



Strategies of the Elite of the Ancien Regime for Obtaining Prebends: The Chapter of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

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In the Modern Age, the family was the institution in charge of guaranteeing any possibilities of social mobility for different groups. In theory, positions in the Church could not be formally inherited.¹ However, in different cathedral chapters, numerous individuals interceded for a relative, resorting to instruments of transmission such as resignations and coadjutorships. Thus, the prebendaries helped their relatives to move up in their ecclesiastical career. Starting from this premise, we intend to detail, in the first place, the characteristics of the forms of access to the Compostela chapter based on the vacancy and its motivations. Secondly, we will analyse relations of kinship within the association. The intention is to demonstrate that the existence of these networks resulted in the formation of lineages that were perpetuated in the chapter for several generations. Finally, the strategies used by some families to move up the social ladder are traced.

Key words: *ecclesiastical chapter; Santiago de Compostela; ways of access, lineage, prebend, family strategies.*

1. SECRETS FOR ACCESSING CATHEDRAL PREBENDS

From the medieval period, the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela showed a clear internal division within the senior clergy between dignities, canons, and rationers (prebendaries). During the first half of the 1700s, the institution was made up of twenty dignities, five *ex officio* canonries, twenty-eight canonries, and nine rationers, where at least 209 people succeeded each other for 235 positions, since some of their members accumulated various prebends (Seijas and

¹This work is part of the research project: *Clergy and Society in the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula (15th–19th centuries)*. Ref: HAR2017-82473-P (AEI/FEDER, UE).

Rodicio, 2017). By comparison with other Castilian chapters, in the cathedral of Murcia there were ten dignities, fifteen canons, and twelve rationers; in Burgos eighteen dignities, forty-four canons, and twenty rationers; in Segovia nine dignities, thirty-nine canons and ten rationers; or in Cádiz six dignities, ten canons, and four rationers (Barrio, 2010; Morgado, 1989). In the Crown of Aragon, the chapter of Mallorca had five dignities and twenty-two canons – the number of rationers is unknown; that of Lleida eight dignities, twenty-four canons, and ten rationers; or that of Tarragona seven dignities, twenty-two canons, and twenty-six rationers (García, 2014; Irigoyen 2001). In short, there were differences in the number of members of the Hispanic chapters, but unanimity in their hierarchical division, since they were all made up of dignities, canons, and rationers.

The capitular prebends were for the most part free provision, that is, they remained under pontifical reserve when they were vacated in the eight apostolic months – after the Concordat of 1753 the pope gave his right to the monarch – and in the hands of prelates and chapters, in the form agreed by both, in the four ordinary months of March, June, September, and December (Barrio, 2011)². In most cathedrals the prelate and the chapter took turns in the election but there were some exceptions. Córdoba, Murcia, and the Compostela see opted for the simultaneous election method. This meant, since the 15th century, the presentation of a candidate by each of the parties, without in any case the vote of the prelate being of higher value (Vázquez, 1987; Díaz, 2012; Irigoyen, 2001; Iglesias, 2012).

In the current state of the research, quantitative data cannot be offered on the appointment of Compostela benefices in the first half of the 18th century; but it does point out, with the appropriate precautions, that the appointment of dignities, as happened in the 1500s, must have belonged to the archbishop, except for the dean, whose election fell to the chapter. The canons and rationers were jointly provided. This was the general rule, but with two exceptions in *ex officio* canonries: the election of the decree lector was made by the dean and the penitentiary by the archbishop (Iglesias, 2014). The other three (doctoral, magisterial, and lector of scripture) were provided by candidacy, as was the canonry of the chapel magisterium. In addition, the presentation of the dignity of Prior of Sar, being a royal patronage, was the responsibility of the monarch. Some examples can be mentioned: Carlos de Borja Ponce de León y Centellas succeeded Pedro Portocarrero in the priory in 1708, granted by the Archbishop Monroy by virtue of the royal decree of Felipe V³. In 1734, his successor, Manuel Pérez de Guzmán *el Bueno*, was granted by the Judicial Vicar, Antonio Fernández de Traba, also by virtue of a royal warrant⁴. Regarding the granting of the collative title, it generally corresponded to the pope or the archbishop, personally or through their general vicariates and judicial vicars. During the first half of the 18th century in Compostela, there were twice as

² As of the Concordat of 1753, the Holy See reserved the faculty of collation of fifty-two benefices, among them three dignities in the Compostela headquarters: the Archdeacon of Reina, the Archdeacon of Santiago or Santa Tasia and the Treasury. *Newest compilation of the Laws of Spain*, book I, title XVIII, law I, Madrid, 1805.

³ Santiago Cathedral Archive [ACS], *Chapter Acts*, IG 47, fs. 111–113.

⁴ ACS, *Chapter Acts*, IG 52, fs. 10v–12.

many pontifical collations (63.8%) as ordinary ones (28.5%) thanks, above all, to the apostolic reserves that granted the popes the collation of certain benefices.

However, the Roman curia many times evaded the right of presentation of prelates and chapters through coadjutorships and resignations in favour, something very frequent in Castilian chapters (Vázquez, 2008; Díaz, 2009; Barrio, 2010; Morgado, 2010). Thus solid family clans were established that managed to monopolize different cathedral prebends. As is well known, in the case of coadjutorships the prebendary asked the pontiff for a clergyman to help him in the service and fulfilment of the obligations of the benefice. The coadjutor – almost always a relative of the prebendary – acquired the right of succession when the owner died. Furthermore, when resigning, the owner of the benefice transferred their ownership – either entirely or reserving a pension – to another person, leaving it in the hands of the pope, but while proposing the successor (Barrio, 2011).

Given the proliferation of these nepotistic habits to which the Apostolic Datary lent itself – due to the economic benefits it obtained – different provisions, canonical and civil, followed one another from the 16th century to try to reduce abusive practices in cathedral chapters⁵. The Council of Trent prohibited coadjutorships, but from the pontificate of Clement VII (1592–1605) they were recovered to allow the transmission of the prebend to the relatives of the capitulars. In the 18th century, after the signing of the Concordat on 26 September 1737 between Clement XII and Felipe V, the granting of coadjutorship was only admitted if the request included a report from the prelate or the chapter. They had to demonstrate the need and suitability of the suitor. However, the Concordat text would prove to be not very effective. In fact, in Santiago, as in many other chapters of the Hispanic monarchy, 23.1% of the prebendaries who entered the institution after 1737 did so through the bulls of coadjutorships and resignations granted after the Concordat. Among the dignities, the percentage came to 33.3%, three of the five prebendaries that came into the chapter used this system, in the canonries 13% did so – three out of twenty-three – and in the hierarchy of rationers another three resorted to this practice, that is, 42.9%. In the Córdoba chapter between December 1737 and January 1746, the percentage of grace prebends, whose ownership was assigned to a coadjutor, amounted to at least 40% (Díaz, 2009a). In Murcia, Cánovas Botía has calculated that a third of the provisions followed the same path until 1745 (Cánovas, 1994). That year Felipe V, by Royal Decree of 24 August, prohibited the granting of coadjutorship with future succession for any prebend or benefice. And on 2 September, by royal decree, he ordered the prelates and chapters not to allow or comply with any bull of coadjutorship and to send them to his Council.

Along these lines, Table 1 shows the different forms of access to the Compostela chapter based on the vacancy and its motivations. In general, the vacancy used to occur due to death, at the will of the beneficiary in the event of resignation, resignation in favour or exchange, and by

⁵ Regarding the Datary, the contributions by Reinhard (1989) and Re (1998) stand out.

transfer. There was also the possibility of gaining a benefice without it having vacated, when the holder chose a successor, by appointing a coadjutor. This practice would be used most frequently to transfer the prebend in favour of consanguineous relatives (Díaz, 2009b; Irigoyen, 2014).

Table 1: Methods of gaining access to the Santiago chapter, 1680–1750

Method of gaining access	Dignities		C. Office		Canons		Rationers		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Death	38	52.1	16	57.1	55	55.0	9	26.5	118	50.2
Coadjutorship	20	27.4	0	0.0	25	25.0	9	26.5	54	23.0
Transfer	4	5.5	7	25.0	3	3.0	10	29.4	24	10.2
Resigned	3	4.1	1	3.6	6	6.0	1	2.9	11	4.7
Forced to resign	1	1.4	1	3.6	2	2.0	4	11.8	8	3.4
Exchange	3	4.1	0	0.0	4	4.0	0	0.0	7	3.0
Ignored	4	5.5	3	10.7	5	5.0	1	2.9	13	5.5
Total	73	100	28	100	100	100	34	100	235	100

Source: ACS, *Chapter Acts*, IG 38–55

From 1680 to 1750, 222 appointments, 94% of the total, have been verified through different methods of access⁶. The data (Table 1) leaves no room for doubt: slightly more than half of the vacancies were filled due to the death of the previous owner (53.2% excluding unknowns), that is, the choice fell on the different institutions (Rome, archbishop, and chapter), and in 49.8% of the occasions (46.8% without unknowns) the appointments were made at the will of the prebendaries. These results can be compared with the Córdoba chapter: 45.5% were provisions for vacancies, 52% through resignations and coadjutorships and the remaining 2.4% for exchanges and forced resignations. In Mallorca, in the same period, approximately 40% of those who succeeded each other in canonries made use of coadjutorship. Finally, without going too far from the Galician territory, between 1547 and 1799 30% of the prebends were gained due to the death of the previous owner, 47% by coadjutorships and resignation, and 2% by exchange. The candidacy route represented 9% and unknown access 12% (Vázquez, 1987; García, 2014; Díaz and López-Salazar, 2014).

When looking at the voluntary vacancy of the beneficiary, the terminology, as confirmed by Arturo Iglesias for the 1500s, is very varied: promotion, renouncing, resignation, free assignment, abandonment, exchange, etc. (Iglesias, 2014). These forms of obtaining benefices had as their main objective the survival of certain family clans in the capitular prebends. Of

⁶ In the chosen chronological framework, the study has been taken back to the last two decades of the seventeenth century to include the prebendaries who, having entered the chapter before 1700, continued on this date.

course with the approval of Pontifical Rome, which sanctioned the appointments by issuing the appropriate bulls, upon payment of a significant amount (Díaz, 2009a). However, it should be noted that nineteen prebendaries, 8% of the provisions, gained access to the capitular body by means of an entrance exam. That is, they would not enter into the same mechanics as the other benefices by distancing themselves from family recommendations.

Regarding forced resignations, only the cases of renouncing and abandonment (3.4%) of the prebend in the hands of the competent authority have been included in this category; in theory, although with reservations, it refers to renouncing in which no type of conditioning has been found, therefore, these would be outside of family transmission. The exchanges (3%) consisted of the voluntary exchange of benefices with the authorization of the archbishop or the pontiff. This was the case, for example, of Benito Díaz de Castro y Pazos who succeeded Pedro Atanasio Cabrera y Luna as cardinal in 1723. He exchanged his canonry by grant of the Judicial Vicar Pedro Freire de Andrade⁷. However, here one could speak of a disguised transfer since the successor in the canonry that he left would be the predecessor in the cardinalate. Four years later the archdeacon Lorenzo de Zúñiga y Rivera did the same in the archdeaconship of Cornado with Gaspar Martínez de Carbona, swapping his archdeaconship of the cathedral of Avila and granted by a bull of grace of His Holiness⁸.

Within the group of transfers, “drop-outs due to promotion” are also considered as well as those in which only “promotions” are discussed. Regarding this, it should be remembered that the transfer from one ecclesiastical office to another could be voluntary, normally because of having obtained a greater benefice, that is, a promotion, or being forced to, by imposition of a superior. On at least nine occasions – in another three it cannot be confirmed – there are cases of promotion to other prebends of the Compostela chapter and in the remaining six they would go on to occupy other bishoprics. Similarly, dropouts/promotions took place when Francisco Antonio Espinosa de los Monteros succeeded in the archdeaconship of Luou in 1727 from Pedro Curiel who left and was promoted to racioners in Seville or when Miguel Jerónimo Millara Montenegro obtained the lector of decrees in 1703 by abandonment when José Antonio Vázquez Jaspe Montenegro ascended to the cardinal major of Santiago⁹. Finally, the three transfers were produced by having passed the prebends to other canonries or parochial benefices outside the Compostela cathedral: Pedro Rodrigo Gómez and Diego José de las Muelas Cardo became masters of the chapel because their predecessors had moved to the magisterium of the Incarnation of Madrid. For his part, Andrés Jerónimo Porrás y Gayoso succeeded Juan Bernardo Serrano as rationer in 1711 due to his having passed to the benefice of Cobres, as granted by the archbishop¹⁰.

⁷ ACS, *Chapter Acts*, IG 50, fs. 49–50.

⁸ ACS, *Chapter Acts*, IG 50, f. 58.

⁹ ACS, *Chapter Acts*, IG 50, f. 388v and IG 46, fs. 72v–73.

¹⁰ ACS, *Chapter Acts*, IG 53, f. 263v, IG 50, f. 35v and IG 48, f. 35v.



But, undoubtedly, among the mechanisms designed to bypass the ordinary channels of entry, coadjutorship was, by far, the most frequent (23%). A true reflection of the fact that before the middle of the century the abandonment of the prebend through this system was safer than *in favorem* resignations, which did not come to 5%. This fact is confirmed when comparing the data with that of the institution in the 16th century characterized by a predominance of resignations with a percentage close to 20% compared to 11.7% by coadjutorship (Iglesias, 2012). In the first half of the 18th century, 54 coadjutors have been found – twenty-five canons, twenty dignities, and eight rationers – and the majority (94.4%) had access to the benefice due to the death of the owner. Some 3.7% was due to promotion and the remaining 1.8% due to the resignation of the prebend holder. These results show that obtaining a coadjutorship bull with future succession became an effective resource to safeguard family interests and, consequently, perpetuate certain power dynasties in the time prior to the Concordat of 1753 (Rey, 1990; Fernández, 2015).

2. FAMILY TIES BETWEEN THE CAPITULARS

Kinship ties with the canons were a determining factor in accessing the prebends of the Compostela chapter in the first half of the 1700s (Seijas, 2016). In fact, some of the surnames that made up the cathedral payroll were insistently repeated. In this way, the prebendaries would help many of their relatives with their ecclesiastical career. Of the thirty-two repeated surnames found among the Compostela capitulars, twenty-four – about 30% of the group – belonged to the same family group; fifteen succeeded each other in the same prebend and the remaining nine, although with capitular relatives, held different positions in the institution. Among the relatives who did not succeed each other, 48.7% were uncles and nephews, 46.2% were brothers, and 5.1% were cousins¹¹.

¹¹ The uncle and nephew relationship appears in the surnames: Bantiñán y Orgeira, Gil Taboada, Granado Catalán, Guiráldez, Huerta, Omaña, Pardiñas Villardefrancos, and Valladares Somoza. Brothers have been found in the Estévez de Castro, Guiráldez, Hernández de Uzal, Mella Varela, Posse de Soto y Gesto, Santa María, Riaño de Malla, and Yanguas Morales lineages. And finally, the two cousins belonged to the Romero family.

Table 2: Relatives in the succession of prebends, 1700–1750

Capitular	Access	Preb. ¹²	Predecessor	Relative ¹³	Capitular	Access	Preb.	Predecessor	Relative
Posse de Soto, Gregorio J.	1735	AR	Posse de Soto y Gesto, Pedro A.	Brother	Bermúdez de Castro, José F.	1727	CC	Bermúdez de Castro, Luis F.	Uncle
Armesto y Astorga, Juan J.	1724	AS	Llanos y Astorga, Juan de	Cousin	Salazar y Vega, Francisco	1731	CC	Pérez de Villanueva y Salazar, Manuel	Cousin
Mendoza Caamaño y Sotomayor, Álvaro	1702	AT	Mendoza Caamaño y Sotomayor, Baltasar	Uncle	Mella Varela, Francisco	1748	CC	Mella Varela, Antonio	Brother
Fariña y Romay, Ignacio A.	1710	C	Fariña de la Concha, Antonio J.	Uncle	Omaña Queipo de Llano, Lope	1708	D	Omaña Uría, Lope de	Uncle
Ruiz Gallo "el Mozo", Andrés	1720	C	Ruiz y Ruiz, Andrés	Uncle	García Abadiano, Manuel	1722	R	García Abadiano, Francisco	Uncle
Santa María y Salazar, Julián T. de	1721	C	Santa María y Salazar, Felipe D. de	Uncle	Pereira y Mahía, Miguel	1724	R	Mahía y Lago, Pedro	Uncle
Fariña y Taboada, José A.	1728	C	Fariña y Romay, Ignacio A.	Uncle	García de Orgeira, Domingo	1727	R	Orgeira García, Alonso de	Uncle
Valladares Louzao, Bernardo F.	1740	C	Valladares Somoza, Pablo	Uncle	Bantiñán y Orgeira, Francisco A. de	1740	R	García Orgeira de Estúa, Domingo	Cousin
Valladares y Somoza, Juan A.	1749	C	Valladares Louzao, Bernardo F.	Brother	Pereira y Mato, Miguel J.	1745	R	Pereira y Mahía, Miguel	Uncle
Cuesta y Huerta, Juan A.	1725	CC	Huerta y Posada, Gabriel de la	Uncle					

Source: ACS, *Information on Blood Cleanliness*, IG 730–732, 737, 739, 741, 749, 753, 761–762 768, 772–773, 775; *Books of Possessions and Deaths (ss. XVII–XVIII)*, Pending Call No., n.p., and *Possessions and Vacancies (XVIII–XIX)*, Pending Call No.

¹² Prebend: AR: Archdeacon of Reina; AS: Archdeacon of Salnés; AT: Archdeacon of Trastamara; C: canon; CC: cardinal canon; D: dean and R: rationer.

¹³ Relationship of the predecessor with the capitular who receives the prebend.

Furthermore, among the relatives who succeeded each other in the prebend there were six cousins and as many siblings – 15.8% in each case. But without a doubt, the most prevalent kinship relationship was the uncle and nephew tandem – 68.4% – quite logical, since as Antonio Irigoyen has pointed out for the Murcian chapter (which can be extrapolated to other cathedrals) when they wanted to ensure the maintenance of the prebend within the family one of its young members was called upon. The usual thing was the delivery of the benefice to a nephew through the extraordinary means of coadjutorship (Irigoyen, 2001; Iglesias, 2012; Irigoyen 2014; Díaz, 2014). The alleged justification for obtaining the bulls and, therefore, the need for a substitute, was the advanced age and/or precarious health of the holder of the prebend. But the data reveals that in the Compostela chapter the request for coadjutorship was intended to favour the relatives of the capitulars. In addition, the holder would continue to enjoy the main income from the benefice and a portion of his emoluments would be allocated to the coadjutor. One example, among others, is that of José Francisco Bermúdez de Castro y Andrade, coadjutor from 1725, who received more than 30 ducats of chamber gold – about 12,000 maravedis – for the monthly matins and *interprentes* of a canonry valued at 600 ducats; José Antonio Manuel Fariña from Vigo, coadjutor from 1724, was assigned the matins and *interprentes* of a canonry valued at another 600 ducats; or the clergyman Miguel José Pereira y Mato, nephew of Miguel Pereira y Mahía, receiving the emoluments of matins, lucrative epistles, and *interprentes* (except those of the *congrua*) from a rationer that was worth 200 ducats, when he was admitted as coadjutor in 1743. At times, the coadjutorship prebend was passed on to other collateral relatives. This was so for the cousins Orgeira, Astorga, and Salazar or the brothers Mella Varela and Posse de Soto. Along with the coadjutorships there were also resignations, obtained in Rome, when the owner renounced the prebend and named a successor. This was the case of Bernardo Valladares who used resignation to cede the canonry to his brother Juan Valladares in 1749¹⁴.

Ultimately, the provision through these mechanisms turned into the formation of lineages that were perpetuated for several generations, until the signing of the Concordat of 1753. Thus, they used strategies for the patrimonialization of positions assimilated to part of the family patrimony. The duration in the institution of each lineage varied from two individuals (eleven cases in which the transmission of the prebend is registered) to three individuals (four cases), that is, the most usual thing would be not to exceed two generations of uncles and nephews.

The tracking of some members of the chapter body confirms that among the dignities, the deanery was in the hands of the Omaña family between 1704–1710, Lope de Omaña Uría of Oviedo, a doctor of laws, being succeeded by his nephew Lope Omaña Queipo de Llano, a descendent of Asturian lineage of the counts of Toreno. His family was related to the Count of Miranda, the Count of Luna, and the Marquis of Camposagrado y Valdecarzana (Portela, 1944)¹⁵. The Archdeacon of Reina was monopolized by the Posse de Soto family between 1709

¹⁴ ACS, *Chapter Acts*, IG 493, f. 379 and fs. 435–435v, IG 522, f. 222 and IG 523, fs. 292v–293.

¹⁵ ACS, *Information on Cleanliness*, IG 735, 6, 1708.

and 1755. The first to occupy the position was Pedro Antonio Posse de Soto y Gesto, a native of Santiago, and a descendant of the house of Posse in San Martiño de Cances, in the province of the same name. He was succeeded by his brother, Dr Gregorio José Posse, who held the position between 1735 and 1755, granted a bull of coadjutorship by Clemente XII¹⁶. Two other brothers were present in the chapter: canons José Benito and Manuel Antonio. Their father, Dr Juan Antonio Posse de Soto, had been a capitular doctor and a Royal Hospital doctor, but also a minister of the Inquisition and a professor of medicine. The archdeacon of Salnés was occupied throughout the first half of the 18th century by Juan de Llanos y Astorga del Castillo, who came to the prebend in the 1600s and kept it until 1724, and his first cousin Juan José Armesto y Astorga, coadjutor from 1708, and native of the town of Villafranca del Bierzo.

In the same way, the Mendoza Caamaño family took over the Archdeaconship of Trastamara between 1685 and 1761. The first to enter the institution was Baltasar Mendoza Caamaño y Sotomayor, son of Mauro de Mendoza y Sotomayor, Marquis of Vilagarcía, where he was from, and Antonia Caamaño y Mendoza, lady of Rubiáns. In 1703 he was succeeded by his paternal nephew, Álvaro Mendoza Caamaño y Sotomayor, son of the viceroy of the kingdom of Valencia, Antonio Domingo de Mendoza Caamaño y Sotomayor. He would occupy the prebend until his death in 1761¹⁷. The succession in four cardinalates is also illustrative. One was controlled by two members of the Huerta lineage: Gabriel de la Huerta y Posada – rationer before ascending to cardinal in 1700 – and his nephew, Juan Antonio de la Cuesta y Huerta, from Oviedo, who succeeded him after his death in 1725¹⁸; the other by the Bermúdez de Castro family: Luis Francisco (1699–1727) and his nephew José Francisco (1727–1752), a native of the jurisdiction of Betanzos, in the diocese of Santiago, and a descendant of the house of Gondar¹⁹; a third by cousins Manuel Pérez de Villanueva y Salazar (1707–1731), a native of the diocese of Calahorra, and Francisco Salazar y Vega (1731–1742) from Madrid, who succeeded him after his death with a bull of coadjutorship by Benedicto XIII²⁰; and lastly one by the brothers Antonio and Francisco Mella Varela who would occupy the position between 1704 and 1754. They were natives of the diocese of Lugo and descendants of the houses of Pantiñobre, Belmil, and Vilar de Ferreiros on the part of their father, Don Andrés de Mella y Mejuto, and of A Baña, Brandariz, and Castro on the part of their mother, Doña Catalina Vázquez Varela²¹.

Other examples of the patrimonialization instruments offered by Rome would be the four canonries in which two or three generations succeeded; the Fariña family (1683–1762), the Ruiz family (1694–1722), the Santa María y Salazar family (1712–1747) or the Valladares family (1713–1768); and the three rationers that would fall to the García Abadiano family

¹⁶ ACS, *Bulls concerning Canonries, Dignities and Rationers*, IG 201, fs. 75–76.

¹⁷ ACS, *Books of Possessions and Deaths (ss. XVII–XVIII)*, Pending Call No., n.p.

¹⁸ ACS, *Books of Possessions and Deaths (ss. XVII–XVIII)*, Pending Call No., n.p.

¹⁹ ACS, *Information on Cleanliness* IG 772, number 1, 1725.

²⁰ ACS, *Chapter Acts*, IG 51, fs. 148–148v.

²¹ ACS, *Information on Cleanliness*, IG 773, number 1, 1740.

(1679–1768), the Mahía y Pereira family (1703–1784) or the Orgeira family (1681–1764). These results corroborate that the succession of relatives in the same prebend was a more common practice among dignities (53.3%) and canonries (26.7%), a very attractive proposition for the great capitular lineages. On the other hand, hoarding rationers was not so common (20%) given the high cost of obtaining the bulls of resignation or coadjutorship for lower social groups.

Finally, when the transmission of the prebend did not take place, there are some cases in which several relatives coincided for some years in different canonries. For example, Domingo Estévez de Castro was canon ten years before his brother Benito Estévez left the lectoral canonry in 1759; Manuel Granado Catalán held the doctoral canonry between 1685 and 1714 and his nephew, Esteban Granado, was a rationer between 1710 and 1753. Antonio Guiráldez was treasurer between 1725 and 1741 and his brother Luis Bernardo canon from 1739 to 1783. José Hernández de Uzal enjoyed a canonry from 1747 and his brother Francisco was a rationer three years later. The brothers Ignacio and Antonio Mella coincided as cardinals from 1731 and their uncle, Antonio Manuel, with their nephew Antonio from 1704. José Benito and Manuel Antonio Posse, canons, and their other brother Pedro Antonio, archdeacon of Reina, also coincided for some years. Pedro Riaño served as cardinal major between 1713 and 1729, and his brother Juan Antonio as canon from 1712 to 1726. Manuel de Yanguas was canon between 1701 and 1749 and his brother Juan from 1710²². Ultimately, these cases verify that kinship encouraged the acquiring of a prebend in the Compostela church.

3. A MATTER OF BLOOD: STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL PROMOTION

In order to assess the social and family relationships around the cathedral chapter and other urban institutions of Compostela, the example of the Porrás family is very revealing. They were natives of a parish in the interior of Galicia, Santa María de Piloño, in the diocese of Santiago. Their presence in the capitular body has been confirmed since the sixteenth century. Thus, Juan de Porrás was coadjutor canon cardinal of Fernando Yáñez de Vaamonde from 1644 to 1645, then holder until 1658. As usual, he was succeeded by his nephew Benito Antonio Ayazo de Porrás, who entered as coadjutor in 1650 and took possession of the prebend eight years later. However, he passed away very soon and only enjoyed his canonry in its own right for a mere five months. In the 18th century, Andrés Jerónimo de Porrás y Gayoso entered the institution as rationer from 1711 until his death in 1741. When rummaging through the ancestors of this individual, it was seen that two brothers of the maternal grandmother were also part of the chapter institution. Antonio Ozores de Sotomayor obtained a canonry in 1632 and held it until 1659, and was then treasurer until 1667. His brother, Fernando Ozores de Sotomayor, was coadjutor treasurer for his uncle Pedro Álvarez de Sotomayor from 1645 to 1648 and holder

²² ACS, *Information on Blood Cleanliness*, IG 738, IG 744, IG 749, IG 771, IG 772 and IG 773; ACS, *Books of Possessions and Deaths (ss. XVII–XVIII)*, Pending Call No., n.p.

for the following ten years. That is to say, in the 1600s the paternal and maternal ancestors of the rationer Porras were contemporaries in the chapter, but occupying different benefices. The two family groups, which would link up after the marriage of the rationer's parents, in 1678, would not be represented in the association again until the 1700s. In this century, the aforementioned Andrés Jerónimo would enter first and, after his death, be followed by his nephew, Antonio José de Toubes Salgado Porras y Gayoso, coadjutor of Cardinal Francisco Antonio de Bezí from 1743. Thus the presence of the lineage was consolidated in a prestigious institution that represented ecclesiastical power. Likewise, this ratifies that the ability to preserve the prebends, in which members of the same family succeeded each other, did not usually last more than two generations.

During the first half of the 18th century, the Porras developed different family strategies to preserve the social status of previous centuries²³. In this sense, their permanence in positions of local power should be highlighted. Thus, at the beginning of the century they were already incorporated into the Compostela chapter, considered one of the first steps in the process of social climbing. The rationer's father, Juan de Porras Figueroa, had acceded in 1658 – after the resignation of his father Gonzalo de Porras – and held the position of alderman until 1710. The following year, the strategy practised by the family, as was customary to prevent the breaking up of patrimony, would lead Juan's second son to join the ecclesiastical chapter, that is, the Church as a mechanism of social mobility (Soria and Díaz, 2012). Porras y Gayoso succeeded Juan Bernardo Serrano y Montalvo in the prebend, but it has not been possible to establish, at least for the moment, if there was any family link between them.

The position reached by Porras in the chapter's structure was not the highest. It is worth noting that the rationers were the lowest group of the cathedral clergy, so the possibilities of intervention within the family would be less, as would be their income. However, the rationer knew how to find other ways to obtain economic benefits and advantages for his family. Thus, in 1713, two years after entering the institution, he became administrator of the Nueva de Santiago holding. The capitular steward would receive 1,720 reals per year from its rent. This holding, of medieval origin, which he acquired as the highest bidder, made up a lot of properties located in the jurisdictions of Xiro da Rocha, Vea, and Montaos, to the north and south of the city of Compostela. The rationer, as manager of the holding, obtained for his benefice the difference between what the goods of the holding actually produced and the price indicated in the public auction held by the capitular association (Seijas, 2018). He was administrator until 5 January 1723. Later he exchanged it with Canon Pablo Valladares Somoza for that of San Martiño de Aríns, and was forced to hand over to the chapter the 6,600 reals established at the auction of the holding²⁴. This operation can be considered a family strategy since the prebendary named his nephew, Pedro Pita de Porras, son of his sister Catalina and Mateo Pita, priest of

²³ On the Porras family and the links with other families in the modern period, the works carried out by Baudilio Barreiro (1990 and 2009) are essential.

²⁴ University of Santiago Historic Archive [AHUS], *Notary Protocols*, S-2.886 (Book 1 of 1723), fs. 96v–102v.

that parish. Consequently, it was an intentional behaviour that allowed him to grant the curate of this locality to a member of his family, and to assure him a means of support.

But family networks extended to other institutions as well. His older brother, Gonzalo de Porras, heir to the Pazo and estate of Raíndo (founded in 1582 by María Núñez Figueroa, married in a second marriage to the Compostela alderman Juan Porras, the rationer's great-great-grandfather) became alderman of the city after the resignation of his father in 1710. In addition, on 30 June 1739 Andrés Jerónimo bought in his own name, for 24,000 reals, the property of the office of the attorney of the archiepiscopal audiences and courts of the city of Santiago. The purchase was made from Vicente Rapela and Rosa Rapela who had received it by inheritance from their deceased parents, Juan Antonio Rapela and María Jacinta Lanzós. A year later, on 1 August 1740, the alderman also acquired the clerk's office for the preserve and jurisdiction of Piloño²⁵.

As the first-born of the family, and thanks to the economic base provided by the estate, Gonzalo de Porras exercised different strategies for various sisters to take their vows. This was done by Petronila Cayetana, who took vows in the Compostela convent of Santo Domingo de Belvís, and Andrea Jacinta de Porras, who did so in Santa Clara. Both of them renounced all the goods received by inheritance from their parents in favour of the bond and estate of their brother, who had paid for the dowries²⁶. In this way, the first-born, following the example of his parents, ensured the future of his relatives and strengthened his estate, obeying the logic of family strategies. In fact, two other sisters of the rationer had been sent – as Barreiro Mallón has pointed out – to communities in the city with the dowries that their parents had contributed: 1,400 ducats for the entry of Margarita Josefa into the monastery of San Paio de Antealtares and 1,200 for Urraca María to enter the Belvís convent. Of the other three brothers, the eldest, as has been said, became a rationer of the cathedral, Antonio became rector of Santo André de Cures, and José Antonio became abbot of San Salvador de Leirado; later renouncing their legal portion in favour of their brother Gonzalo as successor in the bond (Barreiro, 2009).

Other strategic possibilities, such as advantageous marriage alliances, were used by the alderman in favour of other sisters. He gave 33,000 reals in dowry to each of his sisters Juana Benita, Isabel María, and Antonia Francisca de Porras, for their marriages with Pedro Agustín Sánchez de Lanzós, José Antonio Montenegro y Miranda, and Antonio Hipólito Cervela y Teixeira²⁷. With these strategies, the priority of the first-born would be to maintain the social position achieved and expand the network of family relationships with other houses.

²⁵ AHUS, *Notary Protocols*, S-2903 (1739), fs. 226r–227r and S-2.904 (1740), f. 121r.

²⁶ AHUS, *Notary Protocols*, S-2.897 (1733), f. 155r–159r and S-2.899 (1735), fs. 4r–5v

²⁷ AHUS, *Notary Protocols*, S-2.891 (Book 1 of 1727), f. 72r–72v; f. 73r and fs. 92r–93r; S-2.894 (1730), f. 67r–67v, f. 68r–68v and f. 154r–154v and S-2.894 (1730), fs. 191r–192r.

Along these same lines, the rationer Porras was also concerned about benefiting his relatives, when writing his will on 17 December 1740 before Simón Rodríguez²⁸. In fact, he named his elder brother, alderman Gonzalo de Porras, the universal heir. In this way, he consolidated the patrimony of the house and enlarged the lineage. In addition, as is clear from his last wishes, he financed the studies of three nephews living in his house, the children of Mateo Pita and Catalina de Porras: Álvaro, Pedro and Antonio. The first, a cleric of lesser orders, would receive upon the death of his uncle “a breviary in four sections, the choir cape, the furs, and the summer and winter habits” and Pedro, parish priest of the Aríns parish, would take 450 reals. The clergyman did not forget his niece, Juana Pita Porras, as he contributed more than 2,000 ducats for her dowry and profession in the Belvís convent. Likewise, he bequeathed her 300 reals, the same amount as her sister, Cayetana de Porras, a nun in the aforementioned convent. The rationer’s motivation, as specified in his testamentary provisions, was for his sister Catalina to renounce her legitimate paternal and maternal rights in favour of the recipient of the family patrimony, that is, her brother Gonzalo. Otherwise, she and her husband would have to return what the rationer had spent on training their sons and their daughter's profession. Undoubtedly, the rationer wanted to avoid the dispersion of the patrimony and maintain the estate in the family. At the end of the day, the legal institution of the estate, as Antonio Irigoyen points out, “was the bridge between the past and the future, which gave reason for being in the present, the reason for being in the family” (Irigoyen, 2015). Andrés Jerónimo also favoured other female relatives in his testamentary dispositions. He bequeathed 2,000 reals to his other sister, Juana de Porras, and to his niece, María Vicenta de Porras y Calderón, daughter of the alderman and María Francisca Calderón, 1,500 reals “for her personal dressings”. Porras y Gayoso died on 3 January 1741 and was buried in the cloister of the Compostela cathedral, in front of the Alba chapel, in one of the two graves where his relatives rested.

In short, the strategy of the Porras in the first half of the century advocated continuance in the municipal council and in the cathedral chapter, the main centres of local power, in skilful combination with the weaving of strategic marriage alliances for some female relatives and permanent celibacy for some others.

Finally, another example of the many that could be cited about the means used by the privileged to promote their relatives was to facilitate their entry into ecclesiastical benefices. This was fulfilled, for example, with the foundation made by Dean Manuel Francisco Rodríguez de Castro (1717–1747). He instituted three chaplaincies in the cathedral choir for the ordination of three relatives²⁹. These types of foundations, which emerged in the 14th century, and which would proliferate in modern centuries, sought the social prestige of the founding lineage. They would end up becoming a pure family strategy for social reproduction in order to assign a member of the family to the Church (Pro, 1989; Irigoyen, 2001; Soria, 2002; Catalán, 2004; Herreros, 2012). In fact, the testator established that the chaplains who obtained two of the

²⁸ AHUS, *Notary Protocols*, S-2.905 (1741), f. 10v.

²⁹ ACS, *Foundations of Dean Rodriguez Castro. Chaplaincy Provision*, IG 136, n.p.

chaplains should be, in the first instance, the closest relatives by maternal line, the third would be for the relatives of his father and, among these, the descendants of his brother Jacobo; that is, the chaplaincies were family or “blood” chaplaincies³⁰. In addition, he entrusted the appointment of the three chaplains to the chapter institution and specified that if they were 24 years old when they received it, they should become ordained priests within a year, at the most two; if they were younger, when they reached that age. In any case, the founder limited the period of enjoyment of the 275 reals to study grammar – another of the pious works established in his testamentary provisions – until obtaining the chaplaincy. Both chaplaincy and income were incompatible. On the other hand, if the applicant was a professor of a faculty, a collegiate of a college, a lawyer, or a candidate for any prebend or parish, he could also obtain it without residing there, provided that he observed the obligations assigned to the chaplain. The annual income for each one was 880 reals and they, in exchange, promised to say eighty masses a year in favour of the soul of the founder, and whose performance, as patron, the cathedral institution had to monitor³¹. Likewise, the major masses and processions celebrated by the chapter inside and outside the cathedral were a must. For each absence, 20 maravedis were deducted, although they had the benefit of fifty days of recreation to attend to their properties and other particular issues³². In addition, the dean ordered in his codicil, protocolized in Santiago on 9 July 1747, the delivery of 2,500 ducats to each of his two nieces, daughters of his brother Jacobo, for their marriage or entry into religion³³. Consequently, different strategies that allowed the dean, as protector of his family, to ensure the future of his relatives who could aspire to develop an ecclesiastical career or marry into important families.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Compostela chapter was a great institution, located in an eminently clerical city, with a very high number of positions compared to other peninsular chapters, but in keeping with its economic capacity and social pre-eminence. After all, it was the third most important chapter of the Crown of Castile, after Toledo and Seville. From the analysis of family relationships within the institution, it can be concluded, as in other cathedrals, that many prebendaries helped their relatives with their ecclesiastical career. In the stage prior to the Concordat of 1753, identical surnames succeeded each other in the same positions. On other occasions, several members of the same family coincided in time, but with different prebends. This situation resulted in the formation of lineages (Omaña, Posse de Soto, Mendoza Caamaño, etc.) that

³⁰ On 25 March 1750, Don Martín Castelo took possession of one of the chaplaincies, which the founder had assigned to his relatives by paternal line. The two chaplaincies that corresponded to the relatives by maternal line were conferred to Gregorio López who held it from 4 April 1751, and to Juan García, who was granted it on 23 August 1751 and began to carry it out on the 27th of that month. ACS, *Accounts and other data*, IG 135, f. 1 and f. 6.

³¹ For comparison, there is the case of the bishopric of Albarracín where the average number of Masses per chaplaincy was much higher, 159 per year. On the island of El Hierro, the average was around 98 masses per year among the founders who were of greater social descent. Latorre (2015) and Acosta (1992).

³² ACS *Provision of Chaplaincies*, IG 136, n.p.

³³ AHUS, *Book of Wills*, S-3012 (1747), f. 118r



were perpetuated for several generations, especially among the dignities and canonries, more attractive as they were to the great capitular lines. And although a little more than half of the prebendaries acceded to the chapter by canonical means, that is, by provision after a vacancy, many did so without the benefice having been vacated, thanks to the extraordinary channels of coadjutorship and resignations. The former would be used most of all to transfer the prebend in favour of other relatives, with the most common relationship being the uncle and nephew tandem.

Likewise, the tracking of family strategies has confirmed that members of the Porrás lineage advocated continuance in the municipal council and in the cathedral chapter, the main centres of local power, in skilful combination with the weaving of strategic marriage alliances for some female kin and permanent celibacy for others. Finally, the individual actions of the prebendaries, through the founding of chaplains, would entail careful strategies to favour relatives.

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