



*Sons of Adam,
Daughters of Eve*

The Peasant Worldview of
the Alto Minho

JOÃO DE PINA-CABRAL

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To
Daniel P. de Pina-Cabral
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PREFACE

In his introduction to *A Portuguese Rural Society* José Cutileiro argues that a social anthropologist who studies his own society is at a disadvantage and that 'in order to observe and describe the life of some of my fellow-countrymen I had, as it were, to impersonate an Oxford anthropologist' (1971: p. vii). Later on, in the 1977 Portuguese edition of the same work, he changed his mind, arguing that, if the methods of social anthropology are to be trusted at all, they are not dependent on the particular person who uses them.

This issue is clearly debatable. My belief, however, is that we have to take for granted that the social anthropologist as a human being has vested interests in the way he presents his data, whatever the conditions under which his fieldwork was carried out. As Maybury-Lewis points out in the introduction to *Akwẽ-Shavante Society* (1974), the social anthropologist himself should have the honesty to point out any factor which may have had a particular influence on his picture or his knowledge of the society he is studying.

In my own case, even though I am by birth and by education Portuguese, I grew up in Africa as an Anglican. In the summer of 1977, when I first started to prepare for fieldwork, the staunchly Catholic world of provincial Portugal represented to me a largely novel experience. I made a point of choosing an area of rural Minho where I had had no previous contacts, in an attempt to obtain greater freedom of movement, at least during the first period of adaptation to, and discovery of, the field. The suggestion of the borough of Ponte da Barca came from Manuel Villaverde Cabral, then spending a sabbatical year in Oxford. My acquaintance with local society was facilitated by D. Eurico Nogueira, Archbishop of Braga, who gave me letters of introduction to two local priests. I take this opportunity to thank him for his kindness, both then and later.

It took me three months to be accepted by the residents of Paço, where I eventually took up residence. These were three very difficult months. It was only later, however, that I became aware of a problem which I had not predicted and which eventually proved extremely difficult to overcome. This was the progressive discovery of my identity as a member of the urban élite. This membership gave me both status and

an informal kind of power: privileges which I did not at all welcome, particularly as I came to realize that they were hindrances in my relations with the peasantry. Throughout the fieldwork I had to contend with the expectations, prejudices, and biases of townsfolk and peasants alike, both of whom imputed to me beliefs, habits, and attitudes which, in most cases, I did not hold.

At the time, this struggle was largely unstated and unconscious. It was only in the process of writing up the material that I became aware of how important my personal experience of the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry had been for my understanding of local society. I believe my perception of the struggle was increased by my being a native Portuguese. Fewer expectations would have been placed on a foreigner, particularly one who did not speak Portuguese fluently.

This study was written as a D.Phil. thesis for the Institute of Social Anthropology of Oxford University. The thesis was examined in March 1982. To John K. Campbell, who supervised my work, I owe an immense debt of gratitude. I am also grateful to Rodney Needham, whose passion for perfection instilled in me renewed enthusiasm at a difficult moment in the process of completing the thesis; and to Peter Rivière and Julian A. Pitt-Rivers, my examiners, who encouraged me to continue the work and to publish the results.

Back in Lisbon, from 1982 to 1984, I continued to visit the fieldwork area in regular short trips, while radically revising the text of the thesis; in some instances I even changed my mind. Unable to thank all who helped and encouraged me throughout these seven long years, I have to limit myself to those whose generosity was particularly outstanding: Hermínio Martins, Manuel Villaverde Cabral, Renée Hirschon, Rui G. Feijó, and, in Ponte de Barca, António José da Costa and his household, Alzira das Dores e Silva and her household, the late António da Silva Oliveira, his wife and children, Father Fernando Sá and Father José Cerqueira Carneiro.

I make acknowledgement for the use I have made of parts of my own articles to the Editors of the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, *Análise Social*, *Estudos Contemporâneos* and to Croom Helm. Much detail omitted in this book is recorded in these articles.

I am grateful to the British Council and to the Philip Bagby Trust (Oxford) for their funding of the early stages of the thesis. In Lisbon, the Instituto de Ciências Sociais provided the indispensable conditions for the transformation of the thesis into a book. Just as the book went to press, I was appointed to a Research Fellowship at the University of

Southampton funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, which it is hoped will allow me to continue to develop the arguments expounded in the present work. I am equally indebted to these institutions.

Finally, there are those whom I cannot thank enough and to whom I dedicate this work, my father, my mother, and my wife.

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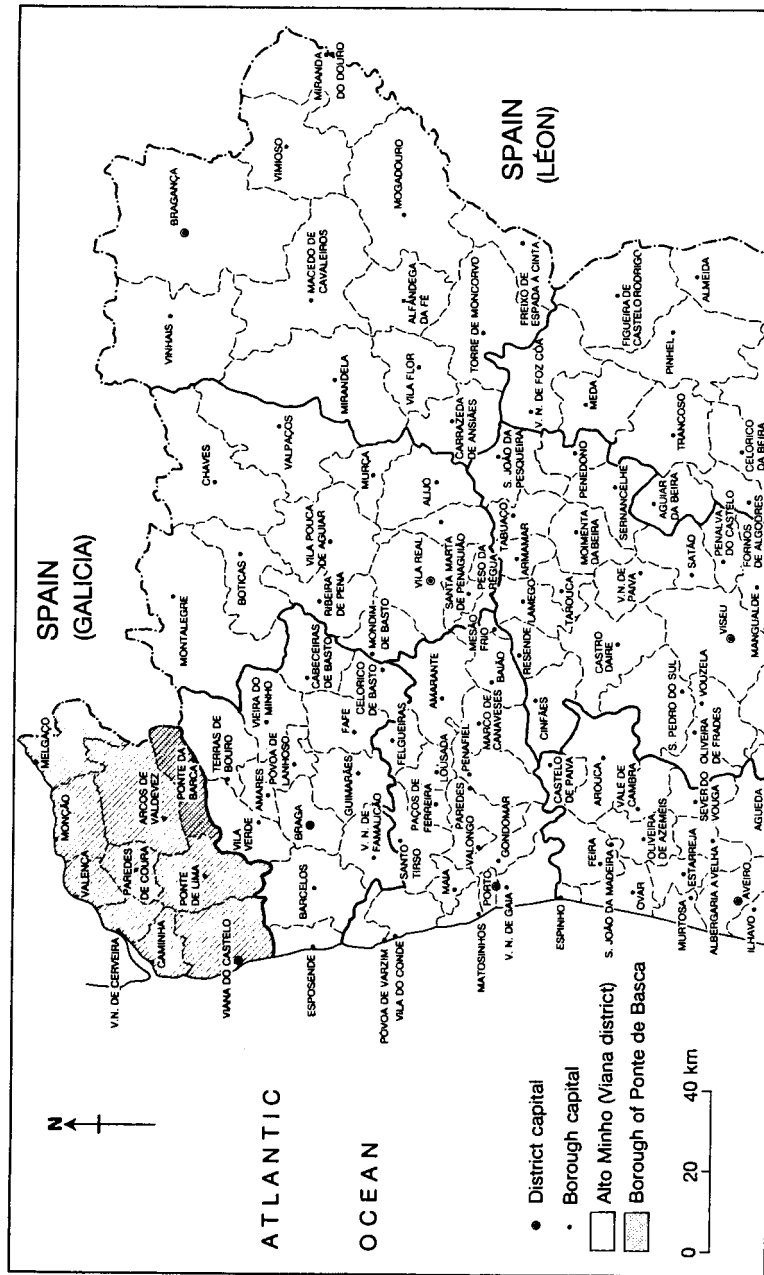
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I

Introduction

Long ago [man] ceased merely to live, and began to think how he lived; he ceased merely to feel life; he conceived it. Out of all phenomena contributing to life he formed a concept of life, fertility, prosperity, vitality. He realised that there was something which distinguished the animate from the inanimate, and this something he called life.

A. M. Hocart, *Kings and Councillors*

1. The setting

I

The River Lima runs westwards from the Spanish province of Orense to the Atlantic coast, which it meets at Viana do Castelo, the capital city of one of the districts of the Portuguese province of Minho. Further along the southern bank of the Lima are two small towns, Ponte de Lima and Ponte da Barca, whose names refer to the bridges (*pontes*) crossing the river at the points where the road which follows it meets the major ancient routes south to north from Braga (the ecclesiastical and economic capital of Minho) to the River Minho on the northernmost border of the country. Paço de S. Miguel and Couto de S. Fins, whose residents are the subjects of this study, are two riverside parishes of the small borough of Ponte da Barca, which is situated on the southern bank of the river about forty kilometres from the sea.¹

The north-eastern part of Minho, where Ponte da Barca lies, is usually referred to as the Alto Minho, as opposed to the lower and flatter areas of this province. It is a humid and on the whole fertile region which, apart from the most mountainous stretches, has a fairly temperate

¹ As a means of stressing the fact that these parishes are studied here as samples of peasant life in the Alto Minho and not for any specific characteristics which might distinguish them from others, as well as a means of protecting the subjects of this study, I have chosen to give the two parishes pseudonyms. The name Paço was chosen because of the importance in this parish's history of the House of Paço to which I will refer later. The names of the boroughs and districts are the correct ones. Most names of residents of the two parishes are pseudonyms.

climate with average rainfall just below 2,000 mm and an average temperature of 13° C to 14° C ranging between a minimum of 4° C to 5° C in January to a maximum of 27° C to 28° C in July.² Paço and Couto, therefore, have fairly warm and dry summers and very humid, wet, and moderately cold winters. The situation of these parishes on the southern bank of the river renders the climate rather less temperate than that of neighbouring ones on the northern bank. This is aggravated by the contours of the terrain. From Pegadinha, on the south of Paço (517 m altitude), to the river (14 m altitude) the land rises approximately 500 m within a distance of barely 4 km. This means that Paço and Couto are like two north-facing amphitheatres where the terraces remind one of small rows of seats, with the river, the main road, and the churches forming the stage.

II

Minho as a whole has a cultural identity which distinguishes it clearly from the other Portuguese provinces. This is particularly pronounced in the Alto Minho. Although this study deals in particular with the two parishes where I took up residence in 1978–80 for two periods of eight months each, its conclusions are on the whole valid for most of the Alto Minho. When, in the course of this work, I refer to *minhoto* peasants or to *minhoto* culture, I have in mind in particular the Alto Minho. These two parishes were chosen not because they presented any specific identifying features, but precisely because they were like most of the other parishes in this region, in their accessibility to the road, proximity to a town, and consequent openness to urban influence. The more isolated, mountain parishes of the borough, such as Ermida, have a different and more picturesque character. One such parish was Vilarinho das Furnas, which Jorge Dias described in his now famous work (Dias, 1981) and which now lies under a dam. These communities, however, are very unlike those of the common *minhoto* parishes, and even Soajo, on the northern bank of the Lima, which was described by Cailler-Boisvert, is in many ways atypical (Cailler-Boisvert, 1966). Her articles, however, are the ethnographic accounts whose subject is geographically nearest to the material presented here.³

² Average rainfall, 1979: Viana observatory: 1712.1 mm, Braga observatory: 1818.1 mm. From *Anuário Estatístico*, 1979.

³ Unfortunately, the differences between northern and southern Portugal are such that José Cutileiro's *A Portuguese Rural Society* (1971) is not a natural companion to this study. A far closer example is provided by Carmelo Lisón's work in Galicia (1971a; 1971b; 1973; 1974; 1976).

Rural parishes are grouped around a small town (*vila*) and together they form a borough (*concelho*). These towns are the seat of the local representatives of the central administration, and of large business firms. Similarly, the locally elected administrative body of greatest significance, the municipality (*Câmara*), is found here, as well as the hospital, the health centre, the social security centre (*Casa do Povo*), the law courts, and the large shops. It is also here that the fairs (*feiras*) are held. The town, which is normally rather sleepy but livens up on market days, is the centre for the borough's élite, the provincial bourgeoisie, which is eager to distinguish itself from the rest of the population, the peasantry, which it looks down upon as backward and uneducated.

Most peasants live in hamlets (*lugares*) scattered across the hillsides, which are composed of from five to eighty households (*casas*), and which possess a definite social identity. Hamlets are associated with specific stretches of land, whether or not all of this land is owned by hamlet residents. There is no local conception of a social group independent of its geographic setting, so that when a *minhoto* speaks of his hamlet, parish or borough, he has both the people and the land in mind (cf. Pitt-Rivers, 1971: 7). A number of hamlets, in turn, are centred around a cemetery and a church to form a parish. Under the name *freguesia*, the parish is the smallest administrative unit which the government recognizes and it elects a Parish Council (*Junta*) which represents its interests; under the name *paróquia*, the parish is the smallest ecclesiastical unit to which a priest is appointed and elects a Church Committee to represent its interests (*Comissão Fabriqueira*).

Both the parish and the hamlet are primarily conceived of as aggregates of households—the *casas de vizinhos*. The word *casa* may refer both to a household and to any building inhabited. Similarly, the word *vizinho* has two related but none the less distinct meanings: when used to refer to individuals, it has much the same meaning as the English 'neighbour'; when *vizinho* is used—often in the plural—to refer to a household, however, it applies only to those households which own land and reside permanently in a parish or hamlet (cf. Serrão, 1965: s.v. *vizinho*). This practice not only stresses the association of the household with the land but also implicitly denies the rights of residence to landless people who do not form households in the sense of *casas de vizinhos*, for these necessarily require a direct and permanent link with the land. The double meanings of these central terms *casa* and *vizinho* reflect an ambivalent attitude to landless people. The *minhoto* peasant's

concern with equality of status, which will be discussed below, excludes landless labourers as a group, although it does not exclude them as individuals.

For as long as we know, the *minhoto* peasantry has not been a uniform group. There have always been considerable differences in wealth between *jornaleiros* (landless people), *caseiros* (share-croppers), and *lavradores* (owner-farmers). Larger landowners rarely work the land and tend to live in the towns rather than in rural areas. Those who do live in rural parishes usually inhabit large houses in a *quinta* (large farm). In this region of Portugal, wealthy landowners who identify themselves with the provincial bourgeoisie do not call themselves *lavradores* but *proprietários* (literally, owners).

In spite of their differences all of the three types of peasants to which I have referred participate in a common identity by opposition to the provincial bourgeoisie. They dress and behave alike, they speak with the same accent, they share roughly the same attitudes. The population of the borough, therefore, is clearly divided into two status groups: the bourgeoisie and the peasantry.⁴

The primary aim of this study is to describe analytically the modes of thought and perception of the world of the *minhoto* peasants—hereafter referred to as ‘the peasant worldview’. In doing this, I am trying to place this worldview in its historical, sociological and economic context, and I am searching for the underlying principles which unify it both in a diachronic and synchronic sense.

My use of the term ‘worldview’ was suggested by Daryll Forde’s early definition in *African Worlds*, as consisting of ‘the dominant beliefs and attitudes of one people concerning the place of Man in Nature and in Society, not only as revealed in formal and informal expressions of belief but also as implicit in customs and ethical prescriptions in both ritual and secular contexts’ (1954: p. vii). Generally speaking, the long but erratic history of the term shows two tendencies which I specifically attempted to avoid: the temptation to use the term exclusively in the context of religious ideas, and the incapacity to relate it to the process of socio-economic change (v. Kearney, 1975 and Kiernan, 1981). Similarly, Berger and Luckman’s use of the notion of ‘worldview’ is too restricted for my purposes; my own usage is closer to their alternative concept of

⁴ Weber defines ‘status’ as ‘an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges’ and ‘status group’ as ‘a plurality of persons who, within a larger group, successfully claim a) a special esteem and possibly also b) status monopolies’ (1978, I: 305-6).

‘everything that passes for “knowledge” in society’ (1966: 26-7). Anthropological literature provides us with an array of terms which might be used to cover much the same object of study. I chose ‘worldview’ as an alternative to ‘culture’, which would be too inclusive; to ‘ideology’ which tends to imply falseness; and to ‘cosmology’ or ‘folk model’ which overstress the systematic and codified aspects of everyday perception of the world.

In regard to the most important issues which have accompanied the history of the concept of worldview—those raised by the notions of space, time, causality, and self—my approach is not systematic. Rather, the ethnographic illustrations of these issues become clear in the course of this study, an essential factor of which is the problem of rationality—itsself an old companion to the concept of worldview.

III

The organization of this study was motivated by the search for an underlying cultural coherence. After a general introduction, I first look at the symbolic features of the elementary social unit, the household, and its formation. I then proceed to examine relations within the household, mainly those between the sexes, and attitudes to human reproduction. This is followed by a description of various manifestations of an experience of community between parish members, and of co-operation between households and between humans and divine beings. This leads to a discussion of ‘envy’ as the perceived source of social conflict and inequality, and of the means by which it is counteracted, mainly through the offices of priests and ‘white witches’. The study concludes with a description of burials, an analysis of attitudes to death as expressed in various forms of worship centred around death, and with the realization that the opposition between life and death—a profound desire for life in its widest possible sense—is the ultimate concern of the peasants of the Alto Minho.

2. The history

I

The historical roots of the present-day division of the land into parishes are to be found in the Roman occupation of the Iberian peninsula. The first Romans reported to have reached the River Lima were the soldiers of Decimus Junus Brutus in 137 BC, but full control of this region finally

took place only during the Pax Augusta (Reis, 1978). The Romans curbed the war-like nature of the Celtic population and encouraged settlement in the more fertile and hitherto unexploited valleys (Carvalho, 1956). Agriculture was organized within the regime of the *villa*. A Roman settler would be given a stretch of land where he would organize and manage production, usually with the aid of a foreman. Due to the hilly nature of the terrain in this region, most of the land of the villa was divided into discontinuous plots which were worked by semi-free labourers (Saraiva, 1978; Sampaio, 1979).

The villas were positioned at strategic points near rivers and roads. Paço and Couto may have originated in this way. The Roman burial site which was found near the church in Paço favours this interpretation, particularly as it is near the very ancient House of Paço, one of the noblest houses of this region (Costa, 1868, I: 208). The word *paço*, Sampaio argues, derives from *pallatium* which, in this region, designated the house of the lord of the villa (1979: 68-9). This would have meant that the road which follows the left bank of the river passed outside its door. In Roman times, this particular stretch of the road linked two major military and civil routes: that which extended from Braga to Tuy and another from Braga to Monção. This second road crosses the river at the spot where, in the fifteenth century, the town of Ponte da Barca rose. During the same period, a bridge was built where previously a barge had crossed the river. This bridge gave the name to the town and later the borough: Ponte da Barca - literally, 'bridge of the barge'.

In 411 the region was invaded by barbarian hordes, the Sueves. These were followed by the Visigoths in 585, who, in general terms, continued the Roman system of exploitation of the land. Throughout the last centuries of the Roman occupation, most of the local population had been converted to Christianity. By the sixth century, when the Sueves and, shortly after, the Visigoths were converted to orthodox Christianity from Arianism (550-60 and 589, respectively), a new and revitalized ecclesiastical organization had taken root. I shall quote Saraiva's summary of this process:

The parishes substituted the *villas* as civic units and the moral headship of the communities passed from the hands of the *dominus*, to those of the parish priest. This evolution is at the root of the word *freguesia*, the term which progressively came to designate the new units of population and neighbourhood. The worker who, from the point of view of the villa, was a serf; from an ecclesiastical viewpoint was a son: *filie ecclesiae* (Saraiva, 1978: 22).

The Muslim invasion in the eighth century was not felt strongly in this area and Christianity did not suffer greatly. Although the city of Braga had been taken in 716, by 868 the Christians had recovered it. To this day, 'the Moors' remain strongly present in the popular mind and mythology, but in fact the influence of Islamic culture was minimal. This may help to explain some of the distinct ethnographic differences between northern and southern Portugal and particularly the preservation of the peculiarly north-western sexual division of labour which had already puzzled the Roman invaders.

By the Middle Ages, the discontinuous plots attached to the Roman villa had become fully independent agricultural enterprises. This is the origin of the various old farms (*quintas*) which, in both Paço and Couto, control the best stretches of land and which were until very recently owned by members of the rural aristocracy.

The more isolated populations always remained largely outside the control of the noble landowners. These mountain villages maintained systems of co-operation which some authors claim to be very ancient.⁵ To some extent this is the case with the hilltop hamlets in Paço and Couto, where the land has always been owned by the residents and where some hamlet-wide systems of co-operation survived up to the time of the Second World War.

Large stretches of land were put under the control of war-lords by the medieval kings and called *Terras* (literally, lands). Paço and Couto belonged to the Terra da Nóbrega which, with a few alterations, became the borough of Ponte da Barca in the mid-nineteenth century. The earliest references to Paço and Couto as parishes are found in a list of the taxes, written before the middle of 1097, which each church had to pay to the Archbishop of Braga (Costa, 1959: 61). The dedication of Paço to St Michael indicates that the church was originally attached to a seigneurial home and we know in fact that its *padroado* (the right to appoint the priest) was still in lay hands in the twelfth century (Costa, 1959: 135; Oliveira, 1950: 64-5). The church of Couto received its patron, S. Fins, at a later date, perhaps when a monastery was created there by Augustinian canons. In 1180, Afonso Henriques (the first king of Portugal) confirmed that the parish was a *couto* of the monastery which meant that it was managed entirely by the monastery, without royal interference. The monastery was abolished in 1434 (Costa, 1959: 197).

⁵ Arguments in favour of this view: e.g. Saraiva, 1978: 235-6; Dias, 1981: 19. For a cogent argument against the 'communitarian' interpretation: Costa, 1959: 235-6.

II

Largely due to the geological constraints of the hilly terrain and to the characteristically dense population, land has traditionally been much divided in Minho. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the overwhelming majority of the land was exploited in plots less than half a hectare in size (1.20 acres) (Oliveira, 1980). Thus, the big landowners of Minho were usually owners of a large number of very small plots.

Tenancy was held mostly under emphyteusis, a system of Roman law which divides the tenure of the land into two categories of rights; that of the owner, who receives an annual rent, and that of the perpetual tenant, who has power over the land to use it in whatever way he wishes. The *ancien régime* system of exacting rent came to an end with the set of laws passed by the elected parliament (*cortes*) of 1821-3 and with the laws written by the liberal minister Mouzinho da Silveira in 1832. These abolished the tithe and most other seigneurial and ecclesiastical dues, they favoured the purchase of full rights to the property by the tenant, abolished the system of tax-collectors and finally in 1863 abolished entailed interests. The intention of these reforms was to open the way for the development of capitalist agriculture, a purpose never fully achieved.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century a new agricultural system, which was dependent on the use of new vegetable and cereal crop species, had been developing in this region. Maize, which by the turn of the seventeenth century had become a major crop in the humid region of Minho, has a productivity three to four times higher than that of wheat or rye, the cereals which had previously been cultivated there. Yields of fifty to one, and even up to three times that amount, are common and maize is better suited to the climatic and geological conditions of Minho than is wheat or rye. This meant that a greater amount of land could be cultivated profitably and it is possible that even in the eighteenth century maize had contributed to demographic growth. Finally, owing to its reliability, maize put an end to the periodic famines which had previously been so frequent (Braudel, 1967: 108-13; A. Oliveira, 1974: 252-3).

Maize required irrigation. In Minho large-scale waterworks are not usually necessary as irrigation is easily achieved by redirecting the small streams which run down the hills or by digging out horizontal wells from the sides of the hills (the *minas*). Water nevertheless remains scarce and the issue of rights to it, in a region where there are so many

small sources, becomes extremely complex. To this day water rights are one of the most frequently encountered reasons for legal disputes.

By considerably reducing the area of marsh and uncultivated land, the introduction of maize is largely responsible for the decline of free-range and transhumant cattle-breeding and the development of stable cattle-breeding. The by-products of maize compensate for the reduction in pastures, as the stalks, the leaves, and the male flowers on top (the latter two being picked even before the grain is harvested), as well as the grain itself, are used to feed the animals. Furthermore, a new system of crop rotation, and the fact that maize does not exhaust the soil as much as wheat or rye, meant that fields could be cultivated every year. Typically, from October to March or April, the fields are used to cultivate fodder for the cattle or other 'novelties'⁶ such as beetroot, parsnips, lupins, and other leguminous plants which enrich the soil and prevent its exhaustion. Bean plants grow up the maize stalks, thus producing one of the farmer's most important staple foods. Increased cereal production, therefore, was achieved without a significant reduction of cattle-breeding.

At the same time that maize was being introduced, another change was also taking place. Vines were no longer being grown on the ground, where they occupied much-needed space, but instead trees were being planted along the edges of the fields and the vines were trained along them. This meant that they did not occupy space and that the produce of the trees (often edible chestnuts) could also be utilized. At a later stage, vines started being grown on pergolas around the edges of the fields. When these are on flat ground, leguminous plants are grown under them; alternatively they are placed over the terraces dividing the fields, which would otherwise be wasted. The increased need for fertilizers was usually answered by cleaning the scrubland and using the bushes as beds for cattle stables to produce manure. By the early twentieth century, however, artificial fertilizers were being used in Minho (Halpern Pereira, 1971: 103).

Other important species such as pine trees, olive trees and potatoes were new features of the landscape throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Taborda de Morais, 1940: 97-138). As the raising of goats decreased, the area dedicated to pinewoods increased considerably and these now cover many of the less profitable hilltop lands, thus providing sources of long-term income for the peasants. The complex

⁶ *Novidades*, a word used to describe species which, in the seventeenth century, were indeed new.

articulation of stock-breeding in stables, together with intense agriculture in small scattered and irrigated plots, is what is usually referred to as mixed farming—*policultura*—the system that still dominates the rural areas of Minho. The result is an intense utilization of the land where even the smallest plateau or terrace in the hills can be put to use.

Throughout the nineteenth century there was a conscious effort on behalf of the *minhoto* farmers to diversify production. The common conception of nineteenth-century peasant agriculture as a subsistence agriculture is incompatible with this effort, as well as with the well developed inter-regional and international commerce in cattle, wine, and fruit, and finally with the existence of large towns and cities in the north-west, the economies of which were dependent on rural production (cf. Halpern Pereira, 1971).

The development of mixed farming in Minho may be understood as a response to two contradictory pulls being made on the farmer: the existence of a market economy and of a reasonably widespread system of exchange which makes it possible for the farmer to produce a surplus; and a concomitant unwillingness to rely on the market system for the most essential requirements. Mixed farming represented a form of protection against market fluctuation in prices and against climatic variability. By diversifying production, the farmer assured himself that if one of his products did not fare well during a certain year, he could be recompensed by profits on other products: as a man in Paço once said to me, 'When God gives maize, he does not give wine.'

Finally, the variety of products meant that although, strictly speaking, agriculture was not of a subsistence type, the household was not dependent on purchased commodities since it produced most of its essential subsistence requirements. As Andrew Pearce has pointed out, 'the schematic answer to why the subsistence orientation of family productive units should survive is simple enough: the peasant does not perceive the existence of a secure system of distribution of goods and facilities for family livelihood based on money-exchange, and his perception generally corresponds to the real situation' (1971: 72-3). The peasant's justified suspicion of the market system means that a subsistence orientation has survived until today.

In spite of the relative prosperity of the rural areas during the 1860s, male emigration continued throughout the nineteenth century. Emigration was not a new phenomenon in the area and dates back to the fifteenth century at least. In the eighteenth century rural poverty had led

to male emigration to Brazil on a large scale: José Fernando da Silva, writing about the navigability of the River Lima towards the end of the reign of José I (1750-77), includes a description of the town and borough of Ponte da Barca. He comments on the fertility of the region but complains about the poor living conditions in the rural areas and the serious exploitation of small farmers. As a result of this, he argues, the young men leave and only the aged remain behind.

When, in the 1890s, commerce in agricultural products collapsed in the face of competition by other more efficient producers, the country found itself in a position of economic bankruptcy and this rural recession is clearly reflected in the emigration figures. Until 1868-9 emigration had remained fairly stable, even decreasing slightly, but from that date onwards it started to rise, reaching peaks in 1888, 1895, and again in 1912 when the national figures were almost four times what they had been in 1888 (see Figure 1). Confronted with the economic recession, shortage of land, and an increased penetration of state bureaucracy, the peasant was forced to emigrate. Emigration was seen by the participants

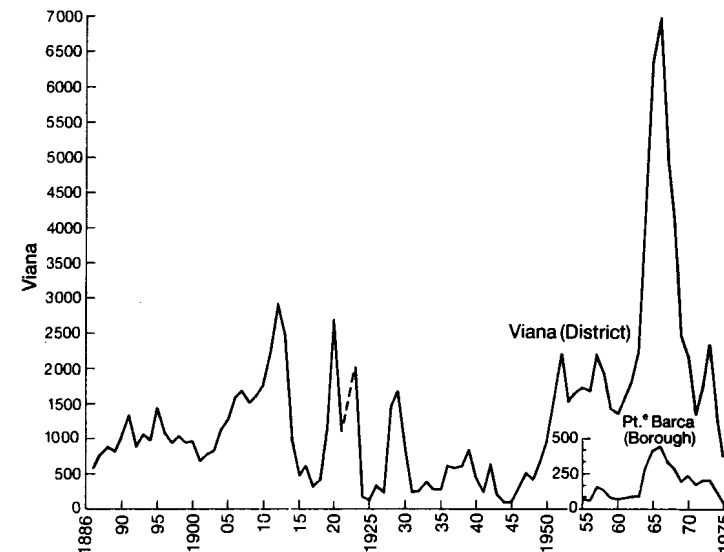


Figure 1. Number of legal emigrants per annum in the borough of Ponte da Barca (1955-75) and the district of Viana (1886-1975). The scale for Ponte da Barca is twice the size of that for Viana. Source: Anuários Demográficos, Instituto Nacional de Estatística, Lisbon, 1951-79.

as a last resort in the attempt to avoid indebtedness, the subsequent expropriation of land, and rural proletarianization.

During the First World War, owing to the difficulty of travel, emigration figures dropped drastically, only to rise again after 1918. They are erratic during the 1930s and 1940s, again due to external circumstances. At home this led to an increased shortage of land and more rural impoverishment. The wave of emigration (mostly to Brazil) in the 1930s left many women without their husbands. For the most part these men neither sent any remittances nor returned. This behaviour is an anomaly and is locally interpreted to mean that their economic failure in Brazil prevented them from doing either. The decade of the 1940s is still remembered as a period of hunger and even starvation, when poor women were often forced to sell their bodies to obtain bread during the winter months. Rural proletarianization increased and the proceeds of agricultural wage labour were extremely low. As rural employment was seasonal, extreme hunger was common among the *jornaleiros*, the landless labourers.

After the end of the Second World War emigration figures returned to the pre-1914 level. At this stage, however, peasants tended to emigrate to Europe and North America and no longer to Brazil. Suddenly, as the western European economies prospered, we find an unprecedented rise in the number of emigrants. At its peak, in 1966, legal emigration for the whole of Portugal reached the extraordinary figure of 120,239. If we take into account the fact that the estimated percentage of clandestine emigrants to France ranged from 44 per cent in 1960 to 61 per cent in 1970, we can see how the figures for legal emigrants, high as they were, hide the real magnitude of the phenomenon (Serrão, 1974: 63). For a country with a population of under nine million the impact of this trend on the rural areas, from which most emigrants came, can readily be understood. Between 1961 and 1970, 13.4 per cent of the population recorded by the 1960 census in the district of Viana had emigrated legally, and in the borough of Ponte da Barca the number of legal emigrants corresponded to 15.3 per cent of the total 1960 population.

Post-war emigration exhibits characteristics which explain why the exodus was so great and which differentiate it clearly from previous trends. The percentage of clandestine emigrants was very high. Poor peasants, who previously had not been able to afford the journey to Brazil, could now emigrate: any landless labourer who was courageous enough—for the hardships were great—could pack his satchel and go to

France.⁷ Young men conscripted into the army, which in the 1960s meant going to fight in Africa, could escape without too much difficulty; the expenses involved in the trip, high as they were, were within the reach of most peasants and, even if a migrant did not manage to make much money abroad, it was always easy to return. Finally, although very few succeeded in making a fortune, the salaries which were paid to migrants were comparatively high by Portuguese standards.⁸

Remittances from emigrants had an almost immediate impact on the north-western rural economy. Land prices rose sharply and emigrants began buying back the land. A wealthy peasant farmer in Paço classified for me the great changes in the ownership of land which have taken place within the past two decades in the following terms: 'Now, things are as in the times of Afonso Henriques, of the *Reconquista* from the Moors, the share-croppers are buying back the land.'

Landlords were, on the whole, interested in selling land for two reasons. First, the exploitation of the land in the traditional way had become unprofitable both in terms of competition from technically more advanced agriculture and in terms of the rise in labour costs. Secondly, in the seventies in particular, the demand for land was so intense that prices rose sharply. Wealthier peasants demanded the right to own land and were willing to sacrifice their savings in order to do so. The landlords, therefore, were easily persuaded to yield control over land which was not very profitable economically, but which was now worth great sums of money.

At the same time, the peasants started buying houses and renovating their old ones. This brought a great deal of wealth to the rural areas as it fostered the development of a local building industry, which then employed many young people who were in search of paid labour in the non-agricultural sector. Concomitantly, remittances from emigrants paid for a small but substantial development in agricultural techniques.

The sociological effects of this emigration were also considerable. First, it significantly improved rural standards of living. The difference between the three traditional strata of the peasantry—landless labourers, share-croppers and tenant farmers, and owner farmers—progressively

⁷ In fact, they often still had to pay the *passadores* who organized their clandestine travel. The amounts, however, were comparatively smaller. For a description of one of these truly epic journeys, see Viegas Guerreiro (1981: 283-99).

⁸ In 1967 the average hourly wage of a worker in Portugal was a sixth to a third of that in the five European countries studied by Xavier Pintado (1967: 57-89).

diminished. Nowadays there are very few day labourers, since most of them either emigrated and brought back some wealth with which they bought land, or took up jobs as paid workers in the building industry. It may be remarked that the increasing economic well-being of rural Alto Minho was not accompanied as a rule by a significant development of industrial activities apart from building.

In 1974-6, due to the widespread recession and as a means of minimizing the growing problem of unemployment, France, Germany, and Canada closed their borders to new emigrants. In Paço and Couto this did not cause an immediate local crisis; some young men went to Venezuela, others were employed by the building industry which was still being boosted by emigrant remittances. Since 1980, however, remittances have started to decrease rapidly as most of the emigrants of the 1960s have returned or settled abroad. Consequently, new opportunities for the employment of the young are becoming scarcer.

Emigration brought about radical changes in peasant society. The resultant economic well-being was accompanied by a weakening of the subsistence sector and the peasant is today dependent on purchased commodities. Furthermore, although standards of living have risen, the technical development of agriculture has not kept up with consumer demands, with the result that peasant families have become dependent on alternative sources of income. At present, the region is entering a crisis: agricultural work functions as a means of hiding a serious unemployment problem, but the standards of living of the rural population are once again decreasing rapidly.

III

At the time of my fieldwork the figures of the 1970 Portuguese census were not available (definitive figures have never been published). As an attempt to overcome this serious gap in our knowledge, a household census of both parishes was carried out in Paço in 1979 and in Couto in 1979-80. In 1982, the official provisory figures for the 1981 census were published and they proved to be significantly comparable to our unofficial figures.

Although, due to its larger size, Paço has a higher number of households than Couto, the growth patterns of both parishes are very similar (see Figure 2). There was a slow growth which was interrupted in the 1890s and again in the 1930s. Since 1950 there has been a steady decline which reflects the emigrational exodus.

Table I.

'Present' population		
	1979-1980	1981 ⁹
District of Viana		255,614
Borough of Ponte da Barca		13,999
Paço	1,106	1,114
Couto	618	646
'Present' households		
	1979-1980	1981
District of Viana		70,840
Borough of Ponte da Barca		3,949
Paço	281	291
Couto	176	183

From 1930 to 1950, the demographic growth rates¹⁰ are positive in both parishes, accompanying the general trend for both the district and the borough (cf. Table II). From 1950 to 1960, the growth rate is negative in the parishes and in the borough; the mild growth at district level reflects the development of the city of Viana. From 1960 to 1970, the decrease in the population is felt at all levels. In Paço it is weaker, reflecting the deeper attachment to the land of its inhabitants. By contrast, Couto systematically shows the greatest population decrease. Finally, from 1970 to 1981, the decrease is again milder. Until 1974, the emigratory trend of the previous decade continues; after that, however, and especially after 1976, emigration practically finishes. The district of Viana has a positive growth rate for the decade, once again reflecting urban and not rural growth.

In 1795, Paço had 160 households and 573 inhabitants, while Couto had 116 households and 348 inhabitants (Cruz, 1970: AP. II); nearly two centuries later, in 1979, these numbers had not doubled. The reasons for this slow rate of growth are to be found in emigration and not in birth or death rates. This becomes clear once we compare the

⁹ The 1981 census figures refer only to 'present' population, that is, the households and inhabitants who were in residence at the time of the census.

¹⁰ These demographic growth rates were worked out on the basis of the formula $r = (\sqrt[m]{\frac{X_n}{X_t}} - 1) 100$: where r = growth rate; m = number of intervening years; X_n = the population in the last year of the series; and X_t = the population in the first year (Floud, 1979: 93-7). Sources: Portuguese censuses, 1930-81, 'present' population.

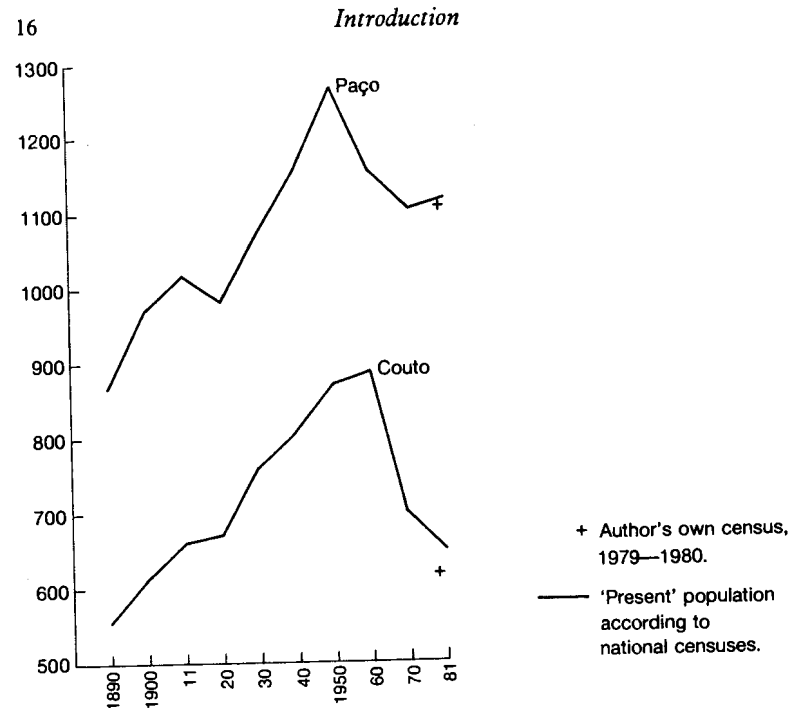


Figure 2. Population of Paço and Couto. *Source:* Recenseamentos gerais da População, 1890-1981. Instituto Nacional de Estatística, Lisbon.

Table II. Demographic growth rates (per cent per annum, see note 10)

Years	1930-50	1950-60	1960-70	1970-81
Viana, district	+0.67	+0.03	-0.93	+0.17
Ponte da Barca, borough	+0.64	-0.16	-1.16	-0.27
Paço, parish	+0.84	-0.96	-0.41	+0.08
Couto, parish	+0.68	-1.01	-1.27	-0.62

evolution of population numbers with the emigration numbers: the periods of crisis in the 1890s and in the 1930s and the exodus of the 1960s are all reflected in the demographic growth (see Figures 1 and 2).

3. Aspects of the economy

I

As Portuguese agrarian economists have argued, the articulation between the agricultural and the industrial sectors of the Portuguese economy would appear to be negative if it were not for the fact that the agricultural sector has functioned as a producer and reproducer of the labour force. This is true not only for the Portuguese industrial sector but also, via the process of emigration, for the countries which received Portuguese workers. Furthermore, during periods of recession, the Portuguese agricultural sector has reabsorbed some of the excess workers, a conclusion corroborated by the variation in emigration figures cited above. The currency remittances sent back home by emigrants have allowed both for an acceleration of industrialization through the purchase of equipment abroad, and for the satisfaction of the growing demand for food products of the urban population, through the purchase of food from foreign countries. Thus, the low levels of productivity of Portuguese agriculture, as well as its articulation with the capitalist sector of the Portuguese economy, can be understood only if we take into account Portugal's peripheral position in the world economy (cf. Barros and Ribeiro Mendes, 1982: 3-4).

II

The investment of the emigrant's currency remittances, as well as the development of the capitalist sector of the economy in the 1960s and early 1970s, brought about a more extensive penetration of capitalist activities into the rural areas. Nevertheless, the extreme subdivision of the land, and the failure by the government to rationalize the commercialization of agricultural products and to provide technical support and investment for rural development on a significant scale, hindered the creation of a fully mechanized, capitalized agriculture. Some development did take place, however, and a certain amount of small-scale mechanization is nowadays in evidence (cf. Cabral, 1983). The main effect of this mechanization has been to reduce the labour requirements of peasants who own more land than they can cultivate and who were finding it difficult to pay for manual labour since they could not compete with the capitalist sector for wages.

Following a typically peasant strategy, emigrants invested a very large portion of their savings in the purchase of land (cf. Mendras, 1967: 107). Land prices rose steeply, but production was not significantly increased. Agriculture remained, in the majority of cases, economically a fairly unrewarding activity. An increasing amount of land, therefore, is being left fallow each year, through lack of interest on the part of the owners. While, on the one hand, peasant agriculture was reinforced by an investment of emigrant remittances which allowed it to survive, on the other hand it stopped being the peasant's primary source of income. (This is particularly the case if we take into account long-term family strategies.) Economically speaking, then, peasant life is not viable today. Yet, socially speaking, it is still the only way of assuring the individual of a kind of social security and belonging from which he cannot afford to abdicate.

In spite of these changes, the term 'peasant' is still apposite in describing the residents of Paço and Couto as a whole, for the majority remain agricultural producers who extract from land they control the greater part of their subsistence needs. Even those residents engaged permanently in wage-earning are seldom completely landless. Whether they own the land or rent it a minimum of agriculture is considered a necessity for a proper family life and the whole household is seen as a joint productive enterprise. When a man is out working for a wage, the rest of the household tills the land. This co-ordination is conceived of as an economic spreading of the household rather than as an aggregate of separate economic activities, as would be the case in urban society. The concept of a 'job', a wage-earning activity which is independent from family life, is foreign to these people. This explains why, even though nowadays most of the household's income is usually derived from non-agricultural sources, the individual still conceives of himself as a peasant.

Table III indicates the dominant economic activities of all residents of Paço and Couto who were over 18 in 1979-80. From it we can see that 75.7 per cent of the adult population of Paço, and 68.38 per cent of Couto, are engaged in agricultural activities. The majority of them are self-employed agricultural workers (farmers) who fit the traditional image of the peasant; the rest are agricultural wage-earners. The numbers of the latter have been so drastically reduced over the past decades that nowadays they represent only 8.72 per cent of the adult population of Paço and 7.71 per cent of that of Couto.

Among the farmers (self-employed agricultural workers), the percentage of women is high (68.6 per cent in Paço and 74.15 per cent in

Table III. Types of economic activities of the adult population*

	Males	Females	Total
Paço			
Self-employed:			
Agricultural	135	295	430
Non-agricultural	27	9	36
Wage-earner (blue collar):			
Agricultural	12	44	56
Non-agricultural	53	—	53
Wage-earner (white collar)	6	2	8
Pensioner	24	24	48
Other [†]	8	3	11
Couto			
Self-employed:			
Agricultural	61	175	236
Non-agricultural	29	5	34
Wage-earner (blue collar):			
Agricultural	12	18	30
Non-agricultural	26	3	29
Wage-earner (white collar)	10	1	11
Pensioner	14	17	31
Other [†]	13	5	17

* Born before 1961.

† Handicapped, students, and profession unknown.

Couto). Some of these women are the wives of emigrants who remained behind to look after the household's agricultural activities. The predominance of female farmers, however, remains evident even when we allow for the number of male household heads who have emigrated (46 in Paço and 25 in Couto). This reflects the practice of combining wage-earning by the males with the household's agricultural activities. Finally, the predominance of females over males (females make up 58.72 per cent of the total adult population of Paço and 57.58 per cent of Couto) once again reflects the tendency for men to leave the parish while women remain.

Another important category is that of self-employed, non-agricultural workers. This includes cattle-dealers, shop-keepers, and the owners of small industries such as building and timber concerns, power-driven mills for maize and oil, and distilleries. By local standards all of these

are fairly wealthy men, many of whom acquired abroad the capital necessary to start their businesses. Except for a stone-grinding plant owned by a man from Paço, all of them are small businesses. This category also includes three seamstresses, one shoemaker, two tailors, two taxi-drivers, one barber, and one basket-maker, who practise their trades at home without any considerable capital investment. To these we can also add State employees and office clerks: three primary school-teachers, two policemen, one forest guard, one river guard and a number of office clerks who work in the town but reside in their parishes of origin. Finally, there are a number of artisans such as builders, carpenters, stone-masons, and metal-workers. Overall, the percentage of adults engaged permanently on these non-agricultural tasks does not rise above 15.1 per cent of the same sample in Paço and 19.02 per cent in Couto.

Ironically, however, by far the most important economic activity after agriculture—and in terms of overall household income certainly the most significant—is emigration. We do not possess official numbers for legal emigration at parish level (for legal emigration at borough and district levels, see Figure 1). But in order to give some idea of the extent of the phenomenon, we shall consider a sample of all the people between the ages of 15 and 30 (in 1979 in Paço and 1979–80 in Couto) whose households of origin are still in Paço and Couto (the ‘youth sample’). Although this sample is quite obviously incomplete, it will certainly provide an idea of the rate of emigration during the period between 1963 and 1978. Since 1976 there has been an attempt by most receiving nations to stop emigration and even, in the case of France, to pay emigrants to return to Portugal. In 1979–80 the only place still receiving a substantial number of emigrants was Venezuela. This means that the youth sample chosen here is already less extreme than it would have been had it not included 1977 and 1978.

The number of young emigrants as a proportion of the sample of young persons is 37.5 per cent for Paço and 33.33 per cent for Couto. Of all the young migrants, 32.62 per cent in Paço and 33.33 per cent in Couto were women, which is a smaller percentage than that found by Serrão for the whole country in the 1951–60 period, which was 38.1 per cent (1974: 123). This indicates that the preference for male emigration was still evident even during the exodus of the 1960s and early 1970s. Finally, this sample includes both emigrants to foreign countries and youths who left to work in the big Portuguese cities. The percentage of the former over the total number of young migrants, however, is approximately 80 per cent in both parishes.

Most emigrants went to France. Germany, Venezuela, Canada, Andorra, Australia, and Brazil are the other important receiving countries in decreasing order of importance. From the data available it is impossible to establish precisely how many emigrants eventually return to their parishes of origin. Judging by the number of men in the 50 to 60 age group who are returned emigrants, it would appear that this percentage over the last two decades has been reasonably high in relation to previous trends of emigration. The rate of return also varies considerably depending on the period of migration and which receiving countries are chosen.

III

The extremely small farm plots are perhaps the most distinctive feature of *minhoto* agriculture. The terrain being very hilly and formed by wide, V-shaped valleys, most agriculture has to take place on small terraces on the hillsides. Already in the seventeenth century, Aurélio de Oliveira judged that most of the land held by tenants of the Abbey of Tibães was in plots of under half a hectare (1.24 acres, 5,000 square metres) (1974: 12). Be this as it may, M. Halpern Pereira argues that until 1870 ‘the division of the property was not viewed as a serious obstacle to regional development’ (1971: 183, note 92) and Minho was referred to as an example to be imitated by other regions of the country. Later, however, the problem became increasingly acute, although in 1949, in the district of Viana, the average size of a landholding remained half a hectare. This has to be seen in context, however, since, as Cunhal argues in his famous *Questão Agrária*, average numbers are not highly significant. Although each plot is very small, a farmer usually cultivates a number of plots, and a landlord owns many. The size of plots, therefore, has to be compared with the overall size of the farms. Table IV indicates how the farms in the district of Viana were distributed according to size in 1979.¹¹

What this means is that, over 90 per cent of all farms are smaller than 4 ha (9.88 acres). The problems which such division of the land can bring about will become obvious when we realize that 26.39 per cent of the farms in Viana in 1968 were composed of more than ten unconnected plots: not only do most people till very little land, but the terrain

¹¹ In 1949, in Viana, 36.36 per cent of the farms were less than ½ ha in areas; 60.85 per cent were between ½ ha and 3 ha; 2.37 per cent between 3 ha and 5 ha; 0.51 per cent were more than 5 ha. These percentages were worked out on the basis of the numbers cited by Cunhal (n.d.: 236).

Table IV. Size of farms in the district of Viana, 1979

Under 1 ha (< 2.47 acres)	57.77%
From 1 ha to 4 ha (9.88 acres)	32.99%
From 4 ha to 20 ha (49.42 acres)	6.89%
From 20 ha to 50 ha (123.55 acres)	0.26%
Over 50 ha	0.08%

Source: *Anuário Estatístico*, 1979, Instituto Nacional de Estatística.

itself is much divided. In 1968, in Ponte da Barca, an inland and therefore hillier borough of the district of Viana, 29.84 per cent of the farms were composed of more than ten scattered plots (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 1968). In fact, the division of the terrain in these hillier regions of the district is such that, in Paço and Couto, fields range between 0.1 ha (0.24 acres) and 0.5 ha (1.23 acres). Moreover, in the upper parts of these parishes, where land is even more rugged, each of these fields is usually divided into three or four terraces. In the mountain parishes on the eastern side of the borough, a field measuring 0.03 ha (0.074 acres) is called *um campo de carro* because it requires an ox-cart full of manure to fertilize it, and it is considered a prize possession.

Such great subdivision of the terrain is certainly uneconomic, not only because of the land taken up by paths and hedges and because of the length of time required to reach different plots of the same farm, but also because it prevents the use of complex agricultural machinery and a consequent adoption of modern agricultural methods. However, this subdivision of the terrain is to a certain extent consistent with the mixed farming system described above. Each household has a group of plots scattered around the parish, usually within walking distance of the house, though sometimes even across parish boundaries. When the fields are too far away they are usually rented out to local people. Different types of land have different uses: vegetable patches; maize fields surrounded by pergolas for vines (irrigated land); rye fields (dry land); land where one collects scrub for the cattle beds; woods; and plots with chestnut, walnut, olive, or fruit trees (these are often also planted along the edges of the fields). If a household does not own one of these types of land—especially the more essential ones such as maize fields with vine pergolas and vegetable patches—they will rent what they require from an emigrant or from someone with unused land.

Some landless or nearly landless households establish contracts of *parceria* (share-cropping) with wealthier landlords. Though most tenants paid half of the yearly product, until the early 1970s it was still common to find contracts under which the tenant paid two-thirds of the yearly product of the land. Large landlords had a number of share-croppers (*caseiros*) working on their land and their agricultural affairs were managed by a wealthier peasant, the *feitor* (foreman). As the land is progressively bought by returned emigrants from absentee landlords, *caseiros* who work only rented land tend to disappear. Nowadays in Paço there are only eight *caseiros* and in Couto thirty-three.

The major products at present are maize, rye, beans, potatoes, wine, olive oil, and cattle fodder and most households produce some quantity of all of these. Similarly, middle and wealthy households own at least one cow and often a pair, which are used for milk, traction, and breeding. Finally, many households keep pigs to be slaughtered in November or December to provide a major source of protein during the winter months. In the past, fewer households managed to keep pigs.

The agricultural year is punctuated by a succession of religious feasts which represent the season and its occupations. At Easter the land is ploughed, manure is spread, and maize is sown; potatoes are also planted. The period around the night of St John (23 June) is the second most active of the year: rye is threshed, the potatoes unearthed, and the vines first sprayed with insecticide. The middle of summer is not very eventful agriculturally except for the continued and regular spraying of the vines. This is the time when most *festas* are celebrated and emigrants return on holidays.

The feast of St Michael (27 September) is the time for harvesting the maize and the grapes, planting grass for cattle fodder, and removing the maize cobs from their leafy coverings. This is the period of greatest labour involvement. 'The St. Martin', in late November and early December, is the season for killing the pigs, gathering the chestnuts and walnuts, sowing the rye and starting to drink the new wine. Finally, after Christmas, scrub is gathered for the cattle beds and vines are pruned.

IV

The products which the household does not require for its subsistence may be sold immediately or stored for a limited period to be sold later, when prices have recovered from the slump caused by harvest abundance. Larger and wealthier households own *espigueiros* (maize

granaries) which are a source of pride and prestige. Storage is a problem, however, for most products do not easily survive well until the end of the next agricultural year. This is the case with the two major crops, maize and the local home-made wine, *vinho verde* (green wine), with its low alcoholic content.

There are different ways of selling the various types of crops. In the case of chestnuts and walnuts, middlemen from the cities come with trucks and give a small percentage to a local shop-keeper who helps them in their rounds of the households. Most business deals, however, are carried out at the *feiras* (fairs). Even when the produce is not actually taken, it is here that contacts are made, and prices standardized, the acquisition of this valuable information being one of the major reasons for attendance; here also the household buys most of the commodities it requires. Finally, the fair is used as an opportunity for meeting people from other parts of the borough and contacting doctors, lawyers and officials: as Lisón puts it, 'the fair is a window to the world' (1971b: 53).

Fairs were instituted by the monarchs as free markets during the Middle Ages; many were granted as part of the borough charters but often the king would issue a special decree for their institution. In these decrees, special privileges and liberties were bestowed that freed the participants from the constraints of feudal by-laws and hindrances; they were called 'the peace of the fair'.

The fair of Ponte de Lima was instituted as early as 1125, the fair of the district capital, Viana do Castelo, dating only from 1342. It appears that fairs began to decline in the middle of the sixteenth century from their medieval importance and magnitude. V. Rau must be partially correct when she argues that permanent commercial houses took much of their business (in Serrão, 1965: s.v. *feira*). It must be remembered, however, that these shops do most of their business on fair days and that the fair remains a major local institution, most households sending at least one member of the head couple and often both.

Ponte da Barca, in the eighteenth century, had a monthly fair on the first and second days of each month. At the beginning of the nineteenth century these were changed to the 2nd and 22nd. At present the fair is held twice a month on Wednesdays, alternating with the fair of the neighbouring borough of Arcos de Valdeve. This alternation is an interesting example of the co-ordination between boroughs which occurs over the whole of the district of Viana. It concerns more the travelling salesmen, who go from fair to fair selling their wares (suits, shoes, gold and silver ornaments, pottery, medicine and pseudo-

medicine, cassettes, belts, etc.) than the peasant himself, whose range is rather more limited. Attendance at fairs depends on the kind of business one wants to carry out and for a more important deal or for a wider choice of commodities one chooses a larger fair. In the case of Ponte da Barca and Arcos, this would be the fair of Ponte de Lima (held on alternate Mondays). It is interesting to note that there seems to be a hierarchy of importance between fairs and that there are distinct classes of fairs, the weekly (or fortnightly), the monthly, and the annual.

In the weekly class, the most important fair in the district is that of the capital, Viana, held on Fridays. An even larger fair is that of Braga, the capital of the neighbouring district, held on Tuesdays. There are no other fairs of the weekly class on these two week days in the district of Viana: they would not be able to compete. The fairs of Barcelos on Thursdays and of Ponte de Lima on Mondays are somewhat less important than the two former ones and are directed at the population of different regions.

Most other borough capitals hold their weekly or fortnightly fairs independently of one another, for they do not compete for customers. There are a few exceptions, however, such as Vila Praia de Âncora, a town which is not a borough capital, and whose fair on Sundays coincides with that of its borough capital (Caminha). This may be explained by the unusual situation of a town not being a borough capital.

There is a monthly fair in the district for every two days of the month. Bigger centres such as Valença and Monção, for example, co-ordinate monthly with weekly fairs. None of these monthly fairs, however, coincide. The big annual fairs are attached to *festas* of a patron saint. They are held mostly at borough level and do not coincide with others in the district.

V

The ownership of land remains a very important index of wealth and prestige in local society. In the absence of a land cadastre, however, it has been impossible to carry out a detailed study of land ownership. This difficulty is increased by the subdivision of the land and the existence of many different types of land which are variously valued. Furthermore, alternative sources of income have become too important to be disregarded in an assessment of economic differentiation. When I compiled the household census of Paço and Couto, I asked the informants to specify the relation of each household to what they thought would be the average situation in the parish. They usually took a very

short time to master this technique of description. There was the problem of distinguishing between economic power and standards of living, which in many cases were not correlated. Whenever the question arose, I asked the informants to pay attention to economic power rather than to standards of living. I also acquired information on the size of agricultural production above subsistence requirements, on non-agricultural occupations, on government pensions and subsidies, and in many cases on unusually large savings due to emigration.

This information was provided in most cases by one informant for each hamlet, and it was later cross-checked and added to by comments from other informants and by my personal observations. Overall, the assessment of relative wealth thus obtained provides us with an impressionistic but nevertheless fairly reliable picture of economic differentiation and inequality in Paço and Couto.

I have divided the households into three basic groups, which were then each divided into two, thus giving rise to six sub-groups: the Very Rich, the Rich, the Upper Middle, the Lower Middle, the Poor and the Very Poor (Table V). The sub-group of the Very Poor is composed of people who do not own any land and often live below subsistence level, that is, they barely manage to survive. The majority of these people work as day labourers, share-croppers of small farms, or as blue-collar wage-earners. The pay for agricultural day labour is still very low: in Paço and Couto, in the summer of 1979, it was 150\$00 a day (approximately £1.50 at the time).¹² The pay for non-agricultural labour, however, is higher. In their old age these people used to be destitute. Nowadays, the government provides through the Casa do Povo an old-age pension amounting to 1,100\$00 per month in 1979 (approximately £11 at the time). This has greatly improved their lot. The category of the Very Poor represents 15.35 per cent of the households of Paço and 25 per cent of Couto. Finally, in both parishes, 23.25 per cent of these households are headed by single mothers.

The Poor sub-group is formed by households which, on the whole, just manage to carry out subsistence agriculture, often owning some land and possibly even getting a modicum of cash from the sale of their produce. Their cash income, however, often derives from the cattle they raise for cattle-dealers. Their younger people usually work as blue-collar wage-earners and many of them emigrate. Most of these house-

¹² In these two parishes men and women have traditionally been paid the same for unskilled agricultural work. This is not the case in other parishes. Men are often paid more because most skilled work is carried out by them.

Table V. Percentages of wealth sub-groups in the total number of households

	Paço		Couto	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
The Very Rich	2	0.71	2	1.16
The Rich	7	2.50	2	1.16
The Upper Middle	76	27.14	25	14.53
The Lower Middle	78	27.85	45	26.16
The Poor	74	26.42	55	31.97
The Very Poor	43	15.35	43	25.00
?	1		—	
Total	281		172	

holds complement their agricultural enterprises by some rented land and by day labour in the peak season. They represent 26.42 per cent of the households of Paço and 31.97 per cent of Couto.

The Lower Middle sub-group consists of households who live reasonably above subsistence level. Mostly they own their own land and whatever rented land they take on is seldom vital for their subsistence. They do not work as day labourers under normal circumstances and many of them are engaged in small businesses and non-agricultural activities. In the lower parts of the parishes one finds among this sub-group a certain number of high-school students, which indicates that there is money available to invest in the child's education. This sub-group represents 27.85 per cent of the households of Paço and 26.16 per cent of Couto.

The households of the Upper Middle sub-group have considerable economic ease; usually they own more land than they alone can work and are thus forced to hire day labourers and to rent out fields to others. The owners of larger businesses (oil and wine presses, timber-yards, large shops, and workshops) form part of this sub-group. Much of the agricultural production of these households is aimed specifically at the market, as their subsistence needs are usually considerably less than their total production. They represent 27.14 per cent of the households of Paço and 14.53 per cent of Couto.

The Rich sub-group consists of seven households in Paço and two in Couto who own a great deal of land, as well as the most profitable local businesses. Their houses are modern, they usually have cars, and they rent out a considerable proportion of their land. They form 2.50 per cent of the households of Paço and 1.16 per cent of those of Couto.

The Very Rich are two households in Paço and two in Couto (0.71 per cent and 1.16 per cent respectively). They are exceptionally rich people, much of their land lying outside their parish of residence. Three of these households owe their exceptional wealth to the successful investment of earnings from abroad. They emigrated before the Second World War and returned to their parishes of birth when most people were leaving in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

VI

Paço and Couto are, in many respects, closely interlinked within the context of the borough of Ponte da Barca as a whole. In the Middle Ages, the monastery of Couto owned land in Paço and still today the two parishes are economically connected: the residents of Paço make many of their purchases in Couto and the residents of one parish provide business for the small industries of the other. Socially too the two parishes are close to each other: for example, they have shared a priest for the past few decades.

None the less, the comparison of the percentage of the households in each sub-group suggests that Couto is a parish of extremes of wealth, while Paço is one where the middle group predominates and where, as a result, the feeling of parish unity and the preservation of typically peasant attitudes are more evident (see Figure 3). Furthermore, the data presented earlier indicated that, although the differences between the two parishes are never large, they are nevertheless consistent. For example, while 75.7 per cent of the adult population of Paço was engaged in agriculture, in Couto the percentage is only 68.38 per cent. In Paço 15.1 per cent of all adults are engaged in non-agricultural activities, while in Couto the percentage is 19.02 per cent. Finally, the emigration figures provided by the 'youth sample' are deceptive, for they do not take into account population reduction: there are more young emigrants in Paço (37.5 per cent of the youth sample) than in Couto (33.33 per cent) because in the latter there has been a stronger trend towards family emigration and a smaller percentage of returning migrants. Since these families severed their ties with the parish, their young members could not be included in the sample. This argument is supported by the fact

that the population of Couto has decreased more rapidly since 1950 than that of Paço (see Figure 2 and Table II).

The major key to the understanding of the differences between these two parishes lies in the ownership of land. Couto is a parish of poor people, where the land has been owned by relatively wealthy and predominantly absentee landlords, while Paço is on the whole a parish where, although the best land was owned by absentee landlords, many peasant households managed to own some land of their own. This argument, which is fully subscribed to by the residents of both parishes, is also supported by the discovery that, while in Paço there are only eight full-time share-cropping households, in Couto there are thirty-three. Before the 1950s Couto also had a higher percentage of illegitimate births which, in this region, as we shall see, is related to landlessness.

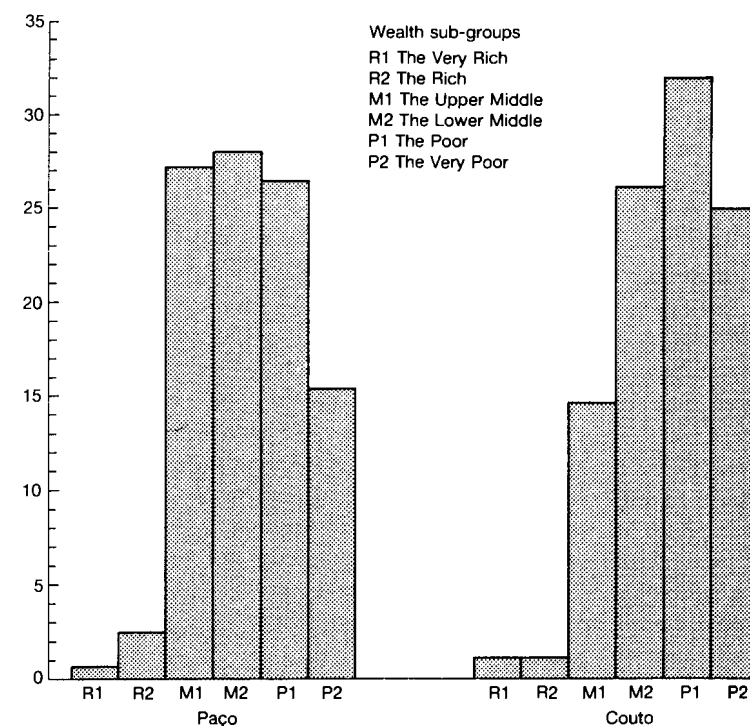


Figure 3. Percentages of wealth sub-groups over total number of households in each parish.

Indeed, once again, this is the explanation given by parish residents for this widely recognized difference between the two parishes. Couto, therefore, was a parish where fewer people owned land and where rural poverty was more evident, and this is reflected in higher mortgage and illegitimacy rates.

With the advent of post-war emigration, the exodus increased, population decreased, and more people had recourse to non-agricultural means of earning a living. The final result is that there has been a greater penetration of urban values into Couto. A striking example of this is the explanation given by the people for the fact that the shops in Couto (a smaller parish) are larger, better stocked, and more prosperous than those of Paço: indeed, most of the residents of this parish prefer to buy their commodities in Couto and at the fair, where their neighbours cannot easily keep watch over them. Residents of Couto have no such compunction. The reason for this secretiveness is that, for the residents of Paço, a household which cannot produce enough for its subsistence loses prestige. Furthermore, for them, a household which engages in the consumption of 'unnecessary luxury' is improvident and its members should not be trusted.

4. Peasant and bourgeois

I

Cultural differentiation at parish level, however, must be seen within the context of Alto Minho society as a whole. Due to the extent and rapidity of cultural change over the past decades, cultural differentiation may at first appear to be random. Nevertheless, closer inspection reveals that this is not so and that we require a conceptual framework within which both cultural differentiation and change may be located. Broadly speaking, *minhoto* society can be divided into two types of cultural areas: urban and rural. Within urban areas, the dominant worldview is that of the bourgeoisie, while within rural areas it is that of the peasantry. Bourgeoisie and peasantry are the two most significant status groups of local society. Within rural areas we also find beggars, gypsies, members of the urban élite who live in the countryside, and mobile landless labourers, but all of these are quantitatively and qualitatively insignificant in relation to the peasantry. Similarly, within the urban areas, we find a remainder of the old rural aristocracy, the beginnings of a proletariat, and even some peasants, but again these are not numerically or culturally significant in relation to the bourgeoisie.

Earlier on, I justified my use of the term 'peasant' to qualify the inhabitants of Paço and Couto by arguing that the majority are 'agricultural producers who extract from land they control the greater part of their subsistence needs'. Yet this definition is at once too inclusive and too exclusive: it excludes peasant merchants and artisans, emigrants and semi-proletarians, and at the same time it includes people who live in the countryside but are clearly members of the urban élite, the *proprietários*. Cultural terms must be included in a definition of peasantry. As Redfield, for example, points out, its cultural subordination to an urban gentry is as central a factor in defining a peasantry, as is its economic subordination (1960, II: 20). The choice of the term 'worldview' favours the awareness that in regard to peasant modes of thought and perception of the world, we are not dealing with a fully separate and independent cultural framework, but rather with part of a complex cultural tradition. Similarly, the choice of the Weberian term 'status group' reflects both the concern with a cultural perspective and the need to define the peasantry and the bourgeoisie by their mutual relation.¹³

The relationship between the urban élite and the peasantry is not symmetrical. On the contrary, as will be demonstrated later (chapter V, sect. 17), the bourgeoisie and the ecclesiastical hierarchy allied to it are the intermediaries through which the cultural hegemony of what Redfield calls the 'great tradition' operates. This control over the local use of the *ciência*, the *cultura*, and the *religião*, invests the provincial bourgeoisie with technical, ideological and spiritual power over the 'uneducated' peasantry. In the past, this control had been in the hands of the rural aristocracy but during the nineteenth century the provincial bourgeoisie took over this role as mediator, and therefore manipulator, of the 'great tradition'.

The belief in its own cultural inferiority is an important aspect of peasant culture and behaviour today (see chapter III, sect. 9. V). The Alto Minho, then, is an example of the situation typified by Redfield when he argues that 'every peasant finds his self-respect, his contentment, qualified by the knowledge that he is poorer and ruder than the gentry, those people of the towns' (1960, II: 75). This is not to say that

¹³ An analysis of peasant behaviour in class terms would tend to minimize the significance of cognitive aspects in determining social action. As Weber has argued, 'the factor that creates "class" is unambiguously economic interest' (1978, II: 928). Although economic interest is widely varied within the peasantry, which includes both wealthy landowners and extremely poor share-croppers, peasants do not recognize status differentiation among themselves and, more importantly, they share a common worldview.

the peasant worldview has had no influence on the bourgeois worldview, for the contrary is often demonstrably the case. Neither does it imply a confusion between the worldview of the provincial bourgeoisie and the 'great tradition'. The bourgeoisie of the small provincial towns is a mere link in a chain which finds its origins in the great scientific, cultural, and religious metropolises of the world.

II

Everyday cultural life in a *minhoto* hamlet is diverse and mobile. People disagree and change their minds, learn new things and forget old ones, so there is a sense in which statements of the kind 'the people of this hamlet think this or that . . .' are nonsensical. Yet a detailed study of this cultural life will demonstrate that everyone's thought relates to particular concepts and images. Natives may accept these, they may argue against them, they may manipulate them for their own benefit, they may even be crushed by them with a mute acceptance of the very principles of their personal destruction. In relation to these concepts and images, one may then say that 'the people of this hamlet think this or that . . .' Albeit from a rather different theoretical background, Redfield expresses the same idea when he says that 'the social structure of a small community is a set of limiting conditions within which the conduct of individuals takes place, it is a system of ethical direction, a set of signposts to the good and virtuous life' (1960, I: 46).

This 'more or less coherent view of the good life' is not something which the natives can consciously describe. The researcher has to explore the most diverse aspects of the culture before he begins to form an image which may hypothetically approach the shared core of the vague images which exist largely subconsciously in the mind of each and every member of the social group in question. Throughout this study I have attempted to develop such an image of 'the good life' as applicable to the peasant population of the Alto Minho. In more abstract rephrasing, at the centre of this worldview I encountered a particular ideal image of the elementary social unit, its reproduction, and its participation and integration into the social whole. The term 'reproduction' must be understood in its widest sense for it refers to the process of acquisition of the material, biological, and ideological conditions for the projection of the elementary social unit through time. To summarize my findings: the elementary social unit is the agricultural household (*casa*) which is essentially, but not exclusively, composed of

the head-couple and their offspring. The household finds its identity in the unity of commensality, residence, management, and property; it produces its own food on land which it controls; and it is ideally independent of external food sources. This direct link to the land is the essential condition for full participation in this peasant society and the proper tending of the land, and not genealogical position, is given as the justification for the head couple's headship. Fertility, wealth, and physical well-being are essential for the survival of the *casa*, but so is an orderly social life, and this requires control of fertility, acquisitiveness and one's bodily desires. To control these the society uses a body of religious as well as secular symbolism which reproduces and reinforces the ideals attached to inter-household relations. These operate on the basis of an identity of status between all the landed households; thus, they are ideally based on equality, symmetrical reciprocity, and friendship. To this complex of images I have given the shorthand title of 'the subsistence prototype' because central to it is the conception that the household survives by its own means.

The concept of subsistence prototype should be distinguished from its close neighbour the 'subsistence ethic', as propounded by James C. Scott (1976). The latter is certainly a very rich construct, for it specifies that which is specifically characteristic of peasant economic behaviour: the need to be safe from hunger and never to fall below the level of subsistence—what Scott calls the 'safety-first principle'. This, he argues, is manifested in two ideological devices: the insistence on *reciprocity* and the villager's *right to subsistence*. On the basis of these principles he constructs a phenomenological theory of peasant exploitation which appears to have great explanatory value as far as peasant revolt is concerned. Personally, I would not follow him in depreciating the value of a substantivist theory of exploitation, as will be obvious later: both have their place at different theoretical moments.

The concept of the subsistence ethic is, therefore, perfectly compatible with that of the subsistence prototype, but they should not be confused: the subsistence prototype is a wider-ranging concept than that of the subsistence ethic; and I do not claim for the subsistence prototype any automatic descriptive validity beyond that of the specific *minhoto* data which I analyse here. If, as I maintain, cultural life is centred on an image of the elementary social unit and of its means of reproduction and relation to other social units—the basic cultural prototype—that image would generate its own moral economy. In this particular case, it would indicate a *specific manifestation* of the principle of

reciprocity, as I shall argue later, as well as a *specific manifestation* of the right to subsistence.

One potential criticism of the concept of the basic cultural prototype is that it postulates a static core to a culture, which would only postpone the problems of explaining cultural diachrony, displacing them from the culture's (or worldview's) surface level to its deeper levels. The answer to such a criticism is that basic cultural prototypes cannot be conceived of as static, but as permanently re-created in the process of cultural interchange between the members of the social group who themselves (as individuals, as groups, and as one group) are continuously placed in the dialectic between action and cognition. This approach is akin to Bourdieu's, and it could even be argued that these prototypes might be thought of as part of the *habitus*.¹⁴ Bourdieu's verbosity, however, in my opinion, hides a lack of central coherence which makes his terminology a very treacherous tool for anyone else to use, and the reliance on the ambiguous term *disposition* weakens it by rendering it universally applicable, thereby reducing its descriptive value.

III

Although this study is primarily concerned with the peasant worldview, I shall nevertheless have to refer to the relationship between this worldview and that of the urban elite, since to isolate it would be to ignore one of the most important characteristics of peasant thought today. The postulation of a basic cultural prototype for the bourgeoisie, such as the one proposed above for the peasantry, would demand as lengthy a study of the urban strata. I shall limit myself here, therefore, to pointing out the clearest differences between the bourgeois worldview and that of the peasantry, thereby necessarily underestimating the internal differentiation of urban society.

The bourgeois worldview is based on a conception of the nuclear family and of individual participation in the cash economy as typified by the sale of labour for a salary. In this, it is distinct from the peasant worldview and its central notion of *casa*. Individuals and their families are ranked separately according to status differences. The bourgeois does not divide society into large status blocks as does the peasant; rather he sees society in terms of a continuum of prestige. His own status is a matter of permanent doubt, which explains his concern with

¹⁴ 'Systèmes de *dispositions* durables et transposables, structures structurées predisposées à fonctionner comme structures structurantes' (Bourdieu, 1980: 88).

'appearance' (cf. Lefebvre, 1971: 177 ff). A peasant's social standing is based on a safe and visible economic asset—his land—while the bourgeois's social standing is based on often invisible and ultimately perishable assets. At the same time, peasants are loath to demonstrate differences of wealth among themselves, owing to their preference for a definition of social relationships as communal. For the bourgeois, social relationships are typically thought of as associative and a strong emphasis is placed on the external demonstration of economic differentiation (Weber, 1978, I: 40-2).

If we were to choose a concept which typifies the bourgeois worldview as that of subsistence typifies the peasant worldview, it would be the concept of salary. Typically, the bourgeois of today is a man who depends on a smaller or greater salary and whose personal life (the life of consumption) is separate from and unrelated to his 'job' (the life of production).

The old household enterprise (*a casa comercial*) which was run at family level is progressively being abandoned for a conception of the enterprise as 'business' (*a empresa*) which separates it from the *família*. Nowadays, fewer people own their own businesses, and those who do are modelling themselves increasingly on the image of the manager (*gestor*) rather than the traditional image of the 'boss' (*o patrão*). This bureaucratic conception of productive activities is taking the upper hand both for the increasingly large number of civil servants and for those employed by the public sector.

The townsman of the Alto Minho is not typically an enterprising 'accumulator of profit' who is willing to run risks in order to increase his economic power. He is dominated by reproductive rather than productive concerns. His accumulation of 'savings' (*poupanças*) is not a means of increasing profit but an attempt to safeguard his present level of consumption. Being an employee, he typically detaches himself from responsibility for the process of production, which explains the institutionalization of sick leave and the low productivity levels of which large enterprises and the State so bitterly complain.

The constant references to 'good deals' (*arranjos, negócios*), so common a feature of bourgeois conversation, are in many ways misleading. Typically, these 'deals' lead to the acquisition of consumer and not production goods. The townsman, as opposed to the peasant, measures himself and others by the capacity for consumption, as his central concern is not the accumulation of profit but the maximization of consumption.

IV

The division of *minhoto* society into two cultural types is not absolute. Nevertheless, while it may be found that many local residents, at times, make statements which could be classified as belonging to one worldview or the other, the worldviews themselves remain largely irreconcilable. Confronted with two alternative 'social definitions of reality', the individual chooses one or the other according to different situations and audiences, and according to his own individual history and interests.

The peasantry and the bourgeoisie have always been in close contact. With increased penetration into the rural areas of the institutions of the modern state, of capitalist economy, and of the media, this has been intensified: individual members of one status group often utilize their knowledge of the worldview of the other status group. But, while bourgeois values are increasingly present and intrusive in all areas of society, peasant values are undergoing a process of decline. It is therefore to be expected that cultural conflict should be stronger among peasants.

In an increasing number of situations rural dwellers are finding it necessary to have recourse to urban conceptions, values, and definitions. Yet, at the same time, the conditions for the reproduction of the subsistence prototype are still present. The economic marginalization of peasant agriculture in the 1970s did not imply its social and cognitive marginalization: to have land and to work it remain the ultimate means of obtaining both social security and prestige. Thus, in economic terms, the land alone no longer ensures subsistence, offering merely a basis upon which families can operate their strategies of economic maximization within a world which is increasingly non-agricultural. Cognitively speaking, however, the conceptions of subsistence and the agricultural household (*casa*) have survived.

II

Household and family

Historically, the concept of the family had several meanings, and it is only useful if its particular meaning is always clearly defined.

Max Weber, *Economy and Society*

5. The concept of *casa*

I

There are four Portuguese terms which may all be translated as 'household' in English: *casa* (literally, house); *lar* (literally, hearth); *fogo* (literally, fire); *família* (literally, family). As in Galicia (Lisón Tolosana, 1971b: 377-80), the term which is most commonly used by the rural population of Minho is *casa*. The bourgeoisie, however, use the term *família* far more frequently. Such a shift in terminology is not due merely to differences in language use; it is rather a manifestation of a real divergence between the two social groups.

For both the bourgeoisie and the peasantry, the household is the elementary social unit. The basic constitution of this group is the same in both instances: a married couple and their children. But, as will become apparent throughout this study, what at first appear to be minor shifts in conception between one worldview and the other turn out to be largely irreconcilable differences, once we begin to analyse the conceptual implications and the assumptions underlying the apparent community of language between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry.

The preference for the use of the term *família* to describe the household among the bourgeoisie reflects the fact that, for the urban population, the nuclear family *is* the household, and other persons living with the *família* are seen largely as extrinsic to it even when they are related by ties of kinship to the head couple. For the peasants, on the other hand, these co-residents are full members of the household. The choice of the word *casa* (house) reflects this conception, as it stresses the spatial unity of the members rather than the kinship relations among