ulloa, p. 95.

²⁹ AGS CJH leg. 23 (36), f. 157, Philip II to Council of Finance, Ghent, 23 July 1559.

³⁰ ACC ii: 434; see also petition 8 of 1558 Cortes, *Cortes de los Antiguos Reinos de León y de Castilla* (CLC), vol. 5, p. 743, and petition 57 of 1563 Cortes, ACC i: 336.

³¹ IVDJ envío 43, f. 316, Philip II's apostil to Junta en Valladolid, 10 July 1592; CRISTÓBAL ESPEJO DE HINOJOSA, *El Consejo de Hacienda durante la presidencia del marqués de Poza* (1924), p. 36; *Corpus Documental* iii: 604, Charles V to Philip, 12 Aug. 1553, 'por lo passado tengo experiencia de quán poco se saca desto'.

that had hitherto been received, by persuading the cities and provincial capitals to accept a quota of sales for which they would take responsibility, in the meantime anticipating the returns by letting the king have the money straight away.³² Many of the towns, however, were unable to dispose of their quotas and either paid the money in order that no *hidalguías* should be sold within their jurisdictions (Trujillo, Logroño, Salamanca), or had to bear the cost themselves out of communal revenues or taxation.³³ In Olmedo the best offer the town received was 31,000 *reales*, and it had to borrow the remaining 13,000 *reales* from the municipal granary. In Medina del Campo the town council could find no buyer at all (on account of its poverty, it claimed), and after raising the money to pay the king by an excise on meat, it had to get royal permission, ten years later, to hawk its *hidalguía* across the country; in the end, the *hidalguía* was passed on to the convent of Barefooted Carmelites of Santa Teresa de Avila who found a buyer in the town of Almendralejo, 200 miles away in Extremadura.³⁴ In the event, Philip IV probably got most of the 400,000 ducats he had intended to raise, but not by selling *hidalguías*, and when, in 1635, he proposed to put a second batch up for sale, the Council of Finance rejected the proposal as not worthy of consideration since the first 100 had not yet been disposed of despite all efforts.³⁵ Twenty still remained unsold in September 1637, and the Crown was apparently still selling off the 100 *hidalguías* of the 1629 grant in 1699, twenty-two of the forty-two issued during the reign of Charles II being attributed

³² Details of these orders can be found in the authorization given to Medina del Campo, 1 May 1630, to raise the money by taxation, AGS DGT 24, leg. 332, and also in *Actas de las Juntas y Diputaciones del Principado de Asturias*, ed. Marcos G. Martínez, vol. 3 (1954), pp. 126-7.

³³ DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Política y hacienda*, p. 46; *Actas de las Juntas... de Asturias*, vol. 5 (1955), p. 155.

³⁴ AGS DGT 24, leg. 332, *relaciones* of 1661.

³⁵ Danvila, BRAH 16: 72; DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Política y hacienda*, p. 387; DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Sociedad española en el siglo XVII*, vol. 1, p. 182.

to the 1629 grant,³⁶ either because some of the earlier sales had fallen through or as a crude constitutional subterfuge.

How is this persistent lack of demand and the relatively small number of *hidalguías* sold to be explained in a society whose nobilomania has become a historiographical legend? One explanation lies in the widespread opposition to the creations and the ambivalence of royal policy which effectively restricted supply. The sale, and indeed the free grant, of *hidalguías* was vigorously and continuously opposed by the Cortes, by the town and village corporations, by the established nobility and by the *pechero* estate alike.³⁷ The repeated petitions of the Cortes to ban further sales on account of the harm done both to the reputation of the nobility by easy access and to the interests of the remaining taxpayers by granting exemptions to the wealthiest members of the community without any corresponding reduction in the total tax demand,³⁸ probably had little direct effect until the reign of Philip III when the prohibition was incorporated into the conditions of the *millones*, but the resistance of the Cortes was certainly responsible for holding back the number of *hidalguías* put on the market by Philip IV.³⁹ The town and village councils also had some influence, partly through their petitions to the Cortes, and partly through their willingness to buy out and suppress *cartas de privilegio* sold to their inhabitants,⁴⁰ the most striking case being the 50,000 ducats paid by the city of Seville

³⁶ In chronological order from 1669-99, CP 17, ff. 29, 39, 12, 19, 67, 80, 65, 45, 16, 33, 66, 73, 84, 34, 58, 83, 63, 20, 15, 61, 78, 42.

³⁷ *Corpus Documental* iii: 629, Philip to Charles V, 12 Nov. 1553.

³⁸ Petition 8, 1558, CLC v: 734; petition 57, 1563, ACC i: 336; petition 24, 1566, ACC ii: 434; petitions 16 and 78, 1570-71, ACC iii: 368, 412; petition 46, 1576, ACC v: 58-9; session 11 Aug. 1592, ACC xii: 176; session 10 July 1599, ACC xviii: 320; sessions 1 and 8 Feb. 1618, ACC xxxi: 247, 268.

³⁹ The Cortes withheld its consent to the sale of a further 100 *hidalguías* in April 1643 and granted 300,000 ducats instead, Danvila, BRAH 16: 86; DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Sociedad española en el siglo XVII*, vol. 1, p. 182; Gallardo Fernández, vol. 1, p. 184.

⁴⁰ One of the measures Philip IV proposed in order to make the *hidalguías* more attractive was to make them immune from suppression in this way, Danvila, BRAH 16: 88 (2 Apr. 1643).

in 1584 in order that no more *hidalguías* be sold within her jurisdiction.⁴¹

Perhaps more important than the opposition of the country was the ambivalence of the Crown. Both Charles V and Philip II had the most serious reservations about selling *hidalguías*. They wanted the money, but neither to devalue nobility nor to increase the tax burden on the commons. All Charles V's Instructions (1529, 1535, 1537, 1538, 1548, 1551) forbade his regents in Castile from making grants of *hidalguía* 'because they are very much to the prejudice of the kingdom'.⁴² It was from the Council of Finance in Castile that the pressure to sell *hidalguías* primarily came, and it was because of the reluctance of Charles V and Philip II that so few were actually sold.⁴³ Charles V forbade the sale of *hidalguía* to anybody guilty of public infamy, to sons of clerics, descendants of unpardoned *comuneros*, or to anybody with any trace of heretical or Jewish blood.⁴⁴ In practice some of these prohibitions had to be relaxed because they were so restrictive, but despite pressure from the Council of Finance Philip II was also concerned to exclude 'personas defectuosas'.⁴⁵ Acting as regent when the first *hidalguías* were put up for sale in 1552, he deliberately set the price so high that no more than a handful of people were prepared to pay it,⁴⁶ and in disregard of

⁴¹ Ulloa, p. 426; PIKE, *Aristocrats and Traders*, p. 23, citing Montoto, gives the date as 1582.

⁴² *Corpus Documental* i: 153, 416, 533, 544, iii: 29, 310. I have found no mention of *hidalguías* in the 1543 Instructions.

⁴³ AGS Estado leg. 75, Philip to Charles V, Guadalajara, 1 June 1547, 'En lo de las hidalguías aunque ha parecido lo mismo que a V.Md por los inconvenientes que en ello ay, todavía se ternia por menores que los que ay en lo del oro y plata de las yglesias en que ay tantas dificultades'; Carande ii: 503; *Corpus Documental* ii: 512, iii: 588, 604.

⁴⁴ *Corpus Documental* iii: 472-3 (18 Sept. 1552).

⁴⁵ *Corpus Documental* iii: 532, 569, 588, 629.

⁴⁶ AGS CJH leg. 13 (23), f. 59, Philip reported to Charles V, 1 Sept. 1552, that the sale of *hidalguías* and other measures 'an seido hasta agora de poco provecho, por que en lo de las hidalguías por ser en tanto perjuicio de los pecheros del reyno, yo he tenido fin a que se vendan las menos que ser puedan, y que los ricos y caudalosos

the advice of his ministers he never allowed any lowering of the threshold throughout his reign.⁴⁷ It was because he regarded it as a 'most hateful and prejudicial business' that was in any case of little fiscal value that he ordered the sale of *hidalguías* to cease in July 1559.⁴⁸ It may be that the sales of 1567-75 reflect some relaxation of this attitude, but in 1592, when the *Junta Grande* and the Council of Finance proposed selling twelve or thirteen new *hidalguías* for upwards of 70,000 ducats, Philip II scotched the plan by arguing that some way had to be found of 'preventing the burden of exemptions falling on the poor, who in justice must be taken into account', and refusing to issue any patents until a sufficient number had been sold to make the revenue they brought in worthwhile, a number he set at a level he knew full well was never likely to be reached.⁴⁹ It was to be four years before another *hidalguía* was sold. Indeed, in no less than nineteen of the 43 years of Philip II's reign there were no *hidalguías* issued

que las quisieren las paguen bien, y asi les puse precio de 5000 ducados cada una a todos los que tubieren de hazienda hasta L o LX M(il) ducados, y que si tubiesen mas hazienda se les pidiese un mayor precio; y como tienen entendidas las necesidades, aunque cosa que mucho descan, an se detenido en venillas a comprar, esperando que verna alguna necesidad tan grande que para ella se vajara el precio, y asi no se an comprado hasta agora mas de quatro...' The price set by Philip was much higher than that proposed by Charles V — 2,000 ducats for individuals without children, or 10 per cent of the grantee's estimated wealth, *Corpus Documental* iii: 472-3 (18 Sept. 1552).

⁴⁷ AGS CJH leg. 91 (135), Francisco Duarte, *Factor* of the Casa de Contratación, to Philip II, Seville, 18 Sept. 1574, proposed that as prospective buyers thought the price was too high, 'si en esto se hiciese algun equibalencia, regulando la calidad y cantidad de los compradores, creo se haria mas efeto', but Philip replied tersely, 'el precio ha de ser de 5,000 ducados y que no tengan hijos casados'.

⁴⁸ AGS CJH leg. 23 (36), f. 157, Philip II to Council of Finance, Ghent, 23 July 1559, 'lo de las hidalguías pues se a bisto el poco fruto e ynteres que desto a procedido y es negocio tan odioso y perjudicial, sera mejor que se dexa de husar deste arbitrio, y asi en lo que no estubiere ya effectuado hasta que otra cosa probeamos no se tratara'.

⁴⁹ AGS CJH leg. 202 (292), *consulta* of Council of Finance, 21 June 1592; IVDJ *envío* 43, f. 316, *Junta* en Valladolid, 10 July 1592, 'que hasta que aya numero de cinquenta no se abra puerta a esto, y quando llegue lo avisen'; to which Philip II, underlining 'de cinquenta', replied, 'basta decir 20, que 50 nunca se juntaran, ni aun creo que las 20'.

at all. Philip III and Philip IV were perhaps less hostile in principle than their predecessors, and Philip IV, in particular, much less discriminating about who might buy from him,⁵⁰ but in the early years of the sales there is no doubt that the purchasers' fears of risking an examination into their backgrounds, on the one hand, and the high cost of the *hidalguías*, on the other, were powerful depressants of demand.⁵¹

What is clear is that the *hidalguías* were very much overpriced. The price varied with the particular conditions and special circumstances of each grant, the inclusion of married sons or sons living independently outside the paternal home, for example, but it was always a fixed and artificial charge, not a market price. From 1552 to 1575 the norm was set at 5,000 ducats in gold; from 1583 to 1609 it was 6,000 to 6,500 ducats; in the 1630s it was 4,000 ducats, silver if possible, but usually *vellón*.⁵² The original price was deliberately designed to limit buyers to those with fortunes of 50 or 60,000 ducats; the equivalent figure at the end of the XVIth century would have been 60-80,000. The total market in Castile can hardly have been more than a few

⁵⁰ Philip III favoured the proposal of the Junta de Medios, 22 Nov. 1600, to sell *hidalguías*, as long as payment was made within six months, Espejo de Hinojosa, p. 36; and Philip IV personally pushed the measure against a reluctant Council of Finance, Danvila, *BRAH* 16: 88 (2 Apr. 1643), raising no social barriers against potential buyers and ordering the Council to sell 'a qualesquier personas que lleguen a comprar las', 4 July 1630, AGS DGT 24, leg. 332; see also RP to Governor of Villanueva de la Serena, 11 Dec. 1635, *ibid.*, 'siendo necesario venderse las dichas hidalguías a la persona o personas que las quisieren comprar de qualquier estado, calidad y condizion que sean, dando quenta particular en el dicho ni qonsejo de hazienda... os doy poder cunplida'.

⁵¹ *Corpus Documental* iii: 629, Philip to Charles V, 12 Nov. 1553, 'De las hidalguías hay poca demanda porque no se han despachado sino cinco, como tengo scripto; dévelo causar que los que podrían pagar el precio de 5,000 ducados no se quieren avergonçar en examinar las calidades, ni en que se sepan sus máculas, y los otros que no las tienen, no se hallan en posibilidad para dar la dicha suma, y así está parado este negocio...'

⁵² Twenty of 27 known prices 1552-75 fell between 5,000 and 5,300 ducats, 16 of 24 1583-1609 between 6,000 and 6,500 ducats, and 4,000 ducats was the standard in the 1630s but with a wide variety of conditions and credit terms.

thousands,⁵³ and even for many of those the price was regarded as excessive. It was the cost more than anything else that the *corregidores* thought explained the lack of interest in 1557.⁵⁴ Cut the price by four-fifths recommended the *corregidor* of Granada and there would be a thousand buyers.⁵⁵ Forty years later a Dr Castañeda thought 7,000 could be sold if they were priced at 2,000 ducats.⁵⁶ Yet when the price was halved in real terms in the XVIIth century, this did not happen. By 1629 the standard price had been dropped to 4,000 ducats *vellón* (the equivalent of 3,654 ducats silver)⁵⁷ with credit extended up to eight or nine years (compared with a year or eighteen months in the 1590s), and in the 1640s it was down to 2,000 ducats. Nonetheless, it took at least ten years to sell the hundred put on offer in 1629, if indeed they were ever sold in full during the Habsburg period.⁵⁸ Although prices recovered in the second half of the seventeenth century to average around 4,000 ducats again, the value of an *hidalguía*

⁵³ The distribution of wealth in Castile is something that can only be guessed at. Gerónimo de Salamanca, *procurador* for Burgos in 1596, estimated that there were 10,000 *vecinos* in Castile worth 20,000 ducats or more, ACC xv: 72, a figure DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *The Golden Age of Spain 1516-1659* (1971), p. 197, thinks optimistic. An income of 3,000 ducats a year, presupposing a capital of 40-60,000, was something worthy of historical record in such a medium-sized, New Castilian town as Casarrubios del Monte (650 *vecinos*), while anybody with a capital of 6,000 or 7,000 ducats was considered a rich man in the provinces. The wealthiest *vecinos* recorded in the *Relaciones* of Toledo and Ciudad Real in the 1570s were worth between 4,000 and 7,000 ducats, CARMELO VIÑAS and RAMÓN PAZ, *Relaciones de los Pueblos de España ordenadas por Felipe II: Reino de Toledo (primera parte)* [1951], pp. 259 (Casarrubios), 484 (Huecas, 5,000 ducats); *Ciudad Real* (1971), pp. 86 (Arenas, 4,000 ducats), 251 (Fuencaliente, 2-3,000 ducats), 269 (Hercencia, 5,000 ducats), 431 (Quintanar de la Orden, 6,000 ducats), 498 (Terrinches, 7,000 ducats). BAROLOMÉ BENASSAR, *Valladolid au siècle d'or* (1967), pp. 134-5, can show no more than a handful of non-aristocratic fortunes in excess of 40,000 ducats, even in a city of 30-40,000 people.

⁵⁴ AGS CJH leg. 21 (32), Ortega de Melgosa, Seville, 25 June 1557; AGS CJH leg. 23 (36), f. 206, Toro, 2 Apr. 1557; AGS CJH leg. 49 (74), Don Melchior de Guevara to Princess Juana, Guadalajara, 7 Apr. 1557; and also Francisco Duarte to Philip II, Seville, 18 Sept. 1574, AGS CJH leg. 91 (135).

⁵⁵ Carande iii: 451.

⁵⁶ Espejo de Hinojosa, p. 36.

⁵⁷ 4,000 ducats seems to have been the asking price as early as 1618, ACC xxxi:247.

⁵⁸ The lists indicate that 100 *hidalguías* had been sold by 1640; but see above, p. 322.

had dropped continuously in real terms between the mid-sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth centuries. From an index of 100 in 1552, it stood at about 75 in 1600, about 40 in 1630, and about 20 in 1640. As over the same period the price of civic offices increased by about 50 per cent in real terms,⁵⁹ this decline cannot be explained as a simple reflection of a general impoverishment in the Castilian economy in the seventeenth century. The lust for honour was being satisfied in the seventeenth century less by movement into the nobility than by movement within it. With not only knighthoods of the Military Orders but also earldoms and marquisesates now available for money, nobility was being cheapened all along the line,⁶⁰ and resources in the seventeenth century were diverted rather into office than into honour. In 1600 there was only one municipal *regimiento* that cost more than an *hidalguía*, that of Seville; by the 1630s there were no less than nineteen of them.⁶¹ The *hidalguía de privilegio*, always difficult to sell, was clearly becoming even less attractive, and this can only be related to the nature of the commodity itself, and to the changing value of the benefits it conferred.

To buy an *hidalguía* was to buy a composite package of legal rights, financial privileges and social status. The *carta de privilegio* made, or declared (and the distinction was an important one), its recipient an *hidalgo*, and with him all his children under the age of twenty-five, unmarried and still in tutelage under the parental roof, together with their descendants in the male line, legitimate or illegitimate, for all time. They were thus entitled

⁵⁹ This calculation is based on work I have in progress on the sale of municipal offices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

⁶⁰ There were more *títulos* created by the Crown in the seventeenth century than *hidalguías* -- 5 *vizcondes*, 128 *condes* and 296 *marqueses*, compared with 44 altogether in 1520-98, DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Sociedad española en el siglo XVII*, vol. 1, p. 209; REGLÁ, *New Cambridge Modern History* v: 370.

⁶¹ viz. Jerez de la Frontera, Murcia, Málaga, Granada, Jaén, Ecija, Córdoba, Cádiz, Seville, Antequera, Toledo, Madrid, Valladolid, Segovia, Salamanca, Plasencia, Badajoz, León, Burgos -- though it is to be noted that the price of *regimientos* also fell markedly in the 1640s.

to all the 'honours, rewards, graces, freedoms, liberties and exemptions, preeminences, prerogatives, immunities and privileges to which by existing or future laws and statutes, or by use and custom, or in any other way, the *hijosdalgo notorios de sangre y solar conocido* were entitled to have and to enjoy'.⁶² These were, principally, perpetual exemption from all royal or municipal taxes, excises and levies on property or the person from which the *hidalgos notorios de sangre* were exempt; the right to show arms on shields, plate, houses, chapels and tombs, to issue and accept challenges, to take the field and receive the surrender of castles and fortresses, to give and receive fealty and to participate in all the ceremonial acts of nobility. No *hidalgo* could be compelled to join the feudal host, or to parade in musters, or to serve public or municipal office. He was, on the other hand, to be admitted to *hidalgo* confraternities and assemblies and to offices customarily or by a formal 'mitad de oficios' statute given to *hidalgos*. He enjoyed immunity from arrest or imprisonment for civil debt and from judicial torture, as well as the privilege of special treatment if gaoled or punished for criminal offences.⁶³

The question is, what were these privileges really worth? It is frequently asserted that it was to escape the heavy burden of taxation that anyone with a bit of money bought a patent of nobility,⁶⁴ but did the financial returns justify an investment of four, five or 6,000 ducats? The classic *pechos*, the payment of which defined social status, were those levied on the person, the *martinega* (a feudal tax due to the lord on St Martin's day), the *moneda forera*, and the *servicios* granted every three years by the Cortes. The *martinega* and the *moneda forera*, levied at a

⁶² The example used here is the printed *privilegio* issued to Mateo de Angulo Vargas of El Arahál, 4 Dec. 1631, CP 17, f. 5.

⁶³ See DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Sociedad española en el siglo XVII*, vol. 1, p. 180; NOEL SALOMON, *La campagne de Nouvelle Castille à la fin du XVI^e siècle d'après les 'Relaciones topográficas'* (1964), p. 289 note 1.

⁶⁴ Elliott, p. 196; De Vries, p. 29; GONZALO ANES, *El Antiguo Régimen: los Borbones* (1975), p. 46, citing Pedro Antonio Sánchez, 1782.

rate of 12 or 16 *maravedís* per *pechero* every seven years, were of no financial significance.⁶⁵ The *servicios* were much more important, but even so in many places the *hidalgo's* exemption was irrelevant, either because no effective distinction of estates existed or because the entire community was exempt. It was this consideration that disinclined anybody in Toledo from offering anything for the *hidalguías* when they were put up for sale in 1557,⁶⁶ and many other important centres fell into one or other of these categories, including Burgos, Palencia, Salamanca, Granada, the entire Kingdom of Seville, Murcia and much of Andalusia.⁶⁷ The *servicios* were in any case after 1538 a fixed contribution of 400,000 ducats a year that was being rapidly devalued by inflation; comprising about 15 per cent of total domestic Crown revenue in 1559, they made up less than 5 per cent forty years later, entirely overshadowed by the *alcabalas* that were tripled during the reign of Philip II and the *millones*, first introduced in 1590. By the seventeenth century the *alcabalas* and the *millones* brought in more than ten times as much as the *servicios*, and from those the *hidalgo* could not escape. He was exempt from the *alcabala* only on the goods he sold, not on what he bought, and the *millones* were in theory levied indiscriminately on all consumption of the basic commodities, meat, wine, oil and vinegar. Clearly, then, everything depended on how taxes

⁶⁵ Carande ii: 356-9; Ulloa, p. 493; DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Política y hacienda*, pp. 203-4, 214; DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Golden Age*, p. 157, on the *martinega*; AGS CJH leg. 202 (292), Licenciado Paulo de Laguna to Philip II, 23 Aug. 1592, opposing permitting certain lords to levy the *moneda forera* because 'dase introduccion para que los Señores tengan mas mano en sus lugares de la que conviene haziendo hidalgos a su voluntad, por no cobrar de ellos esta moneda que es pecho de pecheros, con que adquieren posesion de hidalguia'.

⁶⁶ AGS CJH leg. 23 (36), f. 205; Ulloa, p. 95; ACC xiii: 72.

⁶⁷ ACC xiii: 71-2; Ulloa, pp. 469-71 and Carande ii: 619 list a number of other places with such exemptions. In Poza (Burgos), where Don Juan González de Guzmán procured a *carta de privilegio* in 1691, the only direct tax paid by the *estado general* was 16 *maravedís* for the *moneda forera* every seven years; the *servicios* were paid from communal revenues, and the town was exempt from military levies and billeting because its residents were employed in the salt works, CP 17, f. 33.

were assessed and collected, and this varied from town to town. We know as yet far too little about the social incidence of taxation in Habsburg Castile to be able to generalize about the total value of the *hidalgo's* fiscal privileges. The few pieces of concrete evidence available suggest that they could not have provided much incentive for the purchase of an *hidalguía*. In 1631, Alonso Pantoja Correa bought an *hidalguía* but was denied recognition by the *alcaldes* of the town of Pinto, near Toledo, where he lived, on the grounds that he was the richest man in the place, with more property than 309 other *vecinos* put together and four times as much wealth as the next four richest residents; on top of which, they claimed, he had eight children to inherit his exemptions (he had in fact four sons and two daughters). The town offered 5,100 ducats, 100 ducats more than Pantoja had paid, for the patent to be withdrawn and for a promise that no other *vecino* of Pinto would ever be granted a similar exemption or *carta de privilegio*. Thereupon, Pantoja offered to make available 6,000 *reales* with which to buy *juros* sufficient to provide an annual income equal to his contribution to the services paid by the municipality. As *juros* secured on the *millones* gave a return of 5 per cent, Pantoja must have been assessed at 300 *reales* a year.⁶⁸ For his investment of 61,000 *reales* he could have procured an income in excess of 3,000 *reales*. If this was the case for a man in Pantoja's position, in a town which enjoyed no particular fiscal privileges, it is likely that the purchase of nobility made strictly economic sense only from a dynastic point of view. For a man with a number of sons whose exemption could multiply rapidly, it might be economically worthwhile in the long run;⁶⁹ otherwise, different considerations had to predominate.

⁶⁸ AGS DGT 24, leg. 332, *relaciones* of 1661 (23 Sept. 1634). In Fuente del Maestre (Badajoz), one particular exemption in 1530 was said to have been worth only 10-12 *reales*, CP 17, f. 72.

⁶⁹ AGS CJH leg. 91 (135), Francisco Duarte to Philip II, 18 Sept. 1574, 'entiendo que los que son Ricos y tienen muchos hijos no pararan en ello y las tomaran a este

Other benefits, the freedom from arrest for debt or from cooption as administrators of bankrupts, the exemption from billeting, purveyance, conscription and from service in the *caballería de cuantía* in Andalusia and Murcia, perhaps tended to bulk larger as the military pressures of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries resuscitated the traditional military obligations of the *hidalgo* precisely at the moment when the straight fiscal advantages were beginning to be eroded.⁷⁰ It is symptomatic that one of the concessions suggested by Philip IV to make *hidalguía* more attractive was to give new purchasers immunity for some years from being summoned to war.⁷¹

The concrete benefits weighed all the more because the *hidalguía de privilegio* was not in itself of much honorific value. It was very much a second-class nobility, much less respected than either the 'antigua y estimada nobleza de Castilla', the *hidalgos de solar conocido*, of ancient and renowned lineage, or the 'hidalgos notorios tenidos y estimados por tales', living nobly and held to be such.⁷² Municipal councils whose membership was restricted to noblemen discriminated against the *hidalgos de privilegio* and their known descendants, and the purchasers of *privilegios* themselves did their best to obliterate the origins of their nobility, having any reference to payment written out of their patents, getting the grants to declare them to be *hidalgos de sangre*, and refusing to exhibit their titles when called upon

precio, pero otros que no tienen tanta hacienda ni tantos hijos se an de detener en el comprar'.

⁷⁰ See the reasons given by the Cortes in 1593 for the large number of *hidalguías* litigated in the *chancillerías* during the previous twenty years, ACC xiii: 74; DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Desigualdad contributiva*, pp. 1262-3; Elliott, p. 332; HENRY KAMEN, *The Iron Century. Social Change in Europe 1550-1660* (1971), p. 160.

⁷¹ Danvila, BRAH 16: 88; and 'Relación de 1710', grant to Juan Arias Pérez, 18 Feb. 1631, of the rights of *hidalguía* without any obligation to maintain arms and a horse.

⁷² The classifications are those of the Conde Duque de Olivares, 'Papeles que Dio el Conde Duque a su Magd para el Gobierno de su Monarchia', British Library, Egerton Ms. 347, f. 258.

to prove their privileges so as not to prejudice the status of future generations.⁷³ Interest in the purchasing of nobility, therefore, seems to have been related to the degree of openness of access to the other, more prestigious forms of nobility.⁷⁴

Apart from the grant of patents by the Crown, nobility was recognized either formally through the judgement of the courts, or informally through acceptance by one's peers and neighbours. The formal legal process involved a suit before the *alcaldes de los hijosdalgo* of the *chancillerías* of Valladolid or Granada for a declaration of nobility by virtue of direct descent in the male line from a family of established noble reputation. If after review and appeal judgement was found in favour of the litigant and against the Crown *fiscal* who challenged the action on behalf and at the expense of the local *concejo*, a *carta executoria* was issued declaring the suitor's nobility proved.⁷⁵ Nobility might also be recognized by common repute,⁷⁶ manifested normally by

⁷³ AGS DGT 24, leg. 319, 'traslado del acuerdo en que se mando despachar privilegio de Hidalguia para Antonio de Sant Millan, alcalde de las casas de la moneda y regidor de Segovia' (18 June 1596) — he was to pay 6,500 ducats in cash and the document was to be drawn up 'sin que en el privilegio se haga mencion de que sirve con la dicha cantidad'. It was normal to have separate copies made with and without payment clauses. ACC xii: 176, session 11 Aug. 1592; ACC iii: 412, petition 78 of 1570-71 Cortes, 'muchas personas que han comprado hidalguías en estos reynos, las esconden y encubren queriendo que se olviden y passen de la memoria para despues aprovecharse de la posesion en que han estado, rehusando de mostrar el título con que la adquirieron..'

⁷⁴ A similar process is apparent in eighteenth-century France with interest in the purchase of letters of ennoblement increasing as the possibility of acquiring nobility through the purchase of office declined, ELINOR G. BARBER, *The Bourgeoisie in 18th Century France* (1955), p. 117.

⁷⁵ The procedures are set out in *Novísima Recopilación*, vol. 5 (1805), *Libro XI, título 26* 'De los Juicios de hidalguía, y sus probanzas; y del modo de calificar la nobleza y limpieza', *leyes* 4, 12, 13, 17.

⁷⁶ ACC xiii: 73, session of 4 Nov. 1593; ANTONIO DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *La clase social de los conversos en Castilla en la Edad Moderna* (1955), p. 193, quoting Don Francisco de Amaya (1639), 'Es evidente que la pureza y la nobleza no es algo esencial, corpóreo, real y palpable, sino algo que consiste en la opinión humana, en la opinión del vulgo'.

the town council and the representatives of the commonalty accepting a man as noble and listing him in the *hidalgo* estate when tax rosters (*padrones*) were drawn up or allowing him to take part in elections for specifically *hidalgo* offices in the municipal corporation. Consequently, an alternative aid to social advancement lay in the purchase of a *regimiento* or municipal governing office from the Crown which enabled the venal *regidor* to have a hand in the manipulation of the *padrones* and in the control of municipal litigation.⁷⁷

Neither the law nor office guaranteed success but they conferred a much more desirable status than purchase and in general they were very much cheaper. Any man who could afford to buy a *carta de privilegio* could almost certainly afford to take an action before the *alcaldes* of the *chancillerías*, and if he could afford that he stood a good chance of winning his case without opposition.⁷⁸ Only if the outcome of a court action was seriously in doubt and likely to be costly and inconvenient, perhaps because of the

⁷⁷ ACC xviii: 320, Don Gómez Fernández de Córdoba in session of 10 July 1599.

⁷⁸ Salomon, p. 300, cites the remarks in the Cortes, 11 Nov. 1624, that 'los oficiales de las villas y lugares no se atreven a empadronar a qualquiera que quiere litigar, aunque notoriamente sea pechero y le dejan reservado como si fuera hijodalgo, y con esto adquiere posesion de tal'. The problem is to know what the cost of such a *pleito* really was. It was said in the Cortes (13 July 1599) that it cost 30 ducats or so, ACC xviii: 327, but it is difficult to reconcile this figure with the Cortes' own complaints about both town councils and poor *hidalgos* being ruined by the expense of going to law, or with the standard declarations in the *cartas de privilegio* that the purchasers were paying 6,000 ducats or more in order to avoid the cost and inconvenience of litigation. On the other hand, if the 70,000 *reales* that one late eighteenth-century litigant claimed in costs had been normal, there could hardly have been as many court cases as there were, AGS DGT 5, leg. 3, f. 176. On the relative ease of convincing (or hoodwinking) the judges of the *chancillerías*, which led Philip II in 1593 to order a revision of all their judgements in the previous twenty years, see the recommendation of the king's inner cabinet in Valladolid, 13 Aug. 1592, 'por la mucha desorden que se oye dezir que ay en las chancillerias en librar cartas de hidalguias con mucha facilidad, se acuerda que es cosa en que se podria mandar mirar, y proceder con recato por el perjuizio que resulta, o a los derechos de Su Md o al estado de los pecheros, y assi se podria encargar a los Presidentes de las chancillerias que lo encomienden mucho a los fiscales y juezes', and Philip II's reply, 'muy bien me parece esto, y muy necesario, pero mirese por donde y como', IVDJ envío 43, f. 331.

absence of distant or defunct witnesses or the loss of documentary proofs, or if for some reason the interested party could not wait for the slow process of the law to take its course, perhaps because of age or to qualify for office or escape imprisonment for debt, did the purchase of *hidalguía* make sense,⁷⁹ for what the royal *privilegio* could ensure was speed and finality. It conferred the legal benefits of nobility, whatever they were worth, but more important it conferred them immediately and it also gave the quietus to litigation in train or pending. Whether nobility was based on a formal legal claim or on the acceptance of a customary right, the response of the local community was all important. If it opposed a claim or refused to implement a judgement, nobility was always at risk. Challenged in the courts generation after generation, a claimant and his successors might find themselves shackled to the irremovable irons of costly litigation and subjected in their home towns to victimization and violence. The attraction of the *carta de privilegio* was, therefore, in some ways greater to families who already had a claim to nobility, but whose status was in dispute, than to total upstarts. The threat to nobility, latent in the endemic hostility of the *estado llano* to *hidalgo* status and in the constant testing and sifting of *hidalguía* by *pechero* town councils,⁸⁰ arose most commonly when a man moved to a new area or a new town, or when some change took place in the political organization of the town government. It could be the introduction of the *mitad de oficios* (the formal division of offices between *hidalgos* and *pecheros*)⁸¹ or the presence of personal

⁷⁹ For examples of such cases, CP 17, f. 17 (Pedro Díaz Coca of Utrera, 23 Sept. 1631, aged 70); CP 16, f. 12 (Don Diego de Bernuy y Barba of Burgos, 3 Nov. 1566, confirmation as Mariscal de Alcalá granted earlier in 1566, *Corpus Documental* iii: 618), f. 44 (Juan Martínez Herrera, 24^o of Seville, 17 Mar. 1598), f. 4 (Antonio Alvarez de Alcocer of Toledo, 18 May 1572).

⁸⁰ See Salomon, pp. 295-9; ACC xiii: 77.

⁸¹ CP 17, f. 12 (Don Francisco Careclén y Vera of Tobarra, 19 Oct. 1672), f. 66 (Pedro Pérez Cañas de Oro of Hinojosa, 9 Mar. 1691), f. 58 (Pedro Ortiz Fernández Jara of Almendralejo, 30 Mar. 1694).

enemies in the town council⁸² that made it necessary to define and make explicit a nobility that had previously been taken for granted, but which, in the transition to a more literate and more bureaucratic society with written records and formalized judicial procedures, now required the correct documents and statutory proofs.⁸³ Many of the purchases of *hidalguía* were in fact very circumstantial in nature, reflecting less the rise of new men out of the commons than the fragility and vulnerability of existing noble status. It is this that explains the many apparent anomalies in the purchase of nobility and the expenditure of several thousand ducats by men who claimed already to be enjoying all the privileges of nobility, and in one case by a man who was actually a Knight of Santiago.⁸⁴

The *privilegio* could, of course, also establish a new family on the first rung of the noble ladder. Most important, it entitled the recipient to all the outward and visible signs of nobility, arms, tax exemptions, separate listing in the *padrones de hijosdalgo*, election to *hidalgo* offices, membership of *hidalgo* confraternities, and it facilitated socially advantageous marriages for sons and daughters. In due course the venal origins of the entitlement would be forgotten and nothing would remain but the visible signs. In three generations the *hidalgo de privilegio* would have become an *hidalgo notorio de sangre* in law as well,⁸⁵ and an acceptable candidate for a knighthood of one of the military orders, or better.⁸⁶

⁸² CP 16, f. 14 (Juan de Borja of Roa, 28 Mar. 1558), f. 26 (Pero Hernández de Andrada of Seville and Umbrete, 5 Oct. 1575).

⁸³ This is a consideration that arises in a number of justifications, e.g. CP 17, ff. 42, 63, 67, 83, 84.

⁸⁴ Licenciado Don Francisco Sánchez de Tena Sahabedra, Knight of Santiago, of Hornachos, AGS DGT 24, leg. 332, *relaciones* of 1661 (7 June 1630).

⁸⁵ Gerbet, p. 301.

⁸⁶ In 1733, Captain Don Juan Bautista Manuel Gómez Pardo, *natural* of Alfaro, procured a habit of Santiago, presenting a string of witnesses to testify that his parents and grandparents had been recognized as 'nobles hijosdalgo de sangre según fuero y costumbre de España y no de prebilegio'; his grandfather, Don Alexandro Gómez Pardo, had in fact bought a 'carta de declaración de su hidalguía' in 1669 (CP 17, f. 29), Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Pruebas de Santiago 3470. The Galiano Puches

The essential point, however, is that status was something deriving from the community and validated by the political voice of the community, the town council.⁸⁷ To try to impose status from the outside by an act of the royal will was itself the resort of the 'outsider', the man who lacked roots in the community or influence on the council, or support from allies and relatives among the nobility. This is perhaps one explanation for the highly skewed geographical distribution of the purchasers of *hidalguías* (Table 2). Nearly four-fifths (78%) of the sales were made to residents of Castile south of the Tagus. The whole of Castile to the north of Toledo province, containing 55 per cent of the population, bought less than one fifth (19.2%) of the *hidalguías*. The five contiguous provinces of Toledo, Ciudad Real, Albacete, Badajoz and Sevilla,⁸⁸ in western Andalusia and the south of New Castile and Extremadura, with less than a fifth of the population, bought two-thirds of the patents. This is a distribution very reminiscent of that described by Gerbet for the grants made by the Catholic Kings between 1481 and 1516.⁸⁹ In broad terms it correlates inversely with the distribution of *hidalgos* within Castilian society as a whole.⁹⁰ Over 80 per cent of Castile's *hidalgos* resided north of the Tagus; the purchasers of nobility came predominantly from those areas of Castile where *hidalgos* were thinnest on the ground. None of the seven provinces with most sales per head lay in areas in which *hidalgos* made up any sizeable proportion of the population (4% or more); in León-Asturias where nearly half the population was *hidalgo*, no *hidalguías* were sold at all.⁹¹ Tentatively one might suggest that in

bought an *hidalguía* in 1601, became knights of Santiago in the mid-seventeenth century, and marquises of Galiano in 1742, CP 17, f. 24.

⁸⁷ ACC xiii: 71.

⁸⁸ Sevilla here refers to the modern province; Seville to the city.

⁸⁹ Gerbet, *Les guerres et l'accès à la noblesse en Espagne 1465 à 1592*, p. 324.

⁹⁰ ANNIE MOLINIÉ-BERTRAND, 'Les "Hidalgos" dans le Royaume de Castille à la fin du XVII^e siècle: Approche cartographique', *Revue d'Histoire Economique et Sociale*, 52 (1974), pp. 51-82.

⁹¹ Molinié-Bertrand, Table 1, p. 67, used sixteenth-century administrative divisions;

provinces where *hidalgos* were relatively common the aspirant was more likely to be able to demonstrate the alliances and relationships with other noble families or to buy the kind of plausible testimony and specious genealogy that could prove his case in the courts. The town council and the general public were perhaps also less likely to be exercised by the addition of an extra *hidalgo* to an already large number than they would have been by a more egregious ennoblement. The south, on the other hand, retained many of the characteristics of the frontier. It was an area of resettlement and mobility in which the economy of Seville and the opportunities of the New World had a considerable impact. There was, therefore, perhaps more new, individual wealth, more conspicuous *arrivisme*, but also more difficulty in proving affinity with established noble lines in distant homelands.⁹²

The 272 patents of nobility issued 1552-1700, two-thirds of them after 1629, averaged less than two a year and added an insignificant 0.2 per cent to the 134,000 *hidalgo* families in Castile at the end of the sixteenth century.⁹³ Even in Sevilla, the province most affected, the sales increased the noble population by a mere 1½ per cent or so. Only 132 separate communities were affected.

the seven modern provinces correspond roughly with Toledo 20.7% (but only 9% of those were outside the city of Toledo), Mesa Arzobispal de Toledo 2.1%, Ciudad Real 6.9% (but all of them in the capital city), Campo de Calatrava 3.1%, Ocaña 3.2%, Alcaraz 2.5%, Campo de Montiel 3.07%, Provincia de León de la Orden de Santiago 3.1%, Sevilla 3.9% (61% of them in the city).

⁹² This explanation is valid only in very general terms. The whole S.E. corner of Castile (Murcia, Granada, Córdoba and Jaén), with 12.8% of the population and only one nobleman in every forty or so inhabitants, bought only 6.3% of the *hidalguías*. In Salamanca province, where only 3.2% of the population was noble, none were bought at all. On the other hand, the provinces of Burgos and Logroño, where nobles comprised one-fifth of the population, bought relatively more *hidalguías* than Córdoba, where nobles were only one in 100, or Avila and Guadalajara, where they were between one in forty and one in fifty. Interestingly, the Habsburg pattern did not persist into the Bourbon period. In the eighteenth century the proportion of *hidalguías* sold north of the Tagus is double that of the previous 150 years.

⁹³ Molinié-Bertrand, p. 62.

The biggest increments in individual towns were 37½ per cent in Utrera (Sevilla), 25 per cent in Manzanares (Ciudad Real), 24 per cent in Villarrobledo (Albacete), and there were four other towns, of the twenty-two in which three or more *hidalguías* were sold, with increments of over 10 per cent. In eighty-eight places there was only one new creation.⁹⁴

Although the general impression is that the number of *hidalgos* in Castile was on the increase in the sixteenth century, there is no evidence that the *hidalgos de privilegio* contributed disproportionately to that increase or that their contribution was anything but marginal compared with that of the *hidalgos* who had won *cartas executorias* in the courts. We have no precise knowledge of the number of *cartas executorias* adjudicated by the *chancillerías* in the Habsburg period, but what fragmentary evidence there is suggests that we should be thinking in terms of several thousands, even perhaps in terms of five figures rather than four.⁹⁵ Whatever the exact number, there can be no doubt that the number of *hidalguías* proved in the courts was many times greater than, perhaps up to a hundred times as many as, those

⁹⁴ *Hidalgos* of known *vecindad* were distributed thus: Seville 29, Utrera 9, Ocaña, Villarrobledo 7, Almagro, Cáceres, Villanueva de los Infantes 6, Toledo, Zafra 5, Corral de Almaguer, Esquivias, Guadalcanal 4, Almansa, Almendralejo, El Arahal, Aroche, Burgos, Don Benito, Fuente del Maestre, Manzanares, Tobarra, Ubeda 3; twenty-two towns had two *hidalguías*, and eighty-eight had one.

⁹⁵ See ALFREDO BASANTA DE LA RIVA, *Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid. Sala de los Hijosdalgo*, 4 vols. (Valladolid, 1920-22), and 'Genealogía y Nobleza: quinientos documentos presentados como pruebas en la Sala de los Hijosdalgo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid y estudiados ahora', *BRAH* 78 (1921), pp. 437-56, 505-14; 79 (1921), pp. 42-57, 187-212, 434-48; 80 (1922), pp. 58-70, 137-45, 276-87, 340-68, 416-46. Scattered figures for individual towns give some idea of the extent of the litigation - in Alfaro, a city of 1,200 *vecinos*, there were sixty lawsuits over *hidalguía* pending in 1602 (AGS Cámara de Castilla, Oficios leg. 1, Agreda, f. 25, testimony of Pedro Martín, 25 June 1602), and in the 1570s there were thirteen pending in Aranda de Duero (c. 1,200 *vecinos*; AGS Guerra Antigua leg. 73, f. 8), eleven in Alcolea de Almodóvar (184 *vecinos*), five or six in Socuellamos (700 *vecinos*), and all forty *hidalgos* of Terrinches (150 *vecinos*) had been challenged and forced to appeal to the *alcaldes de los hijosdalgo* of Granada, VIÑAS and PAZ, *Relaciones de los Pueblos de España: Ciudad Real*, pp. 22, 475, 497. The last example underlines the point that many of the lawsuits were not about new *hidalguías* but the confirmation or reestablishment of the old.

which were sold. A partial comparison of the admittedly ambiguous categories of the *relaciones* of the 1570s with the census of 1591 suggests that the *hidalgo* population had grown about 5 per cent faster than the population as a whole. If this inference from a limited geographical area could be generalized, it would mean that the total number of *hidalgos* had increased by about 22,000, some 6,000 in excess of what could have been expected from the general trend of demographic growth, in a period during which only ten patents of nobility had been sold. In six towns of Toledo and Ciudad Real provinces for which a comparison is possible, the number of *hidalgos* increased from 170 *casas* to 204 without any *privilegios* having been bought there.⁹⁶ In Palencia, the number of *hidalgos* increased from three in 1530 to thirty-four in 1622, again without any sales there.⁹⁷

The social impact of the new creations was perhaps even less than their absolute number. If the separate patents issued to brothers and cognates are taken into account, the number of families actually ennobled was only around 200. The same family names recur repeatedly. In the extreme case, fourteen recipients were linked by blood or marriage; nine of the twenty-seven *hidalguías* of Ciudad Real province came from a single six-family network, nineteen of the thirty-nine titles issued to residents of the Kingdom of Seville, outside the capital, went to members of three different family blocks, and at least eight of the *hidalgos* in the city itself were interrelated.

The purchasers of *hidalguías* were largely an urban group.

⁹⁶ For the 1570s, VIÑAS and PAZ, *Relaciones de los Pueblos de España: Ciudad Real*, pp. 73, 170, 231, 307, 590 (Almodóvar del Campo, Campo de Criptana, Daimiel, La Membrilla, Villanueva de los Infantes); *Toledo (primera parte)*, p. 509 (Lillo); and for 1591, Molinié-Bertrand, Table 3, pp. 71-4.

⁹⁷ *Pace* GUILLERMO HERRERO MARTÍNEZ DE AZCOITIA, 'La población palentina en los siglos XVI y XVII', "Publicaciones" de la Institución "Tello Téllez de Meneses", 21 (1961), p. 72, 'Este aumento sería debido, sin duda alguna, a la compra de *hidalguías* por parte de la gente adinerada'; there were three *hidalgos* in 1530, five in 1542, ten in 1562, twenty in 1614, and thirty-four in 1622.

Barely 15 per cent of them came from the 58.6 per cent of the population that lived in communities of 400 *vecinos* or less,⁹⁸ whereas nearly half came from towns and cities of over 1500 *vecinos*. However, as this was true of the *hidalgo* estate as a whole in those areas in which *hidalguías* were bought,⁹⁹ it says nothing about the new *hidalgos* which is not equally applicable to the old. An analysis of the information on the recipients' personal histories and family backgrounds presented in the patents goes further to suggest that the sale of *hidalguías* did not on the whole inject a new social dimension into the noble estate. One has to be careful about taking the claims of the grantees themselves at face value. None of them admitted to, let alone expressed any pride in, being self-made men. If they could not fabricate a genealogy going back to the Reconquista, they ignored their ancestry. Yet not all their claims can be set aside. A considerable number supplied hard evidence of the possession of nobility prior to the purchase of their patents. Of the 157 *cartas* which provide sufficient information for analysis, thirty-four contain convincing, concrete evidence of pre-existing *hidalguía* in the recipients' families. Antonio Alvarez de Alcocer's patent confirmed and ratified a *privilegio* of 1436 and a *carta executoria* of 1568;¹⁰⁰ Don Diego de Guzmán was the illegitimate son of a Commander of the Order of St John;¹⁰¹ the great-grandfather of Juan de Sa-yago de Volaños was a knight of Santiago, and his own father had won a *carta executoria* in 1584 confirming his exemption from taxation;¹⁰² the father of Don Grabiél de Torres del Salto had been freed from imprisonment for debt by the *audiencia* of Seville after proving his *hidalguía* in 1590;¹⁰³ Don Marcos de

⁹⁸ This is the criterion of urbanization employed by Molinié-Bertrand, *op. cit.*

⁹⁹ In eleven of the sixteen provinces south of Madrid, more than 70 per cent of the *hidalgos* lived in towns of 400 *vecinos* and over, Molinié-Bertrand, pp. 78-9.

¹⁰⁰ CP 16, f. 4 (18 May 1572).

¹⁰¹ CP 16, f. 33 (5 June 1573).

¹⁰² CP 17, f. 72 (15 Dec. 1608).

¹⁰³ CP 17, f. 81 (26 June 1610).

Flores Paredes, who paid 4,000 ducats for his *hidalguía* in 1633, had been appointed 'jurado en el estado de los caballeros hijosdalgo' of Osuna in 1627 with the assent of the entire *cabildo*;¹⁰⁴ Fernando García Toledano y Lugo of Villamartín had been elected *alcalde de la hermandad* for the *hidalgo* estate with the approval of his town council;¹⁰⁵ Matías Lovera had contributed with money to the military obligations of the *hidalgos* in Alfaro, and was as well a member of the noble Confraternity of San Pablo;¹⁰⁶ Don Melchior Carrillo de Mora y Lerma, who bought an *hidalguía* for 50,000 *reales* in 1630, seems to have derived from the 'linage de los Carrillos' and the 'casa de Diego de Mora' which were listed among the *hidalgo* families of Daimiel in 1575;¹⁰⁷ Juan Antonio Corzo Vicentelo of Seville had proved noble descent in Corsica in 1568 — his daughter was later to marry the Count of Gelves with a dowry of 240,000 ducats.¹⁰⁸ Alcocer wanted his patent to escape imprisonment for debt; Guzmán wanted legitimization; Corso Vicentelo the naturalization of his Corsican nobility; Torres del Salto the restoration of the *blanca de la carne* collected from him in Seville because he had no *carta executoria*; Sayago de Volaños to resolve the lawsuit reopened by the *concejo* and *vecinos* of Fuente del Maestre; García Toledano to avoid the delays and the costs of litigation in the *chancillería*. In addition to these, eleven others (of twenty in all) claimed already to be enjoying the fiscal or legal privileges of nobility, and six more (of fourteen altogether) were actually in litigation with their town councils over their *hidalguías*. Another ten were the sons of Dons (including three who were the paternal grandsons of Dons), and thirty-three were themselves Dons, nine

¹⁰⁴ CP 17, f. 23 (8 Mar. 1633).

¹⁰⁵ CP 17, f. 27 (20 Nov. 1630).

¹⁰⁶ CP 17, f. 39 (31 Mar. 1669).

¹⁰⁷ AGS DGT 24, leg. 332, *relaciones* of 1661, and 'Relación de 1710' (22 Feb. 1630); VIÑAS and PAZ, *Relaciones de los Pueblos de España: Ciudad Real*, p. 231.

¹⁰⁸ CP 16, f. 23 (16 Apr. 1575); PIKE, *Aristocrats and Traders*, p. 116.

of whom did not fall into any of the previous categories. The title, Don, was not in itself a proof of nobility; it was rather, in both an active and a passive sense, an assumption of nobility. For the first three-quarters or so of the sixteenth century, its use was relatively rare and its absence meant very little, but from the end of the sixteenth century it became increasingly common, and by the later seventeenth century it was almost universal among the local elites.¹⁰⁹ This is reflected in our figures. Only 4.2 per cent of the seventy-two recipients of *hidalguías* 1552-99 were Dons; 20 per cent of the sixty 1600-59, and 64.3 per cent of the twenty-eight 1660-99.¹¹⁰ As four of the nine Dons who had no other superior proof of prior nobility come from this last period, it is perhaps wise to treat their status with caution. On the other hand, three others had close relationships with knights of the Military Orders, and two were *veinticuatros* of Seville, an office for which nobility was a prerequisite.¹¹¹ In all, seventy-one of the 157 had a strong *prima facie* case for the possession of at least a disputed noble status independent of their patents.

Furthermore, as many as sixty-three others, with less positive justification, had already begun their assumption of noble manners and noble forms, claiming to be 'held and reputed to be noble', or to be living nobly 'with servants, arms and horses', or to be married into noble families (respectively ten, sixteen and fourteen in each category). The mothers of sixteen of them were Doñas (the Doña being a very much less exacting title

¹⁰⁹ SEBASTIÁN COVARRUBIAS OROZCO, *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana* (Madrid, 1674), f. 220v, 'es título honorífico, que se dá al cavallero, y noble, y al constituydo en dignidad'; 'Muchas casas de señores han rehusado el don, y no se le ponen; y por estos pocos que le dexan le han tomado muchos, que no se les deve'. See also, PEDRO FERNÁNDEZ NAVARRETE, *Conservación de Monarquías* (1625), Discurso X, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. 25 (1926), p. 472.

¹¹⁰ The analyzable totals vary slightly with the information provided by the different sources.

¹¹¹ PIKE, *Aristocrats and Traders*, p. 23; CP 17, ff. 1, 18; AGS DGT 24, leg. 332, *relaciones* of 1661 (Sebastián de Carrión Agraz, 8 June 1630); CP 16, f. 70 (Pedro de Villarreal, 20 Apr. 1567), f. 50 (Juan Núñez de Illescas, 19 Oct. 1567).

than the Don),¹¹² thirty-eight were married to Doñas, the sons of sixteen of them had adopted the Don as a title, and in four cases their daughters had married Dons. Excluding the seventeen whose only claim derived from their wives and mothers, the remaining forty-six might reasonably be put into a kind of pre-noble category for whom the *carta de privilegio* stamped a formal endorsement on their informally assumed status.¹¹³ Only forty of the 157 *hidalguías* for which we have information were granted to recipients who either had no pretensions to prior nobility or made no claim that was supported by anything more than assertion. To the extent that these may have been 'new men', they were heavily concentrated in the first decades of the sales. Two-thirds of them date from before 1585, making up 45 per cent of all patents issued by that year compared with only 13 per cent in the same category between 1585 and 1700.

There are far fewer clues to the economic origins of the buyers. The justifications presented in the patents, somewhat surprisingly if one is to accept the traditional view of the importance of employment in derogating from *hidalguía* in Castile, show very little interest in the wealth of the applicant and none at all in the way he made his money.¹¹⁴ In not one single case did an applicant consider it necessary to prove that he was not engaged in any trade or 'oficio vil y mecánico' commonly regarded as derogating from nobility. In contrast to the assertions of 'limpieza de sangre' made directly or indirectly in forty-two of the patents,¹¹⁵ the only information there is on occupation

¹¹² Covarrubias Orozco, f. 220v, 'en las mugeres se admite con mas indulgencia, y facilidad'.

¹¹³ Cf. Gerbet, p. 304, 'L'Hidalguia vient peut-être alors sanctionner une élévation sociale datant du père?'.

¹¹⁴ In only nine cases was there any explicit emphasis on the petitioner's wealth, although there were more oblique references in perhaps another thirty cases and in the description of applicants as 'gente principal', living nobly with horses, arms and servants. On the signification of 'principal' as wealthy see BARTOLOMÉ BENASSAR, *Los Españoles, actitudes y mentalidades* (1976), p. 206.

¹¹⁵ Most frequently by the petitioner declaring himself (20 cases) or his father

or source of income comes as a by-product of the cataloguing of the applicant's services.

What mattered was not private employment but public function. Forty-seven of the recipients held important posts in local government, *alguacil mayor*, *alférez mayor*, *regidor*, *jurado*, *alcalde*, *escribano*, *alcaide*,¹¹⁶ emphasizing the point that the new *hidalgos* were often men already prominent in the elites of their local societies, but also suggesting that municipal office was not always a complete instrument of social advance.

Also surprising, perhaps, is the small part that some of the boom careers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seem to have played in the creation of the wealth of the new *hidalgos*. Only nine of them were lawyers or university graduates, or their sons, and no more than thirteen were, or had been, employees of

(12 cases) to be a 'familiar' of the Inquisition, 'porque semejantes titulos y officios no se le an de dar ni dan sino a las personas que son limpias de sangre de su generacion', CP 17, f. 71. There is also some evidence of *conversos* or New Christians among the recipients. Two confirmations of privileges were issued to descendants of converted Moors (CP 16, f. 69; CP 17, f. 22), and the status of nobility and *limpieza* was restored to a woman whose greatgrandparents had been condemned for heresy ('Relación de 1710', 3 Aug. 1629). It is possible also to link up to thirteen of the twenty-nine *hidalgos* of Seville to likely *converso* families, and two of the five Toledan *hidalgos* were probably *conversos* as well (JOSÉ GÓMEZ MENOR, *Cristianos nuevos y mercaderes de Toledo* [1970], p. 17 note 27 -- Hernán Xuárez Franco, CP 16, f. 37, and p. xxxiii -- Antonio Alvarez de Alcocer, CP 16, f. 4). The *hidalguía de privilegio* had the advantage of giving the New Christian the opportunity to justify his nobility on his own terms without the danger of public exposure and investigation; but in practice the channel that was opened was a narrow one. Until the reign of Philip IV, at least, the Crown did not welcome obvious *converso* applicants. Charles V actually prohibited them, and under Philip II and Philip III only five patents were issued with the cryptic 'supliendo qualquier defeto' formula which may have concealed some disqualification or racial impurity (CP 16, f. 47, Don Juan Alonso and Don Francisco de La Mota, 20 Aug. 1565, and f. 12, Don Diego de Bernuy Barba, 3 Nov. 1566, of Burgos, 'y en caso que en la dicha posesion obiese avido algun defecto o quiebra por no tener todas las calidades que las prematicas destos reynos requieren... en vuestras personas o en las de vuestros predecesores, suplo todos e qualesquier defectos que pueden ynpedir la dicha posesion y propiedad'; CP 16, f. 71, Juan Zapata of Azuaga, 5 Feb. 1567; CP 16, f. 5, Licenciado Luis Alvarez, *regidor* of Guadalajara, 10 Nov. 1558; CP 17, f. 81, Don Grabiél de Torres del Salto of Seville, 26 June 1610).

¹¹⁶ *Alguaciles mayores* 2, *alférezes mayores* 3, *regidores* 31, *jurados* 3, *alcalde ordinario* 1, *escribanos del ayuntamiento* 2, *alcaldes* 5.

the royal household or administration, even in the lower echelons.¹¹⁷ In four or five of these cases the *privilegio* may have been a royal grant rather than a proper sale,¹¹⁸ but it is clear that in general the Habsburgs did not, or did not have to, reward their servants with *hidalguía*.

There is equally little evidence that the sale of *hidalguías* had any significant effect on the *desembourgeoisement* of the Castilian, commercial middle-class. Although the purchasers of *hidalguías* were overwhelmingly an urban class, not many of them were residents of the great commercial centres of Castile. Burgos received three patents, all issued to the same La Mota-Bernuy family in 1565-6, and Toledo five (four of them in the years 1568-72), but it was not possible to sell any at all in Medina del Campo throughout the period, only one in each of Medina de Rioseco (1570), Villalón (1598), Segovia (1596), Guadalajara (1558), Cuenca (1640), Palencia (1699) and Valladolid (1699), and only two in Madrid (1572, 1641). In all the major Andalusian seaports there were only two sales, one in Málaga (1567) and one in Cadiz (1670); whereas the province with the second highest number of *privilegios*, with one in seven of all those issued, was

¹¹⁷ Grants were made to Alonso de Mesa, 'mayordomo de la hazienda de Aranjuez, veedor y proveedor de sus obras', 25 Nov. 1567 (CP 16, f. 46), and to Contador Andrés de Almoguer, *alcaide* of the Casa del Bosque de Balsain and *veedor* of buildings at Balsain and of the *alcazares* of Segovia, 24 June 1572 (CP 16, f. 3). *Hidalguías* were also received by Francisco López de Almaguer, *contador* of the Council of Finance, and his brother, Antonio, sometime secretary of the viceroy of New Spain, for 3,500 ducats (CP 16, f. 40, 10 Jan. 1556), Pero Luis Torregrosa, ex magistrate and *factor* of the Casa de Contratación of Seville (CP 16, f. 68, 1 Oct. 1565), a royal *factor* in Peru (CP 16, f. 52), an inspector of mines (CP 16, f. 60), two attorneys of the royal councils (CP 17, ff. 20, 61), three *continos* and two others with some unspecified connection with the royal household (CP 16, ff. 1, 57, 71; CP 17, ff. 9, 23).

¹¹⁸ The Mesa, Almoguer and Torregrosa grants probably (CP 16, ff. 46, 3, 68), the Ortega Valencia grant (CP 16, f. 52), and perhaps that to Albarado Riocavada (CP 16, f. 57). Discounted from this analysis are two *hidalguías* bestowed upon wet nurses of royal infants ('Relación de 1710', 26 July 1626, 17 Aug. 1632), and two to residents of Navalcarnero for their services at the time of Philip IV's second marriage in 1649 (CP 17, f. 6; 'Relación de 1710', 5 Dec. 1649, 11 Dec. 1650).

Badajoz, one of the most rural and backward parts of Castile.¹¹⁹ It was only in the city of Seville, with twenty-nine, or nearly 11 per cent of the *hidalgúas*, that there was any reflection of the social transformations effected by the conquest of the Americas and the growth of the economy in the sixteenth century. The Indies were the only area of Castilian enterprise to show up strongly in the patents. One quarter of all the titles issued 1552-1602 (19 of 77) were bought by men who themselves or whose fathers had spent part of their lives in the New World.¹²⁰ However, as the accounts they rendered of their services concentrated very much on their achievements in the Conquest and their contributions to military organization, we cannot take it for granted that even in this sector it was mercantile wealth rather than the prizes of war that went into nobility. What does emerge very clearly is the narrow chronological span within which the impact of the Indies was felt. Nineteen of the twenty-two patents with an American connection were issued between 1567 and 1602, while twenty-two of the twenty-nine granted to residents of Seville were dated between 1565 and 1585.¹²¹ There was, of course, a considerable overlap; eleven of the twenty-two Indies titles went to residents of the city and four others to towns of the province of Seville. What is striking is the shift in the balance between capital and province before and after 1600. In the sixteenth century, of all sales in what are the present-day provinces of Sevilla, Huelva and Cadiz, 86 per cent were in the

¹¹⁹ BENASSAR, *Los Españoles*, p. 133.

¹²⁰ This is certainly a minimum figure to which at least three others should be added, although there is no mention made in their justifications: Luis Sánchez Dalvo, Rodrigo de Illescas and Juan Núñez de Illescas, all of Seville (CP 16, ff. 66, 34, 50); PIKE, *Aristocrats and Traders*, pp. 43-6, 127, and GUILLERMO LOHMANN VILLENA, *Les Espinosa, une famille d'hommes d'affaires en Espagne et aux Indes à l'époque de la colonisation* (1968), pp. 241-3.

¹²¹ The prohibition of further sales in Seville in 1584 must have had some effect here, though it was never strictly adhered to; grants were made to *vecinos* of Seville in 1585, 1598 and 1610, 'no embargante el privilegio que la Ciudad de Sevilla tiene de que no se den cartas de ydalguia a ninguna persona de la dicha Ciudad' (CP 16, ff. 6, 44, 45; CP 17, f. 81).

capital city alone; in the seventeenth century, 87 per cent were in the provinces, indicative of the drift of the wealthy back to the land in the regressive phase of the economic cycle.

This same short chronological span also limits the period of specifically commercial and financial interest in the *hidalguías*. It has been possible to identify at least twenty-four *hidalguías* as connected either with administrators or local or royal revenues (8)¹²² or with known banking and business families (16), like the Bernuys of Burgos, the Caballeros, the Illescas, Luis Sánchez Dalvo, Diego de la Torre, Pero Luis Torregrosa, Juan Antonio Corzo Vicentelo, and Diego de Alburquerque in Seville, Antonio Alvarez de Alcocer of Toledo, and Juan Xedler, the Fugger agent in Almagro.¹²³ Nineteen of these were sold before 1600; the other five in the seventeenth century.

The fact that two-thirds of all the patents issued were dated after 1629 should not, therefore, be taken to mean that the purchase of *hidalguías* represented anything like a flight of capital from commerce into status in the wake of the declining economic opportunities of the seventeenth century. What diversion of commercial wealth into nobility there was was a thing of the sixteenth not the seventeenth century. If one defines 'commer-

¹²² García de León was *jurado* and *fiel executor* of Seville with long services in the financial administration of the Casa de Contratación (CP 16, f. 39, 7 Apr. 1567); Pedro de Ortega Valencia was royal *factor* for the province of Tierra Firme (CP 16, f. 52, 31 Dec. 1584), Fernando Rodríguez Ribas royal administrator of the rents and properties of Almodóvar del Campo (CP 17, f. 70, 18 Jan. 1631); Diego Vafz of Peñaranda de Duero had twenty years' service in the treasury of royal rents of Santo Domingo de Silos (CP 16, f. 9, 27 Apr. 1592); Antonio de Sant Millán was *alcalde de las casas de la moneda* of Segovia (AGS DGT 24, leg. 319, *acuerdo* 21 Sept. 1596); Don Marcos de Flores Paredes's father was purveyor general of Potosí and treasurer of rents in Charcas (CP 17, f. 23, 8 Mar. 1633); Alejandro Gómez Pardo was *juez administrador* of the rents and properties of Alfaro (CP 17, f. 29, 31 Mar. 1669); Don Juan Martínez de Buxanda was *contador de visitas* of Ocaña (CP 17, f. 45, 22 Aug. 1682).

¹²³ A number of these were also involved in fiscal administration or tax farming, the Bernuys (with three patents, CP 16, ff. 12, 13, 47), Torregrosa (CP 16, f. 68), Alvarez de Alcocer (CP 16, f. 4), Sánchez Dalvo (CP 16, f. 66), Alburquerque (CP 16, f. 6); see Ulloa p. 43, and PIRE, *Enterprise and Adventure*, pp. 94, 96. There were undoubtedly others in this category that it has not been possible to identify.

cial wealth' broadly as including all the Seville and American purchasers as well, the combined titles issued to residents of Seville and to the American, commercial and revenue interests made up 54.3 per cent of analyzable titles pre 1600 (38 of 70), and 12 ½ per cent of those 1600-1700 (11 of 88). In general the market for *hidalguías* moved in step with and not against the overall trend of the economy. In the seventeenth century the price of *hidalguías* collapsed precisely as the economic depression deepened, and a number of buyers were forced to default on their contracts, despite the easy credit terms allowed, as they found their incomes overcommitted.¹²⁴ However, it is hard to see even the high sixteenth-century figure as of any general economic significance. The numbers were too few, the sums expended too small — perhaps 150,000 ducats from public and private sources in Seville in a twenty-year period 1565-85, less than 5 per cent of the private imports of bullion from the Indies in a single year. Nor should it be assumed that nobility was necessarily incompatible with commerce and finance. On the contrary, in some instances at least, nobility was purchased less for its own sake than for the furtherance of commercial interests. Antonio Alvarez de Alcocer bought an *hidalguía* in Toledo in 1572 in order to head off a prosecution for debt.¹²⁵ In March 1598, Juan Martínez Herrera bought an *hidalguía* for 6,600 ducats in order to qualify for taking up the *veinticuatría* of Seville that

¹²⁴ Petition of Alonso Díaz Guerrero of the town of Urda (Ciudad Real), who bought an *hidalguía* in 1629 for 4,000 ducats over nine years, but 'ya no estava en estado de poder tomarla por aver venido en mucha quiebra y desminucion de su hazienda y no tener con que pagarla'; he arranged for Andrés Nieto Patiño Castellanos to take it over for 38,500 *reales* in eight years, 14 Dec. 1637, but by 17 Mar. 1642 Nieto also found it impossible to continue payment 'a causa de la gran quiebra en que ha venido mi hazienda', and he therefore contracted to pass it to Don Francisco Fernández Buenache, as Nieto, also a *regidor* of Villanueva de los Infantes, AGS DGT 24, leg. 332, *relaciones* of 1661.

¹²⁵ CP 16, f. 4; Hernando de Torres del Salto similarly procured his release from imprisonment for a debt of 2,714 *reales* of silver, owed for the purchase of Rouen linen and other cloths, by proving his *hidalguía* in Seville (CP 17, f. 81).

he had paid 7,800 ducats for the previous month, an office coveted among other things for the influence it gave over the control of trade and the administration of the customs system.¹²⁶ All in all, the 400,000-460,000 ducats that it can be estimated was diverted into *hidalguías* between 1552 and 1615, and the 650,000 or so during the rest of the seventeenth century can have taken only a tiny proportion of the investment resources of Castile. At least one hundred times as much went into government *juros* in the same period.¹²⁷

As a fiscal expedient the sale of *hidalguías* was worth about 1¼ million ducats to the Crown over a century and a half in which royal revenues exceeded 2,000 million ducats.¹²⁸ In one totally exceptional year (1567) Philip II raised about 80,000 ducats, approximately 1 per cent of his income, and Philip IV sold some 300,000 ducats-worth in a four-year period (1630-33), but otherwise the contribution the *hidalguías* made to the treasury was barely noticeable. On the other hand, however small the sums involved, the sale of *hidalguías* was from the purely fiscal point of view an exceptionally good deal both for the Crown and, arguably and contrary to contemporary belief, for the country as well. It was a voluntary contribution, involving no alienation of revenue by the Crown, for the *hidalgo's* tax exemptions were not written off but absorbed into the allocation of the rest of the community. Furthermore, with the purchaser paying perhaps 200 years of tax obligations in one go, his re-

¹²⁶ CP 16, f. 44 and AGS DGT 24, leg. 323 (24 Feb. 1598).

¹²⁷ DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Política y hacienda*, p. 164, gives the capital value of *juros* in 1657 as 133 million ducats.

¹²⁸ These figures include the 50,000 ducats paid by Seville in 1584, and up to 100,000 ducats paid by the municipalities in 1630 over and above what they were able to recoup from sales. Ulloa, p. 650, prints a table of returns to the *Tesorería General* from the sale of *hidalguías* in the ten years 1567-70, 1572-5, 1596-7 showing 74,800 ducats for 1567 and a total of 107,506 for the remaining nine years. My own estimate is in the range 225-254,000 1552-75, 170-205,000 1583-1615 (plus 50,000 from Seville), and perhaps 650,000 1629-1700 (plus about 100,000 from the towns), see Table 1.

turn on capital invested ($\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in Pantoja Correa's case) was a very great deal less than it would have been had the Crown alienated revenues to him in *juros* at 5-7 per cent or sold him *alcabalas* and *tercias* at $2\frac{1}{2}$ -3 per cent.¹²⁹ To the extent that the rest of the country was relieved of the need to raise the sums paid to the king by the purchasers of *hidalguías*, the community as a whole can be said to have been a net gainer. The fact that the great majority of the new *hidalgos* came from substantial centres of population (only five were bought in places of fewer than 200 *vecinos*) also meant that the impact of their exemptions was muffled by the number of taxpayers among whom the extra burden had to be shared. In Pantoja's case, and he was by a long way the wealthiest man in a town of over 3,000 people, this would have been about 13 *maravedís* per *pechero* per year, the equivalent of about one hour of labour. Other purchasers were not actually being taxed at all before their purchase (15 cases),¹³⁰ or were resident in places which did not separate *hidalgos* and *pecheros* for tax purposes (42 cases). Indeed, no less than one quarter of them came from the Kingdom of Seville where no significant fiscal distinctions existed,¹³¹ and the total known to be in that category is over seventy. Only in the handful of cases in which there was a number of creations in the same small community, or when the initial exemption was multiplied rapidly by the growth of the grantee's family, could the fiscal impact have been of any importance. There were only twenty-two towns in which three or more *hidalguías* were sold; fifteen of them had populations in excess of 1,000 *vecinos*, and only one less than 400 (Esquivias, Toledo, with four sold 1630-79 in a

¹²⁹ SALVADOR DE MOXÓ, 'La venta de alcabalas en los reinados de Carlos I y Felipe II', *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, 41 (1971), pp. 487-554.

¹³⁰ CP 16, ff. 5, 15, 4, 3; CP 17, ff. 72, 68, 7 mention *pechos* explicitly; CP 17, ff. 11, 41, 27, 3, 26, 23, 60, 39 refer to other privileges comprehending tax exemptions.

¹³¹ ACC xiii: 71-2; DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Orto y ocaso*, p. 50.

population of about 250 *vecinos*).¹³² Proliferation by natural increase was potentially a more serious problem. Contemporaries certainly believed that venal *hidalgos* tended to have a larger than average number of sons. In one case it was claimed that the original exemption had spread from three households to thirty or forty in the space of fourteen years.¹³³ In La Membrilla (Ciudad Real), the *hidalguía* bought by Alvaro Cañuto in 1557 had spread to four Cañuto households by 1575; but his brother's, bought in Villanueva de los Infantes at the same time, was still the only one alongside thirty-nine *hidalguías de sangre*.¹³⁴ In fact, the average number of sons among the venal *hidalgos* at the time of purchase was only 2.56, and as many had no more than one son as had more than three.¹³⁵ So, although in individual cases the belief of the Cortes and even of Philip II that the ennoblement of the richest members of a community imposed an intolerable burden on the rest may have been true, in general the sale of *hidalguías* had no such effect. When the *Junta Grande* and the Council of Finance discussed the problem in 1592, they decided that the harm to the poor was 'so little as not to be worth considering'.¹³⁶ Even the Cortes, when, in 1599, it for once found itself on the other side, declared that the tax benefit was not worth what it cost a town to contest an *hidalguía* in the courts.¹³⁷ If nothing else, the purchaser of a *carta de privilegio* saved the community the cost of litigation.

The evidence presented in this article calls for a substantial revision of the impact which the sale of patents of nobility is

¹³² Of the twelve towns with four *hidalguías* or more, all except Esquivias had more than 1,000 *vecinos*.

¹³³ CP 17, f. 2.

¹³⁴ VIÑAS and PAZ, *Relaciones de los Pueblos de España: Ciudad Real*, p. 307; CP 16, f. 1.

¹³⁵ Of the 79 cases for which clear information is available, 3 had no sons, 17 had one, 22 had two, 17 had three, 14 had four, and 6 had five or more.

¹³⁶ AGS CJH leg. 202 (292), *consulta* of Council of Finance, 5 July 1592.

¹³⁷ ACC xviii: 329, session of 13 July 1599.

usually though to have had on the economy and the social structure of Castile. It was very far from being the large-scale phenomenon that most historians have assumed. Nor is it true, as has been claimed, that the sale of *hidalguías* 'shattered the existing concept of nobility'.¹³⁸ Neither the absolute numbers sold, nor the social background of most of the purchasers, nor the probable sources of the wealth invested in nobility, nor the underlying ideals that validated the grants were such as to have had that effect. The essence of nobility continued to be, as it always had been, blood and war. Alongside the claims of lineage, the military services of the recipient and his ancestors and close relatives remained overwhelmingly the single most important criterion for ennoblement that the justifications put forward. Nine of the grantees had military rank, thirty-three others had served in person in war in Spain, Europe or the Indies, and a further seventy-two adduced the immediate or remote exploits, real or fictitious, of close relatives and distant ancestors back to the Reconquista. Nearly three-quarters of all the grantees made some claim to military service in their justifications.

The sale of *privilegios de hidalguía* was at odds with the concept of nobility as an essence transmitted by blood or by custom, not in its content but in its form. The *carta de privilegio* was a conspicuous act of the royal prerogative and an exercise of the absolute power of the king to create nobility where none had existed before. It involved both a particular abrogation and dispensation from all the laws of his predecessors made in the Cortes which prohibited such grants, and also an assertion of the 'poderío real absoluto' over and against custom, on the one hand, and the purely declaratory judgement of the *chancillerías*, on the other. The disparagement of the *hidalguía de privilegio* was therefore implicitly a political statement, a denial of the superiority of the regalian authority over custom and tradition.

¹³⁸ Carande ii: 502; Salomon, p. 300.

It was also a recognition of the superiority of a corporate concept of honour (of a lineage, a region, a town) over personal nobility and an individualist ethos.¹³⁹ The sale of *hidalguías* in fact diminished the force of neither custom nor corporatism. On the contrary, the standard voluntarist formula of pure creation ('es my merced y voluntad que seais y os hago hijodalgo de sangre y de solar conocido... como si uvieredes nascido de padres e abuelos hijodalgo notorios de sangre')¹⁴⁰ all but disappears after 1585, to be replaced by a primarily declaratory formula ('declaro a vos...y los hago a todos hijodalgo notorios de sangre y solar conocido...tan cumplidamente como si en favor de vos...por mis Alcaldes de los Hijodalgo de las mis Audiencias y Chancillerias por todas instancias fueran dadas sentencias en vista y en grado de revista'),¹⁴¹ which made the royal decree a substitution of the judgement of the courts, not a supplementation of the grantee's deficiencies. At the same time, on the part of the petitioners, the genealogical reconstruction of lineages became even more extravagant in seventeenth-century patents than in the previous century. As long as traditional concepts remained unbroken in this way the purchase of nobility was in the strictest sense a contradiction in terms,¹⁴² and hence something whose moral basis was suspect and whose attractiveness was limited.

¹³⁹ AGS CJH leg. 23 (36), f. 205, Pedro Niño to Princess Juana, Toledo, 24 Mar. 1557, 'yo e platicado con algunas personas diziendoles quan bien les estaria hazerse hidalgos ansi para sus personas como para las de sus hijos y decendientes. Responden que biviendo en Toledo no tienen necesidad de mas hidalguia que la que tienen por los privilegios y libertades que los Reyes pasados dieron a los vezinos desta cibdad que aqui biviesen. A esto yo les digo que les podían suzeder cosas que tuviesen necesidad de yr a poblar a otros lugares donde serian ellos y sus hijos pecheros y que no deven perder esta ocaasio para ser libres para sienpre donde quiera que biviesen, y ni esta Razon ny otras muchas que les e dicho no an bastado a que ninguno se mueva a dar un real por la hidalguia, ni yo creo que avra persona en este lugar que le de ny trate deste negocio'.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted from CP 16, f. 17 (Alonso Cavallero of Seville, 20 Apr. 1567).

¹⁴¹ Quoted from CP 17, f. 5 (Mateo de Angulo Bargas Catalán of El Arahal, 4 Dec. 1631), printed.

¹⁴² ALBERT SICROFF, *Les controverses des Statuts de 'Pureté de Sang' en Espagne du XVe au XVIIe siècle* (1960), pp. 296-7; Gerbet, p. 301. Sicroff and Gerbet (p. 306)

The results of this investigation, then, are largely negative. It was only at moments of extreme financial need, provoked by the specific demands of war, that the Crown was prepared to tamper directly with the traditional structure of nobility, and then so reluctantly, with such diplomatic camouflage, and at such a high price that the overall social and economic effects were minimal. Any impact the sale of *hidalguías* had was largely concentrated within one city and a single decade, or at most a generation. To say this is, of course, to say nothing about *hidalguía* in general nor about the other ways of acquiring it. In Castile, as elsewhere, there were alternative and quantitatively much more important ways of becoming noble. Indeed, it may well be that the unimportance of the sale of *hidalguías* is itself an indication of the relative ease of social mobility and the openness of Castilian society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

What does seem certain, however, is that the direct interference of the Crown with the social order was much less in Spain under the Habsburgs than it was under the Trastámaras or the Bourbons,¹⁴³ or, in view of the proliferation of letters of ennoblement and ennobling offices sold from the time of Francis I and the enormous inflation of knighthoods by the first two Stuarts, than it was at the same time in either France or England.¹⁴⁴

also draw attention to the current of feeling that recognized these attitudes to be both restrictive of royal authority and damaging to the nation, but it is obvious from such polemics that the traditional view remained very deeply rooted.

¹⁴³ Gerbet, *op. cit.*; ANTONIO DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *Sociedad y Estado en el siglo XVIII español* (1976), p. 349. AGS DGT 5, legs. 3 and 4, respectively 275 and 395 patents for 1700-99, of which 134 were Castilian titles; the 'Relación de 1710' lists 57 patents 1701-10.

¹⁴⁴ J. H. SHENNAN, *Government and Society in France 1461-1661* (1969), p. 26; R. J. KNECHT, *Francis I and Absolute Monarchy* (Historical Association, London, 1969), p. 12 — 183 letters of ennoblement were issued in the thirty-two years of Francis I's reign of which at least 153 were sold; DAVIS BITTON, *The French Nobility in Crisis* (1969), p. 95 — there were at least 1,000 ennoblements in Normandy alone 1550-1650; JEAN MEYER, *La Noblesse Bretonne au XVIIIe Siècle* (Flammarion, Paris, 1972), pp. 28, 135, after the revocation in 1598 of all *lettres de noblesse* granted since 1578, 500 were put up for sale in France in 1696 and a further 100 in 1704; *ibid.*, pp. 155-7, the purchase

The same inflation of honours took place *within* the aristocracy, at the higher levels of *títulos* and knights of the Military Orders, but at the foundation of the nobility, the basic distinction between gentleman and commoner, the Spanish Crown was directly responsible for none of the scandalous ennoblements that marked the sale of knighthoods under James I. The Habsburgs issued less than 300 *hidalguías* in 150 years; the Stuarts created well over 3,000 knighthoods in forty years. The *hidalgo* in the early seventeenth century had to pay over 6,000 ducats, a sum which presupposed an estate of 60,000 ducats and an income of at least 3,000; the Jacobean knight paid perhaps £ 100 and needed no more than £ 40 a year in rent, the equivalent of about 150 ducats.¹⁴⁵ The Spanish Crown, therefore, did not contribute to the weakening of traditional concepts of nobility or to the undermining of respect for the social hierarchy (however much these may have been occurring in other ways) in the blatant manner that was happening in England and France. Nor, consequently, were the Habsburgs subjected to the same kind of bitter criticism from the Castilian equivalent of the 'gentry'. There was, of course, opposition to the sale and granting of *hidalguías* in the Cortes and in the country, but, significantly, whereas the opposition in France and England was on social grounds, in Castile it was primarily fiscal. The social complaints from the Cortes, to which the Crown was subjected both when it sold *hidalguías* and when it tried to make *hidalguía* more difficult

of office added about 2,000 new families to the French nobility in the eighteenth century, and in Brittany there were 303 new, noble families, 252 from office, 25 from the purchase of *lettres*.

For England, LAWRENCE STONE, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (1965), ch. 3, especially pp. 66-82, and 'The Inflation of Honours 1558-1641', *Past and Present*, no. 14 (November 1958), pp. 45-70.

¹⁴⁵ The price of nobility was also cheaper in France than it was in Castile, though not to the same degree as in England; *lettres de noblesse* cost c. 300 *écus d'or* in the reign of Francis I (Knecht, p. 12), 6,000 *livres* in that of Louis XIV (Meyer, p. 135), the equivalents of less than 350 ducats in the earlier period and about 2,400 ducats in the later, although by then additional expenses raised the actual cost to 4,000 ducats or so.

to acquire, were both muted and secondary. At the same time, the grounds for fiscal complaint, in the light of the number and the impact of the *hidalguías* sold, were in real terms illusory. Not only, therefore, was the direct creation of nobility by the Crown a far less significant component of social mobility and a far less relevant factor in the economy under the Habsburgs than it was at either earlier or later periods, or than it was at the same time in either France or England, but politically it also contributed one ground less to that deep alienation from government that disturbed so many European states in the seventeenth century.

TABLE I

INCOME FROM *HIDALGUÍAS* 1552-1700

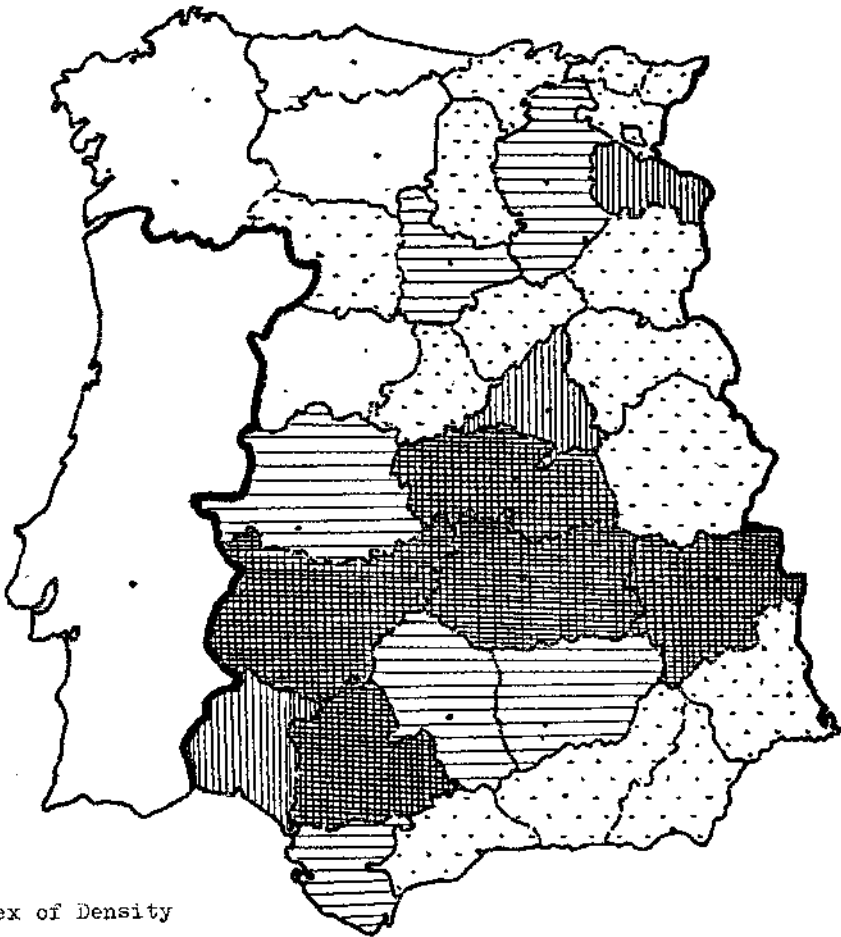
	issues	known income ducats	sales	estimated income ducats	estimated sales
1552-8	10	42,500	9	47,222	10
1561-2	2				
1565-6	4			0-5,000	0-1
1567	17	103,300	18	177,905-206,600	31-36
1568-75	20				
1583-5	5	12,100	2	18,150	3
1591-2	3	18,700	3	18,700	3
1596-8	11	66,600	10	66,600	10
1600-2	5	65,900	9	65,900	9
1605-9	4				
1610-15	6			0-36,611	0-5
1625-9	4			0-12,000	0-3
1629-30	40	175,226	40	175,226	40
1631	20	67,887	17	71,880	18
1632	10	36,818	9	36,818	9
1633-9	34	48,699	13	123,620-127,366	33-34
1640-52	29	14,323	8	46,550-57,292	26-32
1655-63	4				
1655-73	12	35,044	8	118,274-175,220	27-40
1677-82	12				
1691-99	20				
	272			966,845-1,120,585	219-53

TABLE 2





GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF PRIVILEGIOS

modern provinces	population* in <i>vecinos</i>	privilegios		total	%	priv.os % pop. % × 100
		1552-1615	1625-99			
<i>North</i>	743,293	20	29	49	19.22	
Galicia, Asturias						
León, Salamanca	271,112	0	0	0		
Biscay	40,000	0	1	1	0.39	13
Santander	27,035	0	1	1	0.39	19
Logroño	25,217	1	4	5	1.96	104
Burgos	52,234	5	3	8	3.14	81
Palencia	36,799	1	2	3	1.18	43
Valladolid	48,498	2	5	7	2.75	76
Zamora	41,237	2	1	3	1.18	38
Avila	39,972	2	0	2	0.78	26
Segovia	30,571	1	0	1	0.39	17
Soria	25,792	1	1	2	0.78	40
Guadalajara	50,894	1	1	2	0.78	21
Madrid	53,932	4	10	14	5.49	136
<i>South</i>	594,872	65	141	206	80.78	
Cuenca	62,376	0	3	3	1.18	25
Albacete	17,574	2	15	17	6.27	509
Toledo	77,303	8	23	31	12.16	210
Ciudad Real	36,552	10	17	27	10.59	388
Cáceres	61,176	1	8	9	3.53	77
Badajoz	63,895	8	28	36	14.12	296
Sevilla	61,435	30	29	59	23.14	504
Huelva	22,989	0	5	5	1.96	114
Cádiz	20,021	0	3	3	1.18	79
Córdoba	48,554	1	5	6	2.35	65
Jaén	56,656	3	3	6	2.35	56
Granada, Málaga, Almería	48,021	2	1	3	1.18	33
Murcia	18,320	0	1	1	0.39	28
	1,338,165	85	170	255		

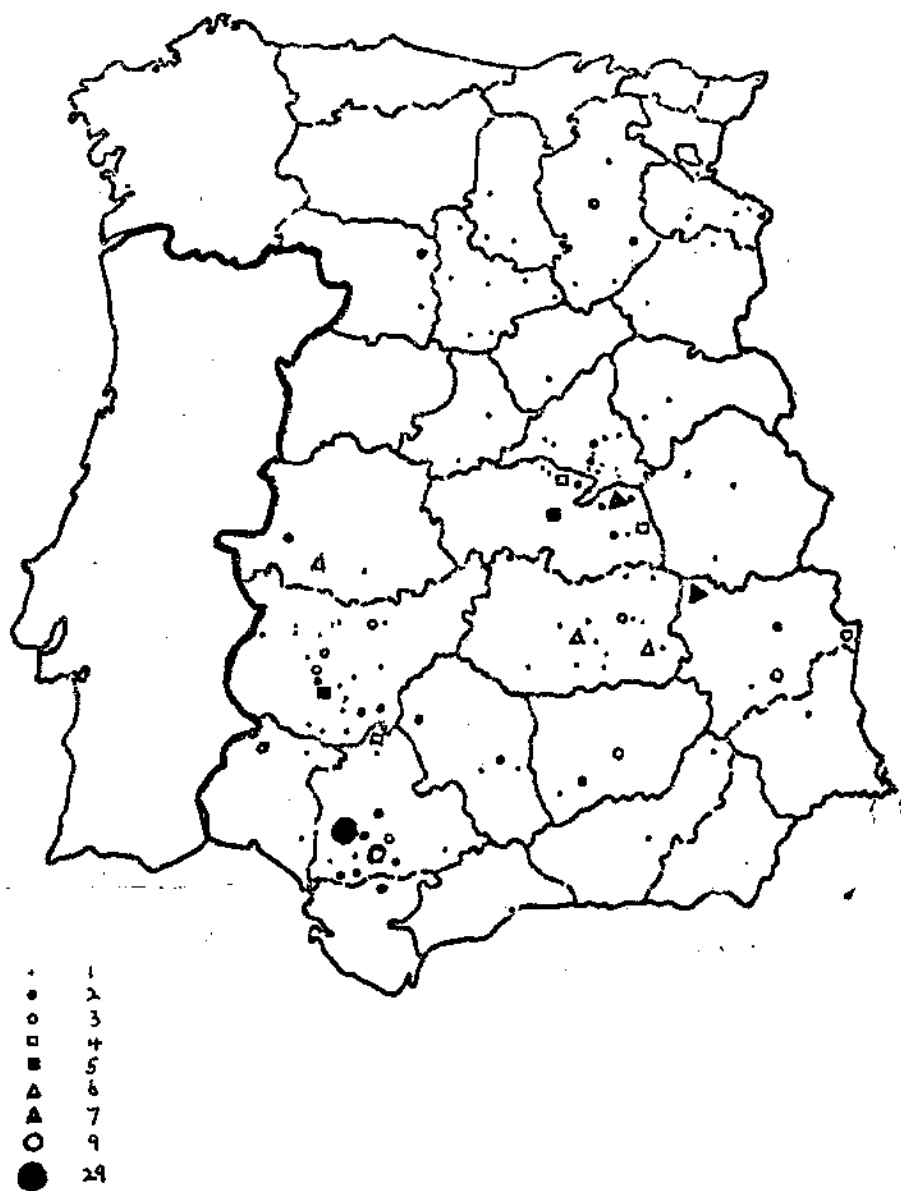
* Population is calculated from a re-working of the 1591 figures printed in Tomás González, *Censo de población de las provincias y partidos de la corona de Castilla en el siglo XVI* (Madrid, 1829).



Index of Density

- 200 + 
- 101-200 
- 51-100 
- 1-50 
- 0

Privilegios de Hidalguía in Castile 1552-1700: Density by Provinces



Geographical Origins of Purchasers of *Hidalguía* in Castile 1552-1700