

# The foundation of San Miguel de Colera: Territorial policy and agricultural colonisation in Spain under Charles III (1768–1771)

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**Zarys treści:** Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia proces, który doprowadził do powstania San Miguel de Colera, hiszpańskiego miasta oficjalnie założonego w 1770 r. na granicy francuskiej. Fundacja ta była wynikiem działań podjętych przez Isidra Ferrána, właściciela ziemskiego, zainteresowanego rozszerzeniem uprawy winorośli i produkcji wina w dolinie Colera, co doprowadziło do poważnego konfliktu z opatem San Quirico sprawującym jurysdykcję na tym terenie. Ferrán dopiął swego przy wsparciu króla Karola III, przekształcając zwykłe karczowanie ziemi w uregulowany proces urbanizacji niezaludnionego obszaru na granicy, co w konsekwencji zaowocowało jego nobilitacją za zasługi dla Korony.

**Słowa kluczowe:** San Miguel de Colera (Hiszpania), XVIII w., emfiteuza, osadnictwo miejskie

**Abstract:** The article examines the process that led to the foundation of San Miguel de Colera, a Spanish town officially established in 1770 on the French border. The founding of San Miguel de Colera was the result of actions taken by Isidro Ferrán, a landowner who was interested in expanding viticulture and wine production in the Colera Valley, which led to serious problems with the San Quirico Monastery who had jurisdiction over the area. Ferrán got his way with the support of King Charles III, turning a simple clearing of land into a planned and regulated process of urbanisation of a previously uninhabited area lying on the border of the state, which was a merit for the Crown for which he was raised to the rank of nobility.

**Keywords:** San Miguel de Colera (Spain), 18th century, emphyteusis, town settlement

## Introduction

To the northeast of Catalonia, at the eastern end of the Pyrenees, lies the town of Colera, beautifully located in the valley of the same name that runs from west to east. The name *Colera* appears for the first time in the tenth century, although it does not refer to the fief of the abbey of San Quirico until the thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Before the foundation, the place seemed to be virtually uninhabited. The census of Campoflorido conducted at the beginning of the eighteenth century reveals only three inhabitants living in the valley.<sup>2</sup> As a result of a complex process

of colonisation, the situation changed in the second half of the eighteenth century. The issue is so complex that in this article, it is studied firstly from the point of view of rural geography, i.e. transforming the forests and meadows into vineyards, and then from the perspective of urban geography as the land transformation leads to the foundation of a new town.

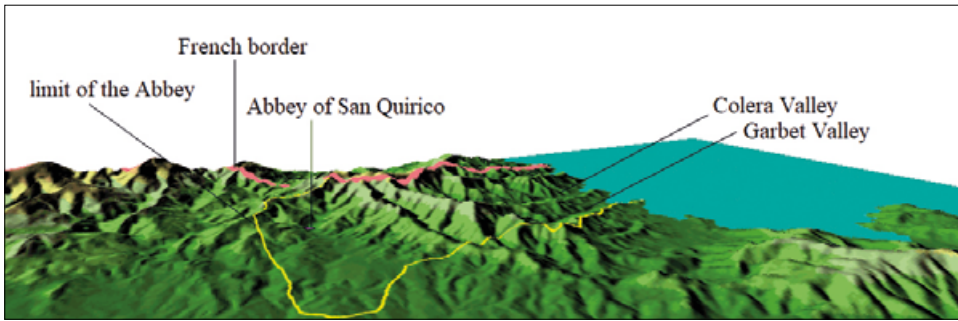
## 1. Jurisdiction, property and emphyteusis

In the middle of the eighteenth century, Isidro Ferrán, a landowner, an emphyteuta, and the promoter of the foundation of Colera, had at his disposal a considerable agrarian estate due to the usufruct of the

<sup>1</sup> A. Pibernat, 'Sant Quirze de Colera. Límits territorials', *Annals de l'Institut d'Estudis Empordanesos*, 37 (2004), 85–95.

<sup>2</sup> P. Vilar, *Catalunya dins l'Espanya moderna. Recerques sobre els fonaments econòmics de les estructures nacionals*, vols 1–4 (Barcelona, 1964–1968),

3/145; see also Y. Barbaza, *El paisatge humà de la Costa Brava*, vols 1–2 (Barcelona, 1988), 2/514.



Map 1. Visualisation of the area. Own work

assets of his late wife, Catalina Ferrer. In 1549, Joan Riusech, a resident of Gariguella, became an emphyteuta of Garbet and Colera by the decision of the Abbot of San Quirico de Colera.<sup>3</sup> Emphyteusis is a contract under which an estate owner gives an emphyteuta the perpetual right to use the estate under the condition of proper care, payment of tax and rent. In this case, Riusech was entitled to use the valley pastures in return for the annual rent of 40 Catalan pounds as well as the tithe and the first fruits obtained. In addition to wielding the first instance of justice inherent to the owner of the fief of the Ampurias County, the Abbot reserved for himself the right to all forested areas, which became an apple of discord during the colonisation.

In 1553, Riusech concluded a contract of emphyteusis regarding the Colera Valley with his neighbour Francesc Ferrer. The latter was to pay the annual amount of 20 Catalan pounds in return. In 1564, Ferrer died without a male successor, leaving the estate to his daughter Joana. She married Miquel Balla, which meant that her family's name would be lost. However, it is worth underlining that Miquel Balla used his wife's last name as an alias to honour the importance of the heritage she brought into the marriage.<sup>4</sup>

After the short introduction to the Ferrer heritage, let us focus on the fundamental aspect associated with the status of the emphyteuta. In 1592, in line with the bull of Pope Clement VIII, the assets of San Quirico were overtaken by the Royal Abbey of San Pedro de Besalú.<sup>5</sup> The Royal Ecclesiastical Patronage was an institution that played a crucial role in the economic and ideological framework of the monarchy. The proof of that can be found, for example, in the remarkable rent growth obtained by the Abbot of Besalú as a result of the agreement concluded in 1664.<sup>6</sup> All the terms and conditions of the Riusech's emphyteusis of 1549 were maintained, but the annual rent increased to 68  $\frac{3}{4}$  Catalan pounds, three times more than the previous amount.

At the end of 1754, Ferrán had the Intendancy of Catalonia publish the edict that entitled him as the emphyteuta of the Colera Valley to claim his right to the enclosure, which led to a legal conflict with the Abbot of Besalú.<sup>7</sup>

As a result of the transformations in the agricultural space caused by the land enclosure, two major issues surfaced. Firstly, the enclosure prevented the collection of firewood, which was the owner's right.

<sup>3</sup> 'Fundación de los lugares de San Quirico y San Miguel de Colera', *Revista de Gerona*, vol. 15 (1891), 306–314 and 335–339.

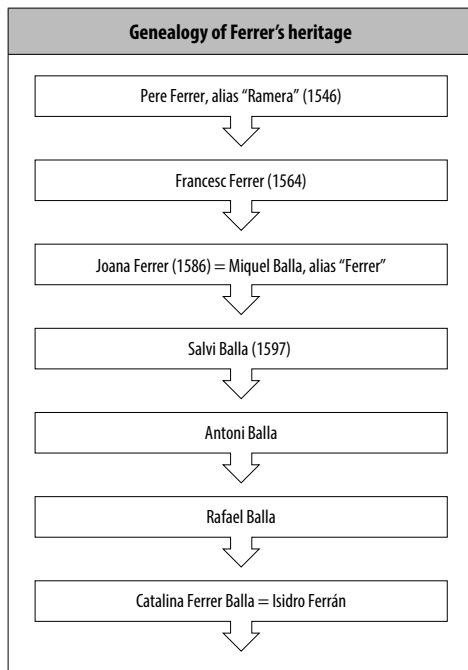
<sup>4</sup> See Table A.

<sup>5</sup> 'Fundación de los lugares', 309.

<sup>6</sup> M. Baig i Aleu, 'La fundació de la vila de Sant Miquel de Colera', *Annals de l'Institut d'Estudis Empordanesos*, vol. 20 (1987), 240–241.

<sup>7</sup> 'Fundación de los lugares', 313–314.

Table A



Source: ACF, Medinaceli, 13/164-166; AHPG – Notaria de Castelló d'Empúries, 1077 and 1110.

And secondly, and more importantly, the process threatened the jurisdictional status of the Abbot. The edict mentioned above indicated that Ferrán would be able to abrogate the Abbot's power to punish intruders.

The legal conflict made Ferrán turn to the royal jurisdiction rather than the feudal one. The reason behind that was that because the Abbey was founded by the Earl of Ampurias, the Abbot, who was both a vassal and a lord, received a series of legal and military prerogatives.<sup>8</sup> One of them was being the first instance judge. Thus, it could be inferred that Ferrán's decision aimed to evade the feudal jurisdiction. It needs to be kept in mind, though, that since the second half of the seventeenth century, the jurisdictional powers related to land ownership have started

disintegrating.<sup>9</sup> The other reason Ferrán turned to royal jurisdiction was the change to the cadastre stemming from the implementation of the edict. The taxes had to be paid into the Royal Treasury, and they became the competence of the Intendancy Court.

At the end of 1754, the Abbot started the proceedings against the edict before the Intendancy Court. He claimed to be the omnipotent jurisdictional lord of the territory in dispute. This argument was based on the unclear boundary between feudal property and jurisdiction. In short, the Abbot denounced that abrogating his county rights was illegal. If Ferrán wanted to avoid the Abbot as the county representative by taking the case to royal jurisdiction, it meant clashing with the almighty Royal Ecclesiastical Patronage.

From the proceedings' point of view, the resolution of the Abbot's case could be defined as swift as it took only ten years in the first instance of the Royal Courts, something regular at that time. On 22 December 1764, Manuel Trebijano y Samaniego, the civil judge of the Royal Court, ruled in favour of the Abbot in both lawsuits. The first decision was upheld during the appeal filed to the Royal Court on 30 June 1766.

After the series of legal defeats, Ferrán's winning card became the county jurisdiction. Interestingly, the spearhead of his last legal offensive was his late payment. He stopped paying the annual rent to the Abbot. The allegedly omnipotent jurisdictional lord went to the Castellón County Court to claim the debt from Isidro Ferrán. The legal steps undertaken by the Abbot betray that the all-encompassing civil and criminal jurisdiction the Abbot tried to use as a winning argument in the Royal Court was not entirely true. Meanwhile, Ferrán continued to litigate despite his

<sup>8</sup> ADM, Ampurias, 95/10438.

<sup>9</sup> See R. Congost, *Els propietaris i els altres. La regió de Girona, 1768–1862* (Vich, 1990), 35–50.

defeats before the Royal Court. He filed an appeal before the Treasury Council, the then highest instance of justice.

## 2. The Agreement of 1768

The agreement signed in 1768 between Isidro Ferrán and the Abbot of Besalú gave the green light to the colonisation project. It solved the complicated legal issue of the overlapping of two jurisdictions.<sup>10</sup> An important aspect was the policy of creating new local communities in Andalusia, e.g. Sierra Morena, which was a clear reference for the colonisation of Colera.<sup>11</sup>

A key element of the process was the pressure exerted by Ferrán on the power structure. In this context, it seems worth mentioning his relationship with Buenaventura Sangenis and José Lebrún who were given substantial pieces of land free of rent.

Ferrán's generosity was aimed at speeding up the necessary procedures to form a new town in both cases. His alliance with Sangenis, first, and Lebrún, later, indicates a shift in his strategy based on the enclosure of the Colera Valley. The publication of the edict of 1754 clearly shows that the profit can be drawn only upon the change in the production model. However, the appearance of Buenaventura Sangenis and the process of setting up new local communities in Andalusia imply that Ferrán rethought not only his strategy but also his goal.<sup>12</sup>

Buenaventura Sangenis was a parish priest of Blancafort. He also received a benefice from Santa María de Castellón de Ampurias, the birthplace of Isidro Ferrán, although the latter repeatedly declared to be a yeoman of Garriguella.<sup>13</sup> Again, Castellón seemed to be the epicentre of

the colonising process. It is also important to underline the role played by Francisco Nualart's notary office especially regarding the bureaucratic work.

Buenaventura's brother, José, a Lieutenant of the Royal Artillery Corps, was assigned to the Royal Foundry of Eugui (Navarre). The Aragon origins of the family and the fact that José served in the Royal Army may be one of the reasons for getting the favours from the almost almighty Captain General of Catalonia, who himself was an Aragon aristocrat. Don Ambrosio Funes de Villalpando y Abarca de Bolea, the Earl of Ricla, was a cousin of Don Pedro Pablo Abarca de Bolea y Jiménez de Urrea, the Earl of Aranda and the President of the Council of Castile – the legal body that had the competence to rule on the complicated case brought by Ferrán.

There are certain aspects that allow us to suspect that the group of the Aragon military was closely knit. Ricla's appointment to the rank of the Captain General of Catalonia can be attributed to his relative Aranda. True as the hypothesis may be, there is also the evidence that the Sangenis' social ties did not reach the highest levels. It seems that this is why Lieutenant Colonel José Lebrún – acting Lieutenant of the Royal Walloon Guards (an elite military body composed exclusively of cadets and commissioned officers) was needed.<sup>14</sup> Most probably, the Sangenis' knew well how to pull strings on lower levels. An example of that can be found in some agreements signed with Ferrán where a certain Romualdo Vilar appears as his agent.<sup>15</sup> The latter was a constructor close to the Sangenis family and the military mentioned above, which is the key to understanding the new strategy adopted by Ferrán. The Sangenis showed him a new, alternative way to implement Ferrán's original idea, i.e. setting up a new local

<sup>10</sup> 'Fundación de los lugares', 335.

<sup>11</sup> AHN, Consejos, 6859/19.

<sup>12</sup> AHPG, Contaduría de Hipotecas, 6/1198-1200, and 7/450-451.

<sup>13</sup> About the benefit of Sangenis, see Baig i Aleu, 'La fundació de la vila', 263; Ferrán's roots in AHPG, Notaría de Castellón de Ampurias, 1993; and Contaduría de Hipotecas, 2/248-250.

<sup>14</sup> AGMS, 1ª Sección, Guardias Walonas, José Lebrun.

<sup>15</sup> AHPG, Notaría de Castellón de Ampurias, 1717/228-234.

community. They pointed out the colonisation process that was taking place at the same time in Sierra Morena. Opting for a similar solution for Colera might push the court proceedings in a different direction. It would put an end to the dispute with the Abbot and would offer Ferrán – the physical promotor of the colonisation idea – a series of benefits that would go well beyond the emphyteutic rents, as well as to the idea's intellectual promotor, Buenaventura Sangenis who would enjoy similar privileges and obtain one hundred *besanas*<sup>16</sup> of land given by Ferrán as the payment for his services.

It is difficult to analyse the importance of the Sangenis brothers in this process. However, when it comes to Romualdo Vilar, some elements indicate that he was Ferrán's primary way of exerting influence. Vilar was a builder associated with the works on the fortress of Figueras from 1755.<sup>17</sup> The Royal Engineers Command at Figueras was crucial in Ferrán's colonisation project. A negative report by the Engineer-in-Chief would mean Ferrán's idea of establishing a new local community could not be implemented. The relationship of the Sangenis with the military was a plausible channel to achieve the goal. Thus, the positive report prepared by the engineer Carlos Cabrer for Ricla was fundamental.

It seems that the Sangenis' influence went only that far. They might have exaggerated their importance, especially in Aranda's circles. Their plan was clever and aimed at drawing substantial benefits from the colonisation project. However, in the face of the arising circumstances, their powers were insufficient. After all, Ferrán's main goal was no longer resolving his problems with the Besalú Abbot. The objective was much more ambitious: he wanted to be a noble. At this point it

became clear that where the Sangenis did not reach, José de Lebrún did.

The memory of Lebrún is still present in Colera. He seems to be a kind of a local Aeneas and even has one of the main streets of the old town named after him. His importance can also be seen in the size of the "remuneration" he received. The Ferrán-Sangenis pacts brought the latter a hundred *besanas* exempt from rent, Lebrún also received land from Ferrán under the same conditions... but it was seven times bigger! Indeed, in the affidavit, for a symbolic payment of 1 ½ pounds, for just over 700 *besanas* in seven different plots of land, Ferrán expressed his gratitude to Lebrún for helping him acquire the status of a noble.<sup>18</sup>

The process of ennoblement of Ferrán is an example of a remarkable social ascent. The fact that Isidro Ferrán had no evidence to support his claim of nobility is very telling. He came from a family of landowners whose history dated back five centuries and had only one uncle in the higher ranks of the military who was a Captain of the Royal Dragoons.<sup>19</sup> A few centuries earlier, such background made it virtually impossible to seek any title. However, in the eighteenth century, the concept of nobility changed significantly. *Pro virtuti et merito* – that was the motto of the Order of Charles III (1771) created nearly at the same time. One of the nineteen titles of nobility granted in Catalonia by Charles III went to Isidro Ferrán on 20 December 1770.<sup>20</sup> In the eighteenth century, a Catalan body of noblemen was established. The titles such as Nobleman, Knight, and Honourable Citizen differed from the so-called *Titles of Castile*, e.g. Duke, Marquis, Earl, etc. In the process, a new type of nobility was

<sup>16</sup> One *besana* equals 2187 sq. m.

<sup>17</sup> AHPG, Notaría de Figueras, 1024/200.

<sup>18</sup> The notarial deed is explicit: "[...] que logrando que dicho señor Joseph Lebrún de su Majestad (que D[ios] guarde) la gracia de noble para ellos", AHPG, Contaduría de Hipotecas, 6/278.

<sup>19</sup> AHN, Consejos, 6859/19.

<sup>20</sup> ACB, Real Audiencia, Privilegiorum, 990/153.

formed. Ferrán's case is truly remarkable. He was the first person to whom a privilege of nobility was granted for population development. It was not until 1774 that Charles III granted a similar privilege, in this case to Melchor Guardia y Mata for the repopulation of Almacellas. The rest of the known cases were people who satisfied their ambition with the title of Knight and, to a greater extent, with that of an Honourable Citizen.<sup>21</sup>

Ferrán managed to climb the social ladder really high. Of fifty-seven titles granted in the eighteenth century, two people received the title of the Noble (Ferrán was one of them), nine of Knights and forty-six of Honourable Citizen. This complex social progression explains the birth of the *hacendados* (yeomen) as a social group characterized by the possession of an important agrarian heritage.<sup>22</sup> Prior to the ennoblement, Isidro Ferrán already appears in the documentation as an *honorable labrador* (an honourable landowner). The way of showing himself reveals his class conscience. He does not feel like an ordinary yeoman anymore.

The weight of the newly acquired nobility was visible even in the agreement that Isidro signed with his eldest son Antonio when the latter came of age. The document sheds light on the difficult relation between the father and the son. The lion's share of Isidro's income came from the usufruct of his first wife's dowry, Catalina Ferrer. The economic difficulties of Antonio and the fact that in 1769, his father got married to Doña Nicolasa Feijoo y Orozco thwarted any chance for paternal-filial harmony.<sup>23</sup>

The family soon adopted its aristocratic status. Not to lose all the vast heritage he had in usufruct, the father endowed his son with a fief called Colera Castle, formed by lands of the upper valley that had not been colonised.<sup>24</sup>

The coat of arms and the right to carry weapons were undoubtedly a way to manifest the new social class, and they clearly show the vanity of Ferrán in the relations with his son, the new lord of the lands of the Colera Valley located outside his father's colonisation plots. But nobility brought far more than glory to the name. It was, first and foremost, a benefit of a much more practical nature for a prominent landowner, i.e. it permitted the exemption of the estate from the cadastral tax.

The operation carried out by Ferrán turned out to be a lucrative business. Although he gave away the land free of rent to Buenaventura Sangenís and José de Lebrún and transferred a part of the valley to his son Antonio, the re-emphyteusis of just a thousand *besanas* produced an income three times higher than the annual rent Ferrán paid to the Abbot. To give but an example: at the price of 7 Catalan pounds per *besana* and the annuity of 3 per cent, a thousand *besanas* (217,8 ha) produced an annual income of 210 Catalan pounds, three times more than the 68¾ pounds that Ferrán paid as his yearly rent to the Abbot. It is worth noticing that in the first three years of colonisation (1769–1771, see table B), the total area of the land given by Ferrán under re-emphyteusis exceeded one thousand hectares.

### 3. City planning control

The study of the spatial development plan of San Miguel de Colera inevitably raises a series of questions that take us to earlier

<sup>21</sup> M.A. Cilleruelo, 'Ennoblecimiento de Cataluña en el siglo XVIII (1700–1808)', *Primer Congreso d'Història Moderna de Catalunya*, vols 1–2 (Barcelona, 1984), 2/233–241.

<sup>22</sup> R. Congost, 'De pagesos a hisendats: Reflexions sobre l'anàlisi dels grups socials dominants. La regió de Girona (1780–1840)', *Recerques*, vol. 35 (1997), 55–57.

<sup>23</sup> AHPG, Contaduría de Hipotecas, 2/249–250, 4/592, and 5/344.

<sup>24</sup> The notarial deed describes it as "una heredad en el termino de San Miguel de Colera... [que] se llamara lo Castell tomando el nombre o apellido de la antigua casa o castillo que en tiempo pasado existia en dicho termino", AHPG, Contaduría de Hipotecas, 7/184.

issues. It seems indispensable to analyse whether there was any contradiction between the attitude of the Intendancy and that of the Royal Ecclesiastical Patronage. In other words, understand the State as a complex structure and assess whether, metaphorically speaking, the right hand could not see what the left was doing. Why did the Abbot question the edict? It is beyond any doubt that the arrival of the emphyteutae meant a substantial increase in the income he obtained from the tithe and the right to get the first fruits collected each year in the Colera Valley.

There is no precedent of a settlement similar to Colera in Catalonia. In general, encouraging people to settle close to an unpopulated border area was a positive thing. At the same time, however, it opened new possibilities that required political authorities to oversee the process. A lawless Colera could easily turn into a smuggling centre, endangering the interests of the Royal Treasury, as well as lead to other difficulties and political consequences whose analysis goes beyond the scope of this paper.

In the records that refer to the Council of Castile's decision to agree to the colonisation of Colera, all the documents prior to the resolution are archived without any chronological order.<sup>25</sup> First, the application of Ferrán and Sangenis of 4 February 1769 is transcribed. Later, it is mentioned that the Attorney of the Council of Castile, Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes, had ordered the Captain General and the Intendant of Catalonia to inform on the case. The report of the Captain General is largely transcribed, while that of the Intendant is summarised. Neither of the two is dated. There is also a letter sent by Isidro Ferrán on 19 May 1770. The Council's opinion was issued on 4 July of that year. Finally, written in another handwriting, there is the resolution of King Charles III,

published in the Royal Order of 3 December 1770.

The analysis of the policy behind the new settlements is very interesting. The precedent to which Ricla's report alludes was in fact the colonisation of Sierra Morena. When it was decided to colonize this part of Andalusia, Pablo de Olavide, the main developer was appointed Intendant with the objective of supervising the colonisation. The Population Act (1767) that was applied to the land lying at the entrance to the Despeñaperros Gorge was written by no other than the Attorney of Castile, Campomanes with the help of Olavide.<sup>26</sup>

Colera's scheme was very similar. Upon the request of Ferrán and the Sangenis, Campomanes asked the Intendant of Catalonia to prepare a report. The incorrect order in which the documents were archived is visible in one of the main aspects mentioned in the report, i.e., the promoters' obligation to construct public buildings. Logically, the report did not mention the new parish church since Ferrán had already committed himself in the previous year's agreement with the Abbot to build it and commissioned his partner Buenaventura Sangenis.<sup>27</sup> Another aspect that betrays the errors in archiving the transcribed documents is that Buenaventura Sangenis requests as a benefit for his work the first vacant canonry in the Cathedral of Lérida and the rank of commissioned officer of the Royal Army for two of his nephews. The report of Ricla does not mention the canonry, which shows that this report is not linked to the request.

The particular steps of the administrative process seem to have been as follows:

<sup>26</sup> See L. Perdices, *Pablo de Olavide (1725–1803). El ilustrado* (Madrid, 1993), 181.

<sup>27</sup> The Abbot's proposal gave two options: "que poblándose como se espera dicho territorio y montaña de Colera". Ferrán could be able to "recomponer la Iglesia que había en el arruinado y antiguo pueblo, o bien edificar otra de nuevo". See 'Fundación de los lugares', 335. About the new church, see AHN, Consejos, 6859/19.

<sup>25</sup> AHN, Consejos, 6859/19.

– In May 1768, the promoters requested the Council of Castile that the status of a new local community be given to Colera.

– The Attorney of Castile, Campomanes, demanded a report from the Intendant of Catalonia.

– After the report, the promoters sent a series of additional documents with the approval of Ricla, the Captain General of Catalonia.

On the basis of the new documents, the President of Castile, Aranda, and his advisors issued a favourable resolution, endorsed, except for a few minor details, by the King.

This complex process can only be understood if the tasks of the State Administration are analysed in detail. Although the Intendance was subordinate to the Captain General of Catalonia, Ricla had other advisory bodies, such as the Royal Court. One of the Court's leading roles was the promotion of the economy. This is the key that allows us to understand the problematic administrative mechanism. The Intendant examined the economic viability of the future settlement, while Ricla managed the administrative, judicial and territorial issues.

Despite all that has been said regarding the territorial planning of the new settlement, it can be concluded that the opinion of the Council of Castile was a mere formality approving the already-taken decision. Starting from 15 February 1769, more than a year before the resolution of the Council, there is evidence of emphyteusis recorded in the Land Registry of Gerona, just eleven days after Ferrán and Sangenís had sent their first letter to the Council of Castile. Hence, it seems evident that when they officially wrote to the Council, the documents establishing the new local community were nearly ready.<sup>28</sup> In other words, before the Attorney of the Council sent his request, both the Captain



Map 2. Detail of *Mapa del Principado de Cataluña con la Frontera de Francia, Aragón y Valencia* made by the Earl of Darnius in the early eighteenth century before the foundation of San Miguel de Colera; see the Abbey of San Quirico (in the map called St. Quirch), and note that the border with France in this zone is uninhabited.

Source: BNE, *Manuscritos*, 6332.

General of Catalonia and his Intendant had already done everything required in this matter. Urban planning, public buildings or the defence of the port were aspects that were already designed and approved. The real task of the Council of Castile, and later of Charles III, was to discuss and approve the personal benefits requested by the promoters.

The first problem for Ferrán and Sangenís was defining the territory. Following the information in the Intendant's report, the public buildings and urban planning were of key importance. To understand those issues, it is indispensable to study the work of military engineers. The available documentation makes an express reference to three men: General Commander Juan Martín-Zermeño, his son Pedro Martín-Zermeño, Director of Catalonia, and Carlos Cabrer, Chief Engineer of Figueras district.

<sup>28</sup> AHN, *Consejos*, 6859/19.



It is no surprise that the role of military engineers in civil architecture and city planning in the eighteenth century was so crucial.<sup>29</sup> In 1767, Juan Martín Zermeño suggested that a part of the Corps of Engineers should specialise in civil works, although it was not until 1780 that the area of Roads, Bridges, Civil Architecture and Channels was formed.<sup>30</sup> Some pieces of information led us to believe that Zermeño could think of his son as the person to lead this area. At the time of the colonisation of Colera, Pedro Martín Zermeño was the Councillor of Architecture of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando. He is also one of the signatories of the request sent to Charles III at the end of 1768 for the Academy to become a body authorising important construction projects. This is the origin of the Architecture Commission, an institution that introduced architectural avant-garde into Spain. Zermeño and other Councillors called for a state reaction to the bad taste in architecture. In addition, the Commission was highly effective in controlling the activity of city halls, cathedral chapters, etc. Attorney Campomanes's attitude aimed at delaying the establishment of the Commission was driven by his concerns about the Commission becoming a counter-power to the Council of Castile.

Pedro Zermeño had a peculiar liking for civil architecture. In addition, as the Director Engineer of Catalonia he had the power to make decisions concerning the urban planning in this part of Spain.<sup>31</sup> The regulation of 1771 regarding

the suburb of the Fortress of Rosas was in Zermeño's view an act establishing a new settlement (just as was Colera), and not only did he design its spatial plan, but he drew the plans of new church as well.<sup>32</sup> This talent of Zermeño as an ecclesiastical architect became even more visible in his marvellous design of the new cathedral in Lérida.<sup>33</sup>

However, Zermeño despite being a Director Engineer of Catalonia, did not design the new settlement of Colera. The reason behind that was the fact that he was working at the very same time in Mallorca.<sup>34</sup> His absence explains the autonomy enjoyed by the Chief Engineer of Figueras, Carlos Cabrer, which is reflected in the records of the Council of Castile. Analysing the Cabrer's design for Colera, it is very important to have in mind the person who developed it. The influence of La Barceloneta, the maritime district of the Catalan capital, in the urban planning of Colera is clearly visible. Cabrer was born in Barcelona, and he trained as an engineer there. The son of Barcelona's notary public, Jerónimo Cabrer, in 1746, at the age of twenty-four entered the Royal Academy of Mathematics of Barcelona. Upon graduating with flying colours in 1749, he joined the Corps of Engineers.<sup>35</sup> The influence of La Barceloneta in the design of Colera is evident with regard to its urban planning and the inclusion of its coastal context.

<sup>29</sup> See C. Sambricio, *La arquitectura española de la Ilustración* (Madrid, 1986), 60.

<sup>30</sup> R. Gutiérrez and C. Esteras, *Arquitectura y fortificación. De la Ilustración a la independencia americana* (Madrid, 1993), 70.

<sup>31</sup> H. Capel et al., *Los ingenieros militares en España. Siglo XVIII. Repertorio biográfico e inventario de su labor científica y espacial* (Barcelona, 1983), 314–317; see also A. Marzal, *La ingeniería militar española del siglo XVIII. Nuevas aportaciones a su legado científico y monumental* (Madrid, 1991), 1191–1195.

<sup>32</sup> P. de la Fuente, *Las fortificaciones reales del golf de Roses en l'època moderna* (Figueras, 1998), 235.

<sup>33</sup> F. Vila, *La catedral de Lleida (segle XVIII)* (Lérida, 1991), 47–53 and 210–212.

<sup>34</sup> ACA, Comandancia de Ingenieros, 136; Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Guerra Moderna, 3325.

<sup>35</sup> Marzal, *La ingeniería militar española*, 1189–1191; Capel et al., *Los ingenieros militares*, 309–313.



Map 3. Detail of *Mapa corográfico de la Provincia de Gerona demarcado con arreglo a los limites asignados por las Cortes (1821)* drawn by M.R. García; see *San Miguel de Colera*, in the map called *Culera*, note the border with France marked in red.  
Source: AGMM, Cartoteca, GE-22/5.

#### 4. The Royal Grace and development

The colonisation process clearly shows the relationship between the core of the Spanish monarchy and its peripheries. While the high-rank officials in Catalonia were competent in technical and administrative matters, the benefits the promoters would obtain were in the hands of the Council of Castile or even the King's own office. The colonisation of Colera was accompanied by the first court proceedings, which corroborates the existence of the two levels of decision-making.<sup>36</sup>

Undoubtedly, the measures approved in Madrid created a *quid pro quo* effect. In exchange for their efforts, the promoters wanted several privileges. One of them was the ennoblement of Ferrán and granting his son Martín a commissioned officer rank in the Royal Army. The Sangenis brothers asked for a canonry in the Cathedral of Lleida for Buenaventura, the rank of Lieutenant Colonel of artillery for his brother, and two ranks of commissioned officer for his nephews Ramón and José.

<sup>36</sup> AHN, Consejos, 6859/19.

Ferrán got what he craved for. However, the Sangenis were not able to pursue their ambitions. The report of the Council of Castile was negative regarding Buenaventura's candidacy for the ecclesiastical vacancy. Instead, two more ranks of commissioned officer were offered to two other nephews, Vicente and Antonio. As for the military rank of the Sangenis' brother, the Council approved that he be granted the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, but the king promoted him to Captain only.

The benefits given by the Council of Castile were to be transferred gradually, and they were conditioned by the settlement of 50 families in a year and a half from the King's approval, published by the Royal Order on 3 December 1770. After the construction of the first ten houses, the title of noble was to be given to Isidro Ferrán. Indeed, the document that confirms the issuance of the said privilege by the Royal Court contains the information that eleven houses had already been built. Accordingly, the military jobs were to be granted upon the completion of the successive tens of houses: twenty houses would give José de Sangenis the rank of Captain of Artillery, and in the same way, the ranks of commissioned officers were to be issued for Martín Ferrán and for Ramón and José, the nephews of Buenaventura. The ranks for Vicente and Antonio Sangenis were to be given upon the completion of the construction of the church and other public buildings.<sup>37</sup>

In December 1771, one year after the actual resolution, 44 contracts of emphyteusis were already registered at the Gerona Land Registry Office. Thus, the goal was met because the papers reveal that on top of the 44 emphyteusis contracts, there were also a dozen new inhabitants who were not settled there under any contract signed with Ferrán.

<sup>37</sup> AHPG, Contaduría de Hipotecas, 6/1198-1199.

One of them was Martín Sirvent, whose case is very illustrative. In July 1771, Isidro Ferrán under emphyteusis rented him a lot of 19 *besanas*. In the record of the Land Registry Office, Martín Sirvent claims to be an inhabitant of Colera.<sup>38</sup> It is evident that he was an immigrant, although the information he gave shows that when he was settled by Ferrán, he was already a resident. Such was also the case of Juan Serrat. When he received the first piece of land in December 1770, he declared that he came from Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans, a French municipality on the border with Spain.<sup>39</sup> Nine months later, when he received a new lot of land, he did not hesitate to claim to be an inhabitant of Colera.<sup>40</sup>

The last aspect that this article aims to analyse is the limited extent of the construction of public infrastructure. The documents investigated in relation to this subject reveal no news about the construction of public buildings. One of them was the church, which was to be erected by Isidro Ferrán and Buenaventura Sangenis, but for years, there was nothing but a hole excavated for future foundations.<sup>41</sup> The defence tower of the port was not built either.<sup>42</sup> As a retribution for that, in the late 1770s, the Royal Court tried unsuccessfully to seize the properties of Buenaventura Sangenis.<sup>43</sup> The construction of public buildings was a prerequisite for granting the rank of officer to Ferrán's nephew, Antonio de Sangenis, the future hero of the siege of Zaragoza (1809).<sup>44</sup> However, the latter's personal file reveals that he was in military service since 1774, which confirms that the rank was granted

to him even though Buenaventura Sangenis did not fulfil the conditions of the agreement. Antonio and José served in the Royal Army,<sup>45</sup> which is proof of Buenaventura's cleverness and cunning. There is no record that either Vicente or Ramón Sangenis were ever enlisted. Since the two military ranks turned out to be no longer needed, Buenaventura did not see it important to deliver on his commitments regarding the construction of public buildings as he already got everything he craved for.

## 5. Migration analysis

A comprehensive study of the migratory processes requires the use of theoretical models. For the analysed period, the Ravenstein's Laws seem to be very useful.<sup>46</sup> One of them is the economic interest and the expulsion-attraction factor, i.e. the unfavourable economic conditions in the origin location and appealing ones in the target location. Another one is that emigrants tend to move to nearby places if possible. Due to the proximity, the emigration involves entire families and people tied with social links who gradually move to a new place of living in subsequent migration waves.

Ravenstein's model is clearly visible in Colera which became populated with the colonists coming from Agullana.<sup>47</sup> Family relations and social links can be traced with regard to three of the four settlers of the first migratory wave, in February 1769, prior to the resolution of the Council of Castile. The relationship of Raimundo Mallol, one of the first migrants, with Antonio Mallol seems obvious as both bear the same surname. It is worth noticing though that Antonio Mallol is given the emphyteusis by Ferrán the same month as Juan Sabiol, another inhabitant of Agullana.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 7/71-72.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 5/824-826.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 7/452-453.

<sup>41</sup> Baig i Aleu, 'La fundació de la vila', 261-263.

<sup>42</sup> P. de la Fuente, 'Noticia d'un projecte de fortificació al litoral de l'Empordà durant el segle XVIII: La torre de Sant Miquel de Colera', *Annals de l'Institut d'Estudis Gironins*, vol. 33 (1994), 660-661.

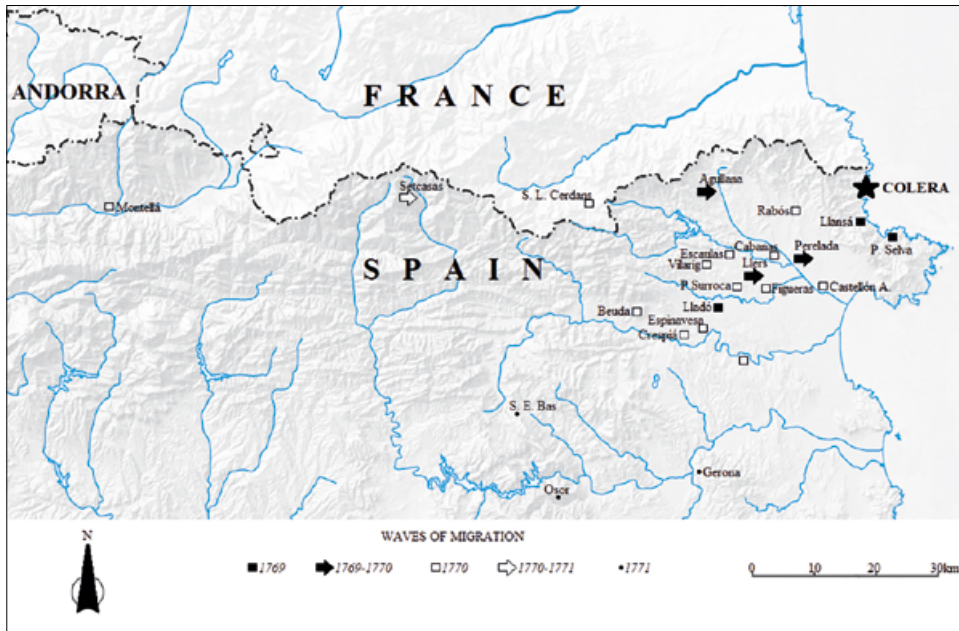
<sup>43</sup> Baig i Aleu, 'La fundació de la vila', 263.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> AGMS, 1ª Sección, Infantería, José Sangenis; Martín Ferrán.

<sup>46</sup> J. Arango, 'Las "leyes de las migraciones" de E.G. Ravenstein, cien años después', *Revista española de investigaciones sociológicas*, vol. 32 (1985), 7-26.

<sup>47</sup> See Table B.



Map 4. Waves of migration, 1769–1771. Own work.

In order to apply the migratory model, the situation needs to meet at least two conditions: (1) the gradual migration has to increase in subsequent years; (2) there must be at least three migrant settlers who come from the same place.

The criteria were met by the migrants who came to Colera from Agullana and Setcasas. In both cases, the records allow us to draw several conclusions. The most interesting is the growth rate of the two villages which is far below the average. The study of the documents reveals that between the censuses of Campoflorido (1718) and Floridablanca (1787) there was a spectacular population growth in Catalonia. However, the growth rate of the two locations compared to the Catalan average is clearly lower. Assuming that the growth rate of Catalonia between 1718 and 1787 is 209 (adopting the data of the Campoflorido census as level 100), it can be seen that the levels of both populations are far lower. Agullana's population grew from 337 inhabitants to 443, representing

an increase of 131. The number of Setcasas' inhabitants increased from 324 to 522, and at 161.1 it is also below the Catalan average.<sup>48</sup> One of the reasons behind that was that the people from both locations emigrated to, among other places, Colera.

The second important aspect of the practical study of the migratory model is the percentage of the population that emigrated from both villages to Colera. In both cases, it significantly exceeded one percentage point. If each settler coming to Colera is considered to be having a family with a minimum of four members, 16 inhabitants who left Agullana for Colera constitute 3.61 per cent of their home village population registered in the census of Floridablanca. When it comes to Setcasas, the percentage reaches a significant 2.17 per cent.

The situation in Figueras and Castellón de Ampurias, the most important population centres in the immediate

<sup>48</sup> See Vilar, *Catalunya dins l'Espanya moderna*, 3/145 and 163.

neighbourhood, is entirely different. All new settlers coming to both towns were registered in 1770 and did not come in subsequent annual waves, which does not permit to apply the gradual annual growth. In addition to that, the growth rate of Figueras and Castellón de Ampurias is 289 and 231, respectively, far above the average for Catalonia i.e. 209. At the same time, the percentage of the population that left both towns is very low not reaching even one per cent. Applying the same criteria as the ones used to interpret the data from Agullana and Setcasas, the percentage of inhabitants who left Figueras was 0.37 per cent and the one for Castellón de Ampurias was 0.54 per cent.<sup>49</sup>

However, the role of Castellón de Ampurias in the colonisation process was very important. It was the place of the Nualart's notary office, where the emphyteusis records were registered. In addition, Ferrán was born there and Sangenis had some ecclesiastic benefits in this parish. Despite its importance, the people living in the town did not show much enthusiasm in moving to Colera, which is confirmed by the low level of emigration expressed in percentages as well as the low number of people who followed their friends and relatives in subsequent emigration waves.

The same conclusion can be drawn from the analysis of the documents related to Figueras. Although, quantitatively, the number of emphyteutae coming from this town is bigger (one person more) than the number of people who came from Castellón de Ampurias, it is known that at least two of the five emphyteutae had no relation to the agricultural process. Two of them were builders Romualdo Vilar and Jaime Gimferrer whose jobs were related to the construction in Colera. As already said, Vilar is a character closely linked to Sangenis as well as the construction of the fortress of Figueras. If both men are

excluded, the percentage of people who emigrated from Figueras to Colera is reduced to 0.22 per cent, below half of the percentage for Castellón de Ampurias. If the idea of colonisation did not raise much enthusiasm among the inhabitants of Castellón de Ampurias, in the case of the people of Figueras, it was virtually of no interest at all.

The detailed study of the above-mentioned aspects confirms the so-called *gravitational model*, based on the formula of universal gravitation. According to the model, the ability to attract migration is inversely proportional to distance. The analysis of all the factors allows us to conclude that the prevailing migratory model in the case of Colera was emigration from rural zones starting with the ones that are nearby and followed by more distant locations. Agullana and Setcasas constitute a very good example of this trend. The emigration is based on family links, too, matching the Newtonian attraction model whereby the subsequent waves of migration bring more relatives to Colera. In the case of Agullana, much closer to Colera than Setcasas, the process began 16 months earlier.

## 6. Conclusion: the limitations of the production model

In 1787, the census of Floridablanca regarding Colera shows that there were 228 inhabitants: one priest, three yeomen, 113 peasants and six artisans.<sup>50</sup> In order to call a colonisation process a success, the following conditions must be met: commercial profitability, capitalist investment, and construction. The model was based on the production of wine and selling it to the market using the coastal waters. The idea seemed so compelling that even the Earl of Ricla, the Supreme Authority of Catalonia, did not doubt the expected

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 145–146.

<sup>50</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística, *Censo de 1787 "Floridablanca"*, vol. 5: *Comunidades Pirenaicas* (Madrid, 1991), 5172.

benefits.<sup>51</sup> It was a telling sign that the first registered emphyteuta of Colera was the businessman Pedro Rubiés.<sup>52</sup> It is clear that the 42 *besanas* that Ferrán gave him under emphyteusis exceeded the average size of land leased to the emphyteutae and were not exploited by Rubiés personally. On the contrary, they were cultivated by other settlers. Undoubtedly, the role of Rubiés must be associated with maritime commerce. In addition, Rubiés was an investor in the colonising company. The land leased to Rubiés under emphyteusis bore the cost of 277 pounds with no perpetual rent attached. The entire amount was paid in two payments. Given the financial cost of constructing the new town, it is logical that the promoters sought sources of financing. An example of that can be Francisco Estela, who was given emphyteusis on the same day as Rubiés. After Ferrán's deals with Sangenis and Lebrún, Estela was the emphyteuta who acquired the largest lot of land until 3 June 1771, when the condition imposed by Charles III to complete the minimum of fifty required settlers expired. For his lot of just over 46 *besanas*, Estela incurred a debt with Ferrán of 305  $\frac{3}{20}$  Catalan pounds. However, Estela would not pay any perpetual rent as he would give an advance payment of 5  $\frac{3}{20}$  Catalan pounds and will commit to pay off the remaining 300 pounds in four years.<sup>53</sup> Estela states in the record to be a yeoman, unlike other colonists who claim to be peasants and labourers.

Another undoubtedly singular case is that of Raimundo Mallol. Again, it can be seen that some of the first settlers behaved as partners in a company to which they brought their capital. Instead of signing an emphyteusis contract for paying a perpetual rent in exchange for the 25  $\frac{1}{2}$  *besanas* of the lot he received, Mallol undertook

the obligation to pay off of the amount of 178 Catalan pounds in the following instalments. He made the first payment of 28 Catalan pounds and offered to pay the remaining 150 pounds over the next four years.<sup>54</sup> It seems that Mallol profited in two ways from his involvement in the colonisation of Colera. Firstly, he was a professional builder and took advantage of the business opportunity offered by the need to construct there. And secondly, he drew income from the land he held under emphyteusis. Such was also the case of another of the colonist builders, Romualdo Vilar, a Sangenis' man of trust. It should not be forgotten that one of Sangenis' commitments with Ferrán and the Council of Castile was the construction of the new church.

The census of Floridablanca reveals that at the end of the eighteenth century, Colera counted 228 inhabitants. The number allows us to suspect that there must have been about fifty houses, which was the prerequisite for obtaining the goals of Ferrán and Sangenis. The population stopped growing, though. Why did that happen? One of the possible reasons behind it was the insufficient infrastructure thwarting the colony's expansion. Another one was that the agricultural colonisation of the Colera Valley had its limits. These were much closer to the foundational target of a neighbourhood of fifty houses rather than Ferrán's exaggerated expectation of 400 or 500 houses.<sup>55</sup> Colera should have had approximately two thousand inhabitants if the latter were to become true. This boastful promise made by Ferrán was nothing but wishful thinking conditioned by his need to sell his product in Madrid. Neither the reports of the Captain General nor the Intendant retake this idea.

Enclosing the land and planting vineyards was hard work. In addition, a sizeable

<sup>51</sup> AHN, Consejos, 6859/19.

<sup>52</sup> AHPG, Contaduría de Hipotecas, 2/283-284.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 2/286-287.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 2/287-288.

<sup>55</sup> AHN, Consejos, 6859/19.

part of the land produced low yield. In this valley, the good vineyards are the ones that face south and are protected from the harsh winds of the north. A perfect

example was the lot Ferrán gave to Lebrún. Out of the 704 *besanas* given by Isidro to his associate, 421 lie on a southwestern slope.<sup>56</sup> ■

Table B

Emphyteutae of San Miguel de Colera (1769–1771)					
1769: 7 emphyteusis contracts / 326.75 <i>besanas</i>					
2/283-4	15 Feb.	Pere Rubiés	businessman	P. Selva	42
2/284-5	15 Feb.	Joan Falcó	peasant	Llansá	22
2/286-7	15 Feb.	Francesc Estela	yeoman	Llers	46.75
2/287-8	15 Feb.	Raimon Mallol	builder	Agullana	25.5
6/1198-200	19 Apr.	Buenaventura Sangenis	priest		135
3/567-8	01 Nov.	Josep Soler	peasant	Lladó	30.5
3/847-8	27 Dec.	Miquel Llensa	peasant	Perelada	25
1770: 31 emphyteusis contracts / 1,513.75 <i>besanas</i>					
4/4-5	01 Jan.	Pedro Costa	peasant	Cabanas	25
4/5-6	01 Jan.	Felix Quintà	weaver	Rabós	20
4/14-5	02 Jan.	Jaime Rumbau	yeoman	Agullana	40
4/15-6	02 Jan.	Juan Mestres	peasant	Roussillon	20
4/16-7	02 Jan.	Esteban Moll	labourer	Perelada	25
4/18-9	02 Jan.	José Lebrún	military		704
4/61-2	09 Jan.	Romualdo Vilar	builder	Figueras	27
4/62-3	09 Jan.	Juan P. Fàbrega	labourer	Figueras	33
4/526-7	13 Mar.	Pedro Pedrosa	peasant	Espinavesa	37.5
4/527-8	13 Mar.	Miguel Gifreu	peasant	Espinavesa	20
4/531	13 Mar.	Silvestre Fajó	peasant	Crespiá	37.5
4/561-2	20 Mar.	Jaime Casadevall	peasant	Llers	30
4/562-3	20 Mar.	Juan Sabiol	peasant	Agullana	28.75
4/604-5	28 Mar.	Antonio Mallol	peasant	Agullana	25
4/608-9	28 Mar.	Isidro Pérez	peasant	Figueras	29
4/609-10	28 Mar.	Lorenzo Rotllan	peasant	Castellón A.	19
4/610-1	28 Mar.	Pedro Garrobé	peasant	Castellón A.	19
4/657-8	04 Apr.	Tomás Vilarrodona	peasant	Castellón A.	18
4/658-9	04 Apr.	Juan Ymonench	peasant	Castellón A.	18

<sup>56</sup> AHPG, Contaduría de Hipotecas, 6/278.

4/853-4	16 May	Salvio Armany	peasant	Figueras	18
4/854-5	16 May	José Brusi	peasant	Setcasas	15
4/855-6	16 May	Francisco Capdevila	labourer	Perelada	18
4/856-7	16 May	Jaime Brusi	peasant	Setcasas	17
4/972-3	06 June	Jaime Gimferrer	builder	Figueras	12
4/973-4	06 June	José Alsina	yeoman	Calabuig	31.5
4/976-7	06 June	Salvador Gispert	peasant	Montellá C.	28
4/977-8	06 June	Baudilio Pararols	peasant	Vilarig	20
5/91-2	18 July	Juan Guillot	miller	Beuda	73.5
5/561-2	31 Oct.	Domingo Triadú	yeoman	P. Surroca	40
5/563	31 Oct.	Jaime Riqué	peasant	L. Escaulas	30
5/824-6	12 Dec.	Juan Serrat	businessman	S. L. Cerdans	35
1771: 7 emphyteusis contracts / 121.5 <i>besanas</i>					
6/1133	19 June	Jaime Surroca	builder	Setcases	18
6/1135-6	19 June	Francisco Ombreras	peasant	Osor	14
7/9	03 July	Gaspar Tarrús	peasant	S. Esteban B.	25
7/71-2	10 July	Martín Sirvent	peasant	Colera	19.5
7/181-2	25 July	Isidro Sala	peasant	Gerona	15
7/182-3	25 July	Narciso Dalmau	peasant	Gerona	30
6/1133	19 June	Jaime Surroca	builder	Setcases	18

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 ACE, Archivo Comarcal de Figueras  
 ADM, Archivo Ducal de Medinaceli in Sevilla  
 AGMM, Archivo General Militar de Madrid  
 AGMS, Archivo General Militar de Segovia

AGS, Archivo General de Simancas  
 AHN, Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid  
 AHPG, Archivo Histórico Provincial de Gerona  
 BNE, Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid

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### San Miguel de Colera: polityka terytorialna i kolonizacja wiejska w Hiszpanii za czasów Karola III (1768–1771)

#### Streszczenie

Niniejsza praca koncentruje się na złożonym i kontrowersyjnym procesie realizowanym w drugiej połowie XVIII w. przez Isidra Ferrána, właściciela ziemskiego w dolinie Colera, w celu przekształcenia dużej części jego ziemi w winnicę. Jego problemy z opatem klasztoru San Quirico, będącym feudalnym panem doliny, początkowo uniemożliwiły mu sadzenie winorośli. Na rozwiązanie tego problemu złożyły się dwie kwestie: pierwsza to fakt, że w społeczeństwie wczesnonowoczesnym postęp nowoczesnego państwa jako kręgosłupa społecznego zależał od trwałości zacofanego świata feudalnego. Drugim była obawa władz przed masową kolonizacją agrarną

praktycznie niezaludnionego obszaru na granicy z Francją, która mogłaby stać się źródłem problemów z powodu braku kontroli, w tym przemytu. Realizację aspiracji Ferrána umożliwiło przekształcenie problemu agrarnego w miejski, mianowicie założenie nowego miasta, w którym osiedli się nowi osadnicy. Królewski patronat nad klasztorem San Quirico sprawił, że pan feudalny przestał być problemem dla ambicji Ferrána. Pojawienie się państwa oznaczało interwencję jego urzędników w proces planowania nowej osady miejskiej i możliwość nobilitacji Ferrána za rolę kolonizatora. ■

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