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An Approach to Asturian Migration to America along Modern Age

Emigration to *Indias* as an object of study has suffered unequal treatment. There are many gaps in relation to the analysis of territory (there is an excess of regional studies and few general monographs) and no more about a wide arc chronological (there are more studies to specific periods of time instead for an overview during modernity). From this point of view, we could affirm that research about Asturian migration to America during the Modern Age is eclipsed by others about the Contemporary Age, especially between 1870 and 1930.

During the Ancient Regime, there was not much attention to migration phenomena and it was dealt with briefly and piecemeal sense. Anyway, we would appreciate the contribution of a sector of nobility, they had improved their social status in various ways, the most highlighted was serving such a military to the Crown in the 18th century.

From a methodological view, we have to be aware of two sides to the emigration phenomena: there was one legal and another one illegal. A random sample of four hundred and fifty people was taken in this research to focus on legal emigration phenomena. In fact, the birth of a Spanish Colonial Empire in The Americas causes continuous movements of population from Spain to America. Then, should this event be analysed from the point of view of emigration? To answer this question we should be aware of two factors: one reason for the trip and the other for the travel time. For this group of migrants, there are many reasons to travel and many more to return to their original land.

I have filed several types of migrants:

- *Provistos*, people who leave to work as staff of government officials, as military personnel, as a priest, etc. Research shows that Asturian migrants held mid-range, which gave them prestige and improve their social status.
- *Criados* (servants), a group of people who went to America such as part of relatives or staff of *provistos* group. *Siervos* represent 54.2% of the sample in this research. They would have configured the entourage that accompanied the previous group. *Siervos* were over *provistos* protection, so they were long-term migrants.
- *Llamados*, people who went to *Indias* because they were demanded by a relative through private correspondence showing their willingness to favour him, it was in the case of absence of direct heirs to the business that he had come to forge in America.
- *Mercaderes* (merchants), a group of people of unknown origin. They used to move to Sevilla or Cádiz, they often settled there because are the main centres where they could do business. These merchants could be assisted by one or two servants who accompanied them on the transoceanic business trip.
- *Viajeros* (travellers), a group of people that could afford to travel to *Indias*.
- *Pobladores y soldados* (settlers and soldiers), they belong to small groups of people who decide to go to *Indias* for colonising lands that need to be consolidated in the conquest process, part of them took part in war events.
- *Clérigos* (clergymen), they were people who belong to religious orders for evangelising activity.

Firstly, many travellers had to accredit their noble social extraction as *hidalgos* at *Casa de la Contratación* showing their pure Christianity blood and social status as part of the nobility group, which was not always fulfilled. As the Modern Age progressed, knowing the social status of migrants started to be complicated because details did not appear in documents. Anyway, checked information has shown 70% of migrants belong to *hidalgos* as a group noble.

Some Asturian councils had strong links with migration, for many different reasons, sometimes it was caused by relevant personalities in the conquest of Indias, occa-

sionally because people from councils kept at services to the King in Indias improving in the military ranks.

The increase of migratory movements to *Indias* may respond to certain circumstances such as agrarian and subsistence in times of crisis, which happened between the decade of 1570 and 1610, from 1690 to 1700, as well as from 1780 to 1810.

The most relevant destination of these characters was the Viceroyalty of *Nueva España*; followed in preference by *Perú* (especially between the 16th and 17th centuries) and *Nueva Granada* (during the 18th century).