

A METHODOLOGICAL PUZZLE: THE REPRESENTATIVENESS OF AFTER-DEATH INVENTORIES WITHOUT MONETARY VALUATIONS. THE CASE OF VIC (1400-1460)

UN PROBLEMA METODOLÓGICO: LA REPRESENTATIVIDAD DE LOS INVENTARIOS POST-MORTEM SIN VALORACIONES MONETARIAS. EL CASO DE VIC (1400-1460)

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Abstract²

The present article aims to analyze the social representativeness of *post mortem* inventories as a valuable source for studying consumer behavior and standards of living in pre-industrial Europe. Specifically, this article examines the possibilities that Catalan after-death inventories have to offer considering their lack of monetary valuations. With the aim to understand the nature and limits of this source, this paper will use the town of Vic and its rich archives as its case study. For this purpose, this article starts by examining the institutional framework that regulated the elaboration of after-death inventories in late medieval Catalonia. This theoretical approach will be complemented with a cross-analysis of the after-death inventories of Vic, alongside the burial records and the *tallas* or direct taxation on wealth of this same town, in order to determine the 'actual' coverage of late medieval Catalan after-death inventories. Finally, the study will assess the possibilities that alternative wealth indicators may offer to socially classify after-death inventories without monetary

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valuations in order to establish a solid methodological foundation essential for conducting a rigorous historical analysis of pre-industrial consumption patterns in Catalonia and, by extension, all the Crown of Aragon.

Keywords

Consumption; After-death Inventories; Wealth taxes; Crown of Aragon; Vic; Late Middle Ages.

Resumen

El presente artículo aborda la representatividad demográfica y social de los inventarios *post-mortem*, como fuente para el estudio de las pautas de consumo y los niveles de vida preindustriales. En particular, el presente artículo pretende valorar las posibilidades que ofrecen los inventarios *post-mortem* catalanes que, a diferencia de los castellanos, no contienen valoraciones monetarias. Con el fin de determinar la naturaleza y límites de esta fuente documental, se analiza el caso de Vic para los años 1400 y 1460. El artículo comienza analizando el marco jurídico e institucional que regulaba la elaboración de los inventarios *post-mortem* en la Cataluña bajomedieval. A continuación, se contraponen la realidad legal catalana con su actual práctica mediante el análisis cruzado de los inventarios *post-mortem* preservados en el archivo episcopal de Vic, los registros de enterramientos de la Sede catedralicia y las tallas o impuestos directos sobre la riqueza de dicha ciudad. Por último, el artículo concluye proponiendo indicadores alternativos a la riqueza para clasificar los inventarios sin valoraciones monetarias con el fin de sentar unos cimientos metodológicos sólidos sobre los cuales construir un análisis histórico riguroso de las pautas de consumo y los niveles de vida de la Cataluña preindustrial y, por extensión, de toda la Corona de Aragón.

Palabras clave

Consumo; inventarios *post-mortem*; tallas; Corona de Aragón; Vic; Baja Edad Media.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Historians have traditionally relied on after-death inventories to study changes in the material living conditions and consumption patterns of the past.³ Inventories are considered reliable sources for understanding pre-industrial consumer behavior because they are relatively abundant documents that can be found in significant numbers since the fourteenth century onwards in Europe and, to a lesser extent, in non-European regions.⁴ The broad temporal and geographical scope of after-death inventories, along with their meticulous descriptions of nearly all the assets that a household owned, makes them ideal sources for studying the changes in the ownership of goods across different regions and historical periods. Despite the widespread use of after-death inventories in consumption studies, these sources are not without faults.

3. The classical inventory-based studies on this matter are: Overton, Mark *et alii.*: *Production and consumption in English households, 1600-1750*. London and New York, Routledge, 2004; Shammas, Carole: *The pre-industrial consumer in England and America*, Oxford and New York, Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press, 1990; Weatherhill, Lorna: *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760*, London and New York, Routledge, 1988; and the collective works: Brewer, John and Porter, Roy: *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London, Routledge, 1993; Schurmann, Anton. J. and Walsh, Lorena S.: *Material Culture: Consumption, Life-Style, Standard of Living, 1500-1900*, Milan, Università Bocconi, 1994. Up to the present day, consumption studies have continued to proliferate well beyond the capacities of any historian to enumerate them all. For the specific case of Spain, see: Marfany, Julie: *Land, Proto-Industry and Population in Catalonia, c. 1680-1829. An Alternative Transition to Capitalism?*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012; Moreno Claverías, Belén: *Consum i condicions de vida a la Catalunya Moderna: Penedès 1670-1790*, Vilafranca del Penedès, Edicions i Propostes Culturals Andana, 2007; Ramos Palencia, Fernando: *Pautas de consumo y mercado en Castilla, 1750-1850. Economía familiar en Palencia al final del Antiguo Régimen*, Madrid, Sílex, 2010; and the monographic volume issued in 2003 in the *Revista de Historia Económica-Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History* that was dedicated to consumption in pre-industrial Spain.

4. Among the many studies that have systematically analyzed after-death inventories to study late medieval and Renaissance consumer behavior, see for instance: Almenar Fernández, Luis and Belenguier González, Antonio: «The Transformation of Private Space in the Later Middle Ages: Rooms and Living Standards in the Kingdom of Valencia (1280-1450),» *Journal of Urban History*, 0 (2020), pp. 1-25; Almenar Fernández, Luis: «Consumir la obra de terra. Los orígenes de la cerámica valenciana por el lado de la demanda (1283-1349),» *Hispania*, LXXVIII, 258 (2018), pp. 69-101; Idem: «Why did medieval villagers buy earthenware? Pottery and consumer behavior in the Valencian countryside (1280-1450),» *Continuity and Change*, 33, n°1 (2018), pp. 1-27; de Groot, Julie: *At Home in Renaissance Bruges: Connecting Objects, People and Domestic Spaces in a Sixteenth-Century City*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2022; Goldberg, Jeremy P.: «The fashioning of bourgeois domesticity in later medieval England: a material culture perspective,» in Kowaleski, Maryanne and Goldberg, Jeremy P. (eds.): *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 124-144; Hohti Erichsen, Paula: *Artisans, Objects and Everyday Life in Renaissance Italy: The Material culture of the Middling Class*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2020; Jervis, Ben, Briggs, Chris and Tompkins, Matthew: «Exploring Text and Objects: Escheators' Inventories and Material Culture in Medieval English Rural Households,» *Medieval Archaeology* 59, n°1 (2015), pp. 168-192; Lord Smail, Daniel: *Legal Plunder: Households and Debt Collection in Late Medieval Europe*. Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press, 2016; Sear, Joanne and Sneath, Ken: *The Origins of the Consumer Revolution in England: From Brass Pots to Clocks*, London and New York, Routledge, 2020.

For the use of after-death inventories outside Europe, see: Carr, Lois G. and Walsh, Lorena S.: «Inventories and the Analysis of Wealth and Consumption Patterns in St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1658-1777,» *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 13 (1980), pp. 81-104; Idem: «The standard of living in the colonial Chesapeake,» *The William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History* 45, 1 (1988), pp. 135-159; Ceylan, Pinar: *Essays on markets, prices and consumption in the Ottoman Empire (late-seventeenth to mid-nineteenth centuries)* (Unedited PhD dissertation), London School of Economic and Political Science, 2016; Karababa, Emingül: «Investigating early modern Ottoman consumer culture in the light of Bursa probate inventories,» *Economic History Review*, 65, 1 (2012), pp. 194-219; Shammas, Carole: *op. cit.*; Walsh, Lorena S.: «Urban amenities and rural sufficiency: Living standards and consumer behavior in the colonial Chesapeake, 1643-1777,» *Journal of Economic History*, 43, n°1 (1983), pp. 109-117.

Scholars have identified several methodological issues when using after-death inventories for statistical purposes. Firstly, some historians have pointed out that *post-mortem* inventories cannot fully address pre-industrial consumption in its static and dynamic dimensions. After all, after-death inventories are only «snapshots» of nearly all the material possessions that an individual or a family owned when the head of the household died. Consequently, they can only illustrate the volume and typologies of movable goods that an individual or a family had at a specific time. On this basis, scholars can study the consumer practices, the collective motivations that led to the consumption of these goods or the social hierarchy of pre-industrial societies on the basis of their material possessions. However, they cannot address demand. Consumer demand is in itself a dynamic concept as it is constantly being reshaped according to the owner's wealth and ideas. Thus, it cannot be studied using after-death inventories.⁵ In order to explore the dynamic perspective of consumption, one must turn to other historical sources, such as household budgets. These sources offer a unique insight on the actual patterns of household resource allocation. Additionally, household budgets can also illustrate the ever-evolving demand for services, social and leisure activities, and various intangible goods which are not recorded in after-death inventories.⁶

Indeed, the second methodological problem of *post-mortem* inventories lies in the omission of goods. Despite their extraordinary richness, after-death inventories often exclude objects of low monetary value and non-durable goods, such as food, shoes or toys.⁷ Occasionally, even valuable objects could be missing. These exclusions typically resulted from the process of administrating and transmitting the deceased's property. Some goods were disposed of before the elaboration of the after-death inventory.⁸ Thus, historians need to carefully consider the accuracy of after-death inventories when using them.

However, the most debated issue by far has been the socio-economic representativeness of the after-death inventories. Not every death automatically led to the elaboration of an after-death inventory. There were many late medieval

5. De Vries, Jan: «Between purchasing power and the world of goods: understanding the household economy in early modern Europe,» in Brewer, John and Porter, Roy (eds.). *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993, pp. 85-132, especially 102.

6. Viale, Mattia: «Stocks and flows: Material culture and consumption behaviour in early modern Venice (c.1680-1800),» *Economic History Review*, 00 (2023), pp. 1-28.

7. De Vries, «Between purchasing power and the world of goods», 102; Schuurman, Anton: «Things by which one measures one's life. Wealth and poverty in European rural societies,» in Schuurman, Anton and Broad, John (eds.): *Wealth and Poverty in Rural Societies from the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Century*, Brussels, Brepols, 2013, pp. 13-37, especially p. 25; Riello, Giorgio: «'Things seen and unseen': The material culture of early modern inventories and their representation of domestic interiors,» in Findlen, Paula (ed.): *Early modern things. Objects and their histories, 1500-1800*, London and New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 125-150, especially p. 137.

8. Yun, Bartolomé: «Inventarios *post-mortem*, consumo y niveles de vida del campesinado del Antiguo Régimen. Problemas metodológicos a la luz de la investigación internacional,» in Torras, Jaume and Yun, Bartolomé (eds.): *Consumo, Condiciones de vida y Comercialización en Cataluña y Castilla, ss. XVII-XIX*, Valladolid, Junta de Castilla y León, 1999, pp. 27-40, especially p. 33.

and early modern households that were not inventoried, and even fewer whose inventory has survived until today. Moreover, some researchers have identified a wealth bias in the surviving collections of after-death inventories. It seems that the upper and middling social groups were more prone to request the elaboration of an after-death inventory than those of more humble origins.⁹ This bias has led some historians to question the validity of statistical analyses based on these sources.

The largest controversy has concerned eighteenth century studies, when the data from real wages does not match the findings in the after-death inventories. The statistical analysis of the later has shown an improvement in the material living conditions of the European population in the context of stable, or even declining, real wages. This paradox has led some historians, such as Gregory Clark, to claim that the alleged increase of household goods was the result of a 'statistical artifact.' According to this scholar, there is a social bias in the after-death inventories of the later periods that tends to overrepresent the upper social groups. From his viewpoint, as the eighteenth century progressed, less English households were inventoried and most of them belonged to landowners with significantly large estates. Consequently, the findings based on the analysis of after-death inventories cannot be valid because they do not cover the same social groups across time.¹⁰ The recent studies of Jane Humphries, Jacob Weisdorf, and Benjamin Schneider on the annual earnings of English workers seem to have put an end to this debate. Their research has shown that eighteenth century workers were more industrious than their earlier counterparts. Therefore, their annual earnings were also much higher than previous studies had estimated on the basis of daily wages.¹¹ Following Jan de Vries' argument, these authors have claimed that eighteenth-century households reallocated more time into their work, thus increasing their modest incomes and allowing them to gain the necessary cash with which to buy the new commodities listed in the probate inventories.¹²

Regardless of its outcome, this debate emphasizes the importance of understanding the socio-economic composition inherent in any inventory sample used for statistical purposes. This is even more crucial when inventories lack monetary valuations, as in the case of the Crown of Aragon. Surprisingly

9. Smith, Daniel S.: «Underregistration and Bias in Probate Records: An Analysis of Data from Eighteenth Century Hingham, Massachusetts,» *The William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History*, 32, nº1 (1975), pp. 100-110, especially p. 105-106; Keibek, Sebastian A.J.: «Correcting the Probate Inventory Record for Wealth Bias,» *Working Paper for the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure and Queens' College*, 28 (2017), pp. 1-25, especially 7.

10. Clark, Gregory: «The consumer Revolution. Turning point in human history, or statistical artifact?,» *MPRA Paper*, 25467 (2010), pp. 1-22.

11. Humphries, Jane and Weisdorf, Jacob: «Unreal Wages? Real Income and Economic Growth in England, 1260-1850,» *Economic Journal*, 129 (2019), pp. 2867-2887; Humphries, Jane and Schneider, Benjamin: «Spinning the industrial revolution,» *Economic History Review*, 72, nº 1 (2019), pp. 126-155.

12. de Vries, Jan: «Between purchasing power and the world of goods...» pp. 104-121; Idem: *The Industrious Revolution: consumer behavior and the household economy, 1650 to the present*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

so, the majority of consumption studies focused on this region have rarely addressed social matters, choosing instead to collectively analyze inventories without making any socioeconomic distinctions.¹³ When social stratification has been considered, historians have often chosen to classify after-death inventories according to the occupation of the head of the household.¹⁴ Although occupation shaped consumer behavior, most consumption studies agree that wealth was the primary determinant.¹⁵

In order to understand the social limits to the market of household goods in the Crown of Aragon, it is essential to establish a solid methodology that enables historians to classify after-death inventories without monetary valuations in economic terms. With this objective in mind, the present article aims to study the social representativeness of late medieval after-death inventories in Catalonia, using Vic as its main case study. The rich archives of this city allow the use of three complementary sources: after-death inventories, burial records and wealth taxes. All this combined data serves not only to determine the social coverage of late medieval Catalan after-death inventories, but it also enables the testing of different socioeconomic indicators to classify after-death inventories without monetary valuations. To achieve this, the present article begins by examining the legal context that regulated the elaboration of *post-mortem* inventories in fifteenth century Catalonia, offering a theoretical approach of the institutional incentives that prompted the Catalan population to request the elaboration of after-death inventories. The subsequent sections assess the 'real' representativeness of late medieval *post-mortem* inventories based on the number of burials that left an inventory and delve into the social representativeness of after-death inventories by comparing them to the surviving wealth taxes of the same period. The final section of this article tests several variables to socially classify Catalan inventories.

13. Instead, they have often considered town residency as a significant variable influencing the consumer behaviour of the Catalan population. See, for instance: Moreno Claverías, Belén: «Lugar de residencia y pautas de consumo. El Penedés y Barcelona, 1770-1790,» *Revista de Historia Industrial*, 31 (2006), pp. 139-168.

14. Almenar Fernández, Luis: «Consumir la obra de terra...»; Marfany, Julie: *op. cit.*, pp. 171-175; Moreno Claverías, Belén: *Consum i condicions de vida a la Catalunya Moderna...* In the last two cases, the authors have also categorized after-death inventories according to land ownership, a valuable proxy for wealth considering that land was the primary source of income and rents in pre-industrial societies.

15. Carole Shammas and Lorna Weatherill agree that there was a positive correlation between wealth and consumption in eighteenth-century England and America, although they differ in their assessments of its importance. For Shammas, wealth could predict up to 90 percent of the variation in the consumption of goods whereas, for Weatherill, social status and occupation also played an important role in determining wealth. In particular, Weatherill emphasizes the distinctions between individuals belonging to the agricultural sector and those who did not. Her findings also revealed that merchants, shopkeepers and innkeepers were more inclined towards the acquisition of decorative goods, books and clocks than other occupations (Shammas, Carole: *op. cit.*, pp. 103-111 and 173-180; Weatherill, Lorna: *op. cit.*, pp. 109 and 185-187). For the Iberian Peninsula, Fernando Ramos Palencia has also found a correlation between wealth and consumer behavior (Ramos Palencia, Fernando: *op. cit.*, pp. 92-96, 107-109, 121-122, 138, 141-142, 151-154 and 158-162). The sole exception to this consensus is Mark Overton, who claims that social status and occupation were more strongly associated with the acquisition of new goods than wealth (Overton, Mark *et alii.*: *op. cit.*, pp. 165-167).

II. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF LATE MEDIEVAL CATALONIA

In the Principality of Catalonia, inventories became mandatory after the approval of the assizes of the Parliament (*constitucions de les Corts*) of Perpignan of 1350. According to these statutes, after-death inventories had to be made on two special occasions. On the one hand, the statute known as *Hac Nostra* established that every widow had to request an inventory of the possessions of their deceased husbands if they wished to receive the amount of goods equivalent to their dowry, *esponsalici*¹⁶ and other nuptial right from their deceased husband's estate. Additionally, the elaboration of an after-death inventory entitled the widow to receive food, clothing, and shelter according to her social and economic position (*any de plor*).¹⁷ The usufruct right of a widow was not a novel concept in Catalan medieval law. The right of a woman to receive her dowry can be traced back to Roman law.¹⁸ Furthermore, the local customs of Barcelona also ensured that a widow had access to the property of her deceased husband.¹⁹ Thus, the statute *Hac Nostra* was not innovative. However, what made it noteworthy was the fact that, for the first time, it established the obligation to make an inventory prior to receiving the goods. Moreover, this obligation had to be fulfilled within a month of the husband's death and its completion was expected by the end of the second month. This regulation undoubtedly contributed to the generalization of the practice of requesting *post-mortem* inventories.

On the other hand, the parliament of Perpignan also obliged the guardians of minors or the curators of individuals with disabilities to compile an inventory of the inheritance of their wards to guarantee its preservation during the guardianship or curatorship. The 32nd statute of the assizes of the parliament of Perpignan established that a guardian did not need the prior approval of a judge to assume his or her charge. The only requirement for an individual to be legally recognized as a guardian (or

16. The *esponsalici* or *escreix* refers to the goods brought into the marriage by the husband. His contribution was expected to be proportional to the dowry offered by the wife. In the case of Barcelona, it was customary that the *esponsalici* to amount to half of the bride's dowry (Comas, Mireia: *Les dones soles a la Baixa Edat Mitjana: una lectura sobre la viduïtat* (Unedited PhD dissertation), Universitat de Barcelona, 2012, pp. 47-48).

17. «*Hac nostra constitutione, perpetuo valitura, sancimus quod uxor, mortuo viro, confestim post mortem eiusdem censeatur omnia bona viri sui possidere, et infra annum luctus de bonis ipsis in omnibus sue vite necessariis provideatur; post annum vero, fructus ipsorum bonorum suos faciat, donec sibi in dote et sponsalicio suis fuerit integre satisfactum; exceptis tamen uxoribus quibus per suos viros certa loca aut redditus aut alia bona, unde annui redditus vel proventus provenire possint, pro securitate sue dotis et sponsalicii, fuerint assignati. Quo easu ipsa dumtaxat loca et redditus et bona possidere censeatur, et super ipsis provisionem suam habeat et fructus suos faciat eorundem. Adiecto, quod uxor in primo casu, videlicet quo omnia bona viri sui possidere censeatur, inventarium infra mensem postquam sui viri mortem sciverit computandum incipere, et infra alium sequentem complere omnimode teneatur, alias provisione anui luctus et comode faciendi fructus suos careat ipso facto. Per hoc tamen, non intendimus astrictos ad faciendum inventarium, ab ipsius confeccione aliquatenus liberare» (AA.VV.: *Cortes de los Antiguos Reinos de Aragón y de Valencia y Principado de Cataluña*, vol. I (2), Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 1906, p. 394). For the legal terminology, see: Brocà, Guillem M.: *Historia del derecho de Cataluña especialmente del civil y exposición de las instituciones del derecho civil del mismo territorio en relación con el código civil de España y la jurisprudencia*, Barcelona, Generalitat de Catalunya, 1985, p. 365.*

18. Justinian: *El Digesto de Justiniano*, vol. 2, Pamplona, Editorial Aranzadi, 1972, pp. 166-183 (Libro 24, Título III).

19. Comas, Mireia: *op.cit.* pp. 44-54.

curator) was the making of the *post-mortem* inventory.²⁰ This notarial document served as a guarantee of the proper administration of the child's inheritance during the period of guardianship, which concluded once the minor reached the legal marriageable age (15 for boys and 12 for girls, or upon marriage).²¹

In cases where the legal guardian of a minor changed during the tutelage period (which could happen, for example, when a widow, as guardian of a minor, remarried), the new caretaker could request the elaboration of a new inventory. After all, at the end of the guardianship, the caretaker had to compensate any loss of their ward's inheritance with his or her own goods unless there was a reasonable excuse that justified the losses. Thus, it was in the best interest of the new guardian that any previous mistakes made in the administration of a ward's inheritance did not fall upon him or her. Mistrust appears to have led Bernat Gener, as the new guardian of his grandson, Pere Joan Puigsec, to request a new inventory of the inheritance of his ward. Violant, Pere's mother, who had acted as the guardian of the minor until then, had passed away. Hence, the notarial archives of Vic contain two *post-mortem* inventories of the property of Pere Joan Puigsec, as heir of his deceased father. The first was made in 1431 at the request of Violant, and the second was made seven years later after the designation of the new guardian.²²

To summarize, the assizes of the parliament of Perpignan established the first legal framework that made *post-mortem* inventories compulsory for the entire Principality of Catalonia. These inventories served as legal instruments that safeguarded the rights of individuals in particularly vulnerable situations, such as widows, minors and people with disabilities. However, before the promulgation of these statutes, Catalan notarial minutes demonstrate that some guardians already requested the elaboration of after-death inventories on behalf of their wards.²³ Nevertheless, the widespread adoption of these notarial documents truly began with the onset of the Black Death in 1348 and the subsequent approval of the assizes of the Parliament of Perpignan in 1350. Indeed, the devastating impact of this epidemic prompted many Catalan notaries to meticulously record these documents in specialized ledgers known

20. «*Preterea, reiecta solennitate a lure Romano, inducta, ordinamus et statuimus quod tutor, filio seu filie in testamento, codicillo aut qualibet alia voluntate ultima sui patris datus, possit nomine ipsius pupilli vel pupille se hereditati paterne, absque confirmatione seu decreto iudicis aut quavis alia iuris solennitate, inmiscere, inventariumque facere et omnia alia que cum confirmatione et decreto iudicis facere possit; prius tamen per eundem tutorem, in posse illius Curie a qua confirmationem seu decretum recepturus erat, super procurando utiliadicti pupilli vel pupille et evitando inutilia prestito iuramento, quod antequam incipiat facere inventarium vel aliquid gerere de bonis pupilli vel pupille facere teneatur*» (AA.VV.: *op.cit.*, pp. 375-376).

21. Exceptionally, noblemen were not considered adults until they reached the age of 20 (Vives y Cebrià, Pedro Nolasco: *Traducción al castellano de los Usatges y demás derechos de Cataluña que no están derogados o no son notoriamente inútiles, con indicación del contenido de éstos y de las disposiciones por las que han venido a serlo, ilustrada con notas sacadas de los más clásicos autores del principado*, vol. I, Barcelona, Generalitat de Catalunya-Parlament de Catalunya, 2010, pp. 515-518 (Llibre V, Títol IV).

22. ABEV, ACF, vol. 3770, ff. 142r-156r. 19 September 1431; ABEV, ACF, vol. 3770, ff. 195r-212v. 25 April 1438.

23. Josep Hernando was able to identify ten *post-mortem* inventories made before the Black Death at the request of the guardian of the minor (Hernando i Delgado, Josep: *Llibres i lectors a la Barcelona del segle XIV*, Barcelona, Fundació Noguera, 1995, Doc 4, 12, 59, 61, 72, 76, 78, 80, 120, 137).

as books of inventories (and public auctions).²⁴ However, in more secluded places, where inventories were made by either the local vicar or the parish scribe, the practice of making after-death inventories only became firmly established during the 1380s, reaching its peak between 1420 and 1455.²⁵ Similarly, in other regions of the Crown of Aragon, such as the kingdom of Valencia, it appears that after-death inventories started to be widely compiled during the last decades of the fourteenth century, although the earliest inventories can be traced back to the late thirteenth century.²⁶

TABLE 1. TYPOLOGY OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE AFTER-DEATH INVENTORIES OF VIC FOR THREE SAMPLE PERIODS BELONGING TO THE FIRST SIXTY YEARS OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Participants	1400-1410		1425-1435		1450-1460		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Testamentary Administrators and Executors	64	42.4%	88	65.2%	44	56.4%	196	53.8%
Widows	77	51%	60	44.4%	36	46.2%	173	47.5%
Heirs	41	27.2%	49	36.3%	26	33.3%	116	31.9%
Guardians of minor	29	19.2%	23	17%	17	21.8%	69	19%
Jurisdictional lords	3	2%	2	1.5%	0	0%	4	1.1%
Unknown	5	3.3%	1	0.7%	2	2.6%	8	2.2%
Total number of inventories	151	100%	135	100%	78	100%	364	100%

Note: The table excludes all inventories made during sickness since they were technically not after-death inventories

Even though medieval Catalan law only explicitly regulated the elaboration of *post-mortem* inventories in these two occasions, any circumstance involving the transmission of a property could lead to the making of an after-death inventory. In fact, the *post-mortem* inventories of fifteenth century Vic identify three additional parties beyond those previously mentioned. First and foremost, the inventory sample from Vic demonstrates the pivotal role that testamentary administrators and executors (*marmessors i executors*) played in the elaboration of these documents (Table 1). Their regular involvement was likely the result of their need to manage the testamentary

24. Sant Feliu de Guíxols and Vic boast an extensive collection of notarial books dedicated specifically to documenting *post-mortem* inventories. The first ledgers of after-death inventories in Vic trace back to 1303, but only from 1348 onwards does a continuous series of books emerge (ABEV, ACF, vol. 3730 (1300-1400), vol. 3701 (1303-1373), vol. 3737 (1331-1342), vol. 3702 (1348-1352), vol. 3738 (1352-1364), 3739 (1358-1367), 3744 (1361-1374), vol. 3745 (1367-1371), vol. 3740 (1367-1384), etc.). For Sant Feliu de Guíxols, the first books of after-death inventories reach back to the Black Death, extending seamlessly throughout the second half of the fourteenth century with nearly no lacunae (AHG, SFe, vols. 631 (1348) ; vol. 710 (1348-1388); vol. 46 (1350-1357); vol. 638 (1362-1366); vol. 969 (1369-1371)). Similarly, in Peralada, the earliest books of inventories and public auctions date back to the period of the Black Death (AHG, Pe 1053 and AHG, Pe 1253). As for Amer, the first *post-mortem* inventories recorded in the notarial minutes date back to the mid-fourteenth century, with a notable surge commencing in 1360 (Palarea Marimon, Aina: *Els nivells de vida a la Catalunya baixmedieval a través dels inventaris post-mortem: el cas d'Amer (1380-1410)* (Unedited Master thesis), Universitat de Girona, 2015).

25. Benito Monclús, Pere: «Casa rural y niveles de vida en el entorno de Barcelona a fines de la Edad Media,» in Furió, Antoni and García-Oliver, Ferran (eds.): *Pautas de consumo y niveles de vida en el mundo rural medieval*, València, Universitat de València, 2008, pp. 1-26, especially pp. 3-5.

26. Almenar Fernández, Luis: «Los inventarios post-mortem de la Valencia medieval. Una Fuente para el estudio del consume doméstico y los niveles de vida,» *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 47, n^o2 (2017), pp. 533-566, especially, pp. 551-554.

bequests and the unpaid debts following the owner's demise. In these cases, inventories served not only as useful management tools but also as a protective measure that safeguarded the testamentary administrators and executors from potential accusations of mismanagement. Secondly, the after-death inventories of Vic also reveal the active participation of heirs in their elaboration (Table 1). Drawing from Roman law, specifically from Justinian's Code of Civil Law, heirs had the right to renounce their claims to the inheritance. This provision was particularly useful in cases where the debts surmounted the assets of an estate.²⁷ To make informed decisions about their inheritance claims, many citizens in fifteenth century Vic sought the elaboration of an after-death inventory.

Beyond the above-mentioned reasons, the after-death inventories of Vic sometimes mention the involvement of the jurisdictional lords of this town in their elaboration. However, such occurrences were exceedingly rare. In the dataset, only five inventories were requested either on behalf of the Bishop of Vic or the Count of Foix and Viscount of Castellbò, who shared jurisdiction over Vic.²⁸ In the case of the inventory of Joan Terrés, it was explicitly stated that the Bishop of Vic requested the inventory to ensure the accurate compilation of all the goods that made the deceased's estate.²⁹ Thus, the participation of the jurisdictional lords in the elaboration of after-death inventories was aimed at preventing any conflicts related to the inheritance process.

While the *post-mortem* inventories of Vic do not make any mention to feudal lords, their participation was quite common in the Catalan countryside, where peasant serfdom was widely extended. Like in other European regions, feudal lords often requested the elaboration of an after-death inventory for the estates of their deceased peasant serfs or villeins (*remences*) when the latter had no living successor to inherit the peasant household (*eixorc*), or had died without a written last will (*intestat*).³⁰

27. This practice was based on the Roman principle that deemed inheritances indivisible. Heirs were not permitted to selectively accept only a portion of the inheritance while renouncing any share that ran contrary to their interest (Justinian: op. cit., pp. 367-385 (Libro 29, Título II)). In some rare occasions, the inventories of Vic make explicit reference to the Roman Code of Civil Law. For instance, the guardians and curators of Bernat Casanova, pupil, son and heir of the deceased Pere Casanova, requested the elaboration of an after-death inventory on behalf of Bernat because «*volentes, ut dixerunt, bona dicta hereditatis beneficio inventarii recipere ut uti valeant beneficio facientibus inventarium concessio per sacratissimum imperatorem Justinianum et ne ultra vires hereditarias creditoribus siqui sint teneantur*» (ABEV, ACF, vol. 3771, ff. 63r-74v. 5 July 1434).

28. ABEV, ACF, vol. 3763, ff. 222r-225v. 26 August 1427, vol. 3764, ff. 60r-63r. 5 February 1407, vol. 3764, ff. 160r-162r. 8 June 1408, and vol. 3770, ff. 48r-49r. 4 August 1427.

29. «*Igitur, dictus dominus episcopus vicensis pro conservacione bonorum predictorum et ne occultari valeant modo aliquo seu perire mandavit dicto venerabilis Johanni de Deo, vires gerenti predicto*» (ABEV, ACF, vol. 3707, ff. 69r-96v and ff. 128v-129r. 30 September 1405).

30. In England, one can also find after-death inventories involving a feudal lord when a villein passed away intestate or without heirs. In these cases, the lord's participation was driven by the desire to claim the possessions of the deceased's estate (Briggs, Chris: «Manorial Court Roll Inventories as Evidence of English Peasant Consumption and Living Standards, c. 1270-c.1420,» in Furió, Antoni and García-Oliver, Ferran (eds.): *Pautas de consumo y niveles de vida en el mundo rural medieval*, València, Universitat de València, 2008, pp. 1-32, especially p. 5). In the notarial minutes of Amer, it is possible to identify numerous cases in which the abbot of the monastery of Amer requested the elaboration of an after-death inventory as the feudal lord (*dominus directus*) of the villein's estate. See, for instance: Arxiu Històric de Girona (AHG), Notarials d'Amer, vol. 633. 28 October 1365; vol. 848. 29 September 1367; vol. 85, ff. 37r-37v. 16 March

In these cases, the villein's goods were inventoried by the feudal lord (or one of his representatives) in order to separate the items that belong to him ($\frac{1}{3}$ of the moveable and semi-moveable goods), from those that were used to fulfill the testamentary dispositions, or that belonged to the widow or heir.³¹

In some instances, it appears that the feudal lord preferred to receive his proportional share of the estate in cash rather than in kind. That was the case of Guillemma, villein (*dona pròpia i soliu*) of the abbot Bernat Vilafresser of Amer who died *eixorca*. Her inventory was followed by a public auction, and the proceeds of the sale were used to settle her debts and pay the proportional share to the abbot.³²

Hence, the late medieval after-death inventories of Vic reveal that they were made for many more reasons beyond those established in the Parliament of Perpignan. It is unsurprising considering that any misunderstanding or disagreement regarding the administration and transmission of the deceased's estate could be resolved on the basis of this notarial document. Therefore, it was in the best interests of the different parties involved in the inheritance process to have an after-death inventory.³³

Moreover, the involvement of more than one participant in the elaboration of an after-death inventory would have contributed to ensure the veracity of these notarial records.³⁴

Indeed, some after-death inventories indicate that goods were rapidly distributed before they could even be officially recorded by the notary. For instance, the inventory of the servant Guillemma Ripoll listed an old female shirt that was used to dress the corpse of the dead, a female gown that was given to another woman and four silver spoons that had been given to a presbyter as compensation for anointing Guillemma and settling a debt owed by the deceased.³⁵

Fortunately, in the case of Guillemma Ripoll all the goods were accurately recorded in the after-death inventory. However, in other cases, items were removed before the notary could document them. The inventory of the deceased Pere Bosc, clergyman of Amer, provides undeniable proof of such occurrences. In 1400, Vicenç Terrats, one of the testamentary administrators and executors of the inheritance of the

1372; vol. 85, ff. 79v-80r. 2 June 1372; vol. 85, ff. 88v-89r. 9 July 1372; vol. 85, ff. 95v-96v. 8 August 1372; vol. 113, ff. 119v-120r. 2 April 1395; vol. 140, f. 168v and ff. 171r-172r. 14-19 September 1410; and vol. 140, ff. 197v-198r. 5 November 1410. On the Catalan peasant servitudes, see: Lluch Bramon, Rosa: *Els remences: la senyoria de l'Almoina de Girona als segles XIV i XV*, Girona, Documenta Universitaria, 2005, pp. 286-287.

31. According to Luis Almenar, the main difference between these seignorial inventories and those made to facilitate the administration and transmission of a property is the systematic omission of low valued objects in the former. In contrast, for Chris Briggs, seignorial inventories recorded all the moveable goods within a peasant's estate (Almenar Fernández, Luis: «Los inventarios post-mortem de la Valencia medieval...», p. 539; Briggs, Chris: «Manorial Court Roll Inventories as Evidence of English Peasant Consumption and Living Standards...», p. 3).

32. AHG, Notarials d'Amer, vol. 99, f. 15v and f. 16r. January 1385.

33. In 34 percent of the after-death inventories of fifteenth century Vic, these documents were requested by two individuals (or one with two different motives) and, in 11 percent of the cases, it was requested by three individuals.

34. Ryckbosch, Wouter: *A Consumer Revolution under Strain: Consumption, Wealth and Status in Eighteenth-Century Aalst (Southern Netherlands)* (Unedited PhD dissertation), University of Antwerp, 2012, p. 42.

35. «una camisa de dona oldana de poca valor. Ha servit a la dita dona que la li vestiren quant fo morta.» «una gonella de dona de drap de blanquet nova. Ha la dada a la dita na Feliu» and «quatre culleres d'argent les quals té en P. Bonell, prevera, per la unció que feu fer a la dita dona e per un flori que dix lo dit Bonell que havia bastret per la dita dona» (ABEV, ACF, vol. 3712, ff. 66r-067v. 5 September 1425).

dead, was found in possession of several goods and some coins belonging to the deceased Pere. According to Vicens Terrats, he had just taken the things that the deceased Pere Bosch had left him in his last will. This issue was resolved by adding the missing goods to the inventory in an additional piece of paper (Figure 1).³⁶

However, it seems reasonable to assume that omissions often went undetected. For this reason, the participation of different parties (including the notary and several witnesses) in the elaboration of an after-death inventory would have created a network of checks and counterbalances that would have ensured that the administration and transmission of the deceased's property was carried out «*cum ob doli maculam evitandam*», that is, avoiding all fraud and deceit, as claimed in the protocol clauses of all Catalan after-death inventories.

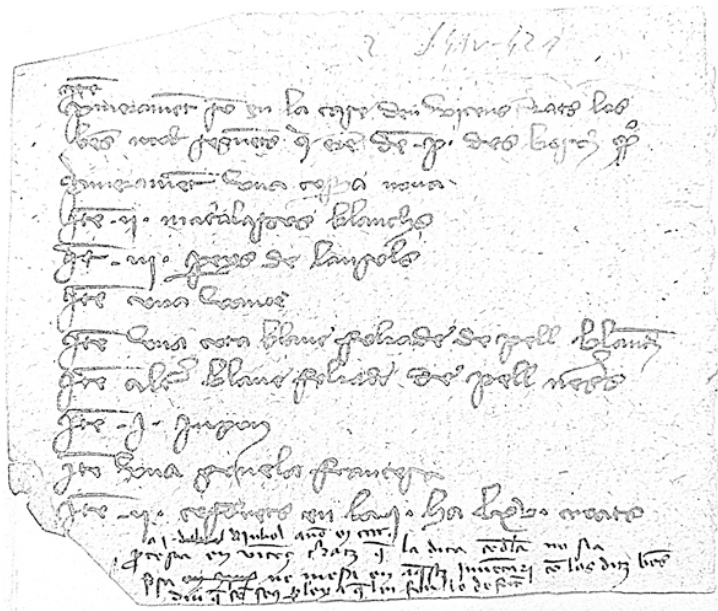


FIGURE 1. LIST OF GOODS AND MONEY THAT VICENS TERRATS TOOK FROM THE ESTATE OF THE DECEASED PERE BOSCH³⁷

36. Luis Almenar Fernández has examined several cases of missing goods in the after-death inventories of Valencia by cross-referencing them with their respective public auction (Almenar Fernández, Luis: «Los inventarios post-mortem de la Valencia medieval...», pp. 548-550).

37. AHG, Notariales d'Amer, vol. 121, f.s. 41v-42r. 17 April 1400.

III. THE DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIVENESS OF LATE MEDIEVAL CATALAN AFTER-DEATH INVENTORIES

The social representativeness of Catalan after-death inventories cannot be simply solved by considering the legal incentives that led to the elaboration of an after-death inventory. For this reason, this section will compare the number of burials recorded in the exceptionally well-preserved parish records of the cathedral of Vic with three sample cases of inventories from fifteenth century Vic. By combining the demographic data with the after-death inventories of Vic, this section aims to determine the inventory coverage of this town. To better understand gender and socio-professional biases, the analysis will also consider the gender and occupation of the individuals listed in the burial registers and in the set of inventories.

The Episcopal Archive of Vic contains the registers of all church burials that were made in the cemetery of the cathedral of Vic from 1348 until 1854, with very few lacunae.³⁸ These burial records do not represent aggregate mortality figures, since not every death led to a burial. Moreover, the parish records of Vic only contain the burials of the adult population of Vic that were carried out by the community of beneficiaries of the cathedral. Most infants (*albats*) were buried by the hebdomadary (*domer*), and their deaths were recorded in other books that have not survived until today. Lastly, it should be noted that the burial registers of Vic only recorded people who were buried in the cemetery of the cathedral of Vic. The urban inhabitants of Vic could also be buried in the graveyard of the Franciscan convent and in the cemeteries of the five hospitals of the town.³⁹ According to late fourteenth century Catalan wills, less than 25 percent of the testators requested to be buried in the Franciscan cemetery.⁴⁰ Thus, while the burial records of the cathedral of Vic do not contain all the burials of the residents living in Vic, they provide a useful estimation of the mortality rates of a significant part of the urban population of the town (presumably more than 75 percent of the total burials). As such, they are the most useful sources to estimate the inventory coverage of Vic.

38. Unfortunately, for the first sixty years of the fifteenth century, there are no records from 16 July 1409 to 10 September 1412, from 4 September 1414 to 13 June 1424 (except the months of July and August 1416 and the first six months of 1420), from 9 August 1425 to 22 February 1426, from 6 August 1427 to 17 September 1430, from 1 September 1431 to 1 September 1435, from 31 August 1443 to 1 September 1449 and from 31 August 1457 to 1463 (ABEV, ACBV, vols. 247-262).

39. Puigferrat i Oliva, Carles: «Pesta i crisi de mortalitat a la ciutat de Vic entre el 1348 i el 1500.» *Ausa*, 30, n.º 187-188 (2021), pp. 39-73. In August 1283, an arbitration between the Franciscan monastery and the Bishop Ramón III of Vic established that the Franciscan monks were allowed to bury the inhabitants of Vic if they requested so in their last wills. However, the Cathedral would keep half of the testamentary bequests as well as half of the bread and wax given by the dead. Furthermore, the funerary mass would take place in the cathedral and only afterwards would the Franciscan monks be allowed to take the corpse to their cemetery (de Moncada, Juan Luis: *Episcopologio de Vich. Escrito a mediados del siglo XVII* (ed. Jaume Collrell, canonge), vol. 2., Vic, Imprenta de Ramón Anglada, 1894, pp. 97-98).

40. In 1348, 23 testators out of 91 requested to be buried in the Franciscan cemetery while only one person made that same request between 1356 and 1363 (Puigferrat i Oliva, Carles: *op. cit.*, p. 45).

TABLE 2. REPRESENTATIVITY OF THE AFTER-DEATH INVENTORIES OF VIC DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

	1400 - 1409 ¹	1425 - 1427; 1430 - 1431; 1435 ²	1425 - 1427; 1430 - 1431; 1435 ³	1450 - 1457 ⁴
Urban burials	686	173	245	362
Adult burials ⁵	620	166	237	346
Adult male burials ⁵	329	90	125	156
Urban inventories ⁶	108	45	69	39
Adult male inventories ⁶	92	41	59	33
Urban coverage	15.7%	26%	27.3%	10.8%
Adult coverage	17.4%	27.1%	28.3%	11.3%
Adult male coverage	28%	45.6%	45.6%	21.2%

¹ For the year 1409, it only includes the first nine months. After 16 September, there are no burial records.

² It only includes the following months: 01/01/1425 - 09/08/1425, 22/02/1426 - 06/08/1427, 17/09/1430 - 01/09/1431 and 01/09/1435 - 31/12/1435. For the in-between months, there are no burial records.

³ It includes the estimated number of burials for the years 1425, 1426, 1427, 1431 and 1435. The years 1430 has not been estimated because there was an epidemic outbreak and the burials evolution does not follow a normal distribution. For the rest of the years, estimations have been based on the monthly average burials of the years 1355-1365, 1372-1383, 1389-1408, 1413, 1436-1442, 1450-1456 (excluding the epidemic years 1362, 1371, 1374-75, 1396-97, 1403-04 and 1441).

⁴ For the year 1457, it only includes the first eight months. There are no burial registers after August of 1457.

⁵ This category has excluded all the entries that identified as «*albat*» (newborn) and «*fadrí/-ina*» (unmarried man or woman of about 15 years old). It has also dismissed individuals categorized as «*esclau*» (slave). It is a very conservative estimate. It is very likely that most of the people identified as «*fills/-es*» (sons and daughters), «*nebots/-es*» (nephews and nieces) and «*néts/-es*» (grandchildren) were minors, but it is impossible to actually know for certain, and thus, they have been included as adults.

⁶ This category has excluded all the repeated after-death inventories.

Table 2 combines the number of burials with the corresponding after-death inventories. The results reveal that inventory coverage in late medieval Vic was relatively low. Only 11 to 27 percent of the burials led to the making of a *post-mortem* inventory. Even if only the adult population is considered, these figures remain more or less the same. Between 11 and 28 percent of the burials of the adult population of Vic resulted in the elaboration of an after-death inventory. Furthermore, a man was more likely to leave an after-death inventory than a woman. Between 21 and 46 percent of the total male adult population had an inventory drawn up after their deaths, while only 3 to 5.5 percent of burials of women resulted in the elaboration of an after-death inventory. The limited representation of women in the after-death inventories of fifteenth century Vic was likely the result of the gender division within the Catalan property system.⁴¹ Thus, Table 2 unequivocally

41. Moreno Claverías, Belén: *Consum i condicions de vida a la Catalunya Moderna...*, pp. 12-15 and 189-217.

demonstrates that there was no such thing as ‘universal coverage’. Not all deaths automatically led to the making of a *post-mortem* inventory. At most, Catalan after-death inventories could represent 17 percent of the adult population of any given urban center. At worst, the surviving rate of the after-death inventories meant that only 10 percent of total urban population was represented. Moreover, women were less likely to leave an after-death inventory, making extremely difficult to study female-led households.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no equivalent studies of inventory coverage in other European regions for the late medieval period. However, it is possible to draw some parallels between the adult male inventory coverage of fifteenth century Vic and other similar studies for later periods. For instance, in seventeenth-century Cheshire, 17 to 30 percent of the adult male deaths led to the making of an inventory.⁴² For what concerns seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Catalonia, the inventory coverage of the adult male population varied greatly depending on the town. In Vilafranca del Penedès, nearly 9 percent of all adult burials resulted in the elaboration of an after-death inventory. However, if only the male population is considered, the percentages escalate to 13.7-15.1 percent.⁴³ Conversely, in Igualada, the inventory coverage of the adult population was a mere 6.5 percent.⁴⁴ At last, in some towns of the diocese of Girona, between 17 and 20 percent of the adult men left an inventory, while in others, inventory coverage reached $\frac{1}{3}$ or even $\frac{1}{2}$ of all adult male deaths.⁴⁵ In comparison to these early modern cases, the inventory coverage of Vic seems to fit within the expected range.

To gain a deeper understanding of the representativeness of the late medieval inventories of Vic, Table 3 compares the occupational distribution in the burial records with that found in *post-mortem* inventories. At first glance, the most striking feature of the data is the high percentage (33 percent) of burials whose occupation was impossible to determine. This ambiguity largely stems from the inconsistent registration employed in the parish records. While the prevalence of unidentified individuals poses a significant challenge to the statistical analysis of the data, it still seems feasible to estimate the occupational bias of the *post-mortem* inventories of Vic.

42. Keibek, Sebastian: *op. cit.*, p. 5

43. Moreno Claverías, Belén: «Els inventaris *post-mortem* catalans a l'època moderna: característiques, punts forts i punts febles,» in Moreno Claverías, Belén (ed.): *Els inventaris post-mortem. Una font per a la història econòmica i social*, Girona, Documenta Universitaria, 2018, pp. 37-62, especially pp. 41-42; Idem: «Pautas de consumo y diferenciación social en el Penedés a fines del siglo XVII. Una propuesta metodológica a partir de inventarios sin valoraciones monetarias», *Revista de Historia Económica*, 21 (2003), pp. 207-245, especially pp. 210-211; Idem: *Consum i condicions de vida a la Catalunya Moderna...*, pp. 12-15.

44. Marfany, Julie: *op. cit.*, p. 123.

45. Ros, Rosa and Congost, Rosa: «Els inventaris de la gent humil: els treballadors de la regió de Girona al segle XVIII,» in Moreno Claverías Belén (ed.): *Els inventaris post-mortem. Una font per a la història econòmica i social*, Girona, Documenta Universitaria, 2018, pp. 63-86, especially p. 68.

TABLE 3 - OCCUPATIONAL COMPOSITION OF BURIALS AND AFTER-DEATH INVENTORIES OF VIC FOR THE FIRST HALF OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES	1400-1409*		1425-27; 1430-31; 1435*		1450-1457*		TOTAL		Ratio of inv.(%)/burials (%)		
	Burials (%)	Inv. (%)	Burials (%)	Inv. (%)	Burials (%)	Inv. (%)	N	%			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Nobility	0.8%	2.6%	0%	0%	1.5%	3.1%	2	1%	3	2.1%	2.2
Merchants and Shopkeepers	0.8%	5.3%	0%	5.9%	4.5%	6.3%	4	1.9%	8	5.6%	2.9
Jurists, Medical Workers and Officials	9.1%	7.9%	15.8%	5.9%	3%	9.4%	16	7.8%	11	7.7%	1.0
Clergy and Related Officials	24.8%	10.5%	0.0%	17.6%	6.1%	31.3%	34	16.5%	24	16.9%	1.0
Artisans and Construction Workers	54.5%	61.8%	73.7%	64.7%	69.7%	40.6%	126	61.2%	82	57.7%	0.9
Service Workers	1.7%	1.3%	0%	0%	4.5%	0%	5	2.4%	1	0.7%	0.3
Transport Operators	2.5%	2.6%	0%	0%	6.1%	0%	7	3.4%	2	1.4%	0.4
Workers	5.8%	7.9%	10.5%	5.9%	4.5%	9.4%	12	5.8%	11	7.7%	1.3
Total	121	76	19	34	66	32	206	100%	142	100%	-
Women**	290	18	75	6	190	6	555	-	30	-	-
Undetermined	209	14	72	5	90	3	371	-	22	-	-
TOTAL	620	108	166	45	346	41	113	-	194	-	-

* For the exact chronology, see Table 2.

** This category includes all widows and women of unknown profession.

However, in order to do so, all unidentified individuals have been excluded from the analysis. Additionally, women have also been omitted because neither source provides a full description of their economic activities. With those considerations in mind, Table 3 reveals that nobles, merchants, and to a lesser extent, workers are overrepresented in the sample of after-death inventories in comparison to their presence in the burial records. Conversely, small occupational groups, such as service workers and transport operators, are slightly underrepresented. Interestingly, artisans, liberal professionals and clergymen are well-represented in the sample of after-death inventories, with their relative weight matching that of the overall adult male deaths. Thus, based on the findings of Table 3, it is possible to conclude that the after-death inventories of Vic represented reasonably well the occupational structure of the deceased population of Vic.

IV. THE SOCIOECONOMIC REPRESENTATIVENESS OF LATE MEDIEVAL CATALAN AFTER-DEATH INVENTORIES

By comparing burial records to after-death inventories, the previous section has shown the occupational and gender groups that were more likely to leave an after-death inventory. This exercise has revealed that Catalan after-death inventories included nearly all professional groups of Vic in a relatively proportionate way, although small-size professional groups were clearly underrepresented. Moreover, the number of inventoried women was very small when compared to the number of burials. Despite the interesting conclusions drawn from comparing these two sources, it fails to illustrate the economic distribution of the after-death inventories. In order to determine the relative wealth level of the after-death inventories of Vic, this section will link the inventoried households with their equivalents in the wealth taxes of fifteenth century Vic. The aim of this second comparison is to determine the wealth bias of the Catalan after-death inventories.

Wealth taxes, known as *talles* in Catalonia, were direct taxes on the total wealth of all individuals residing within the same fiscal district. In theory, these taxes required individual wealth assessments that were calculated on the basis of the combined value of both moveable and immoveable assets held by each fiscal unit or taxpayer within their respective fiscal districts.⁴⁶ On the

46. In late medieval Catalonia, these wealth assessments were recorded in separate books, called *llibres d'estimes, de manifest or de valies*. In the proper wealth taxes or *talles*, the tax rate applied to moveable goods was often more burdensome, typically double, than that applied to immoveable goods. Adding to this complexity, certain locations also incorporated deductions based on the taxpayer's debts (Morelló Baget, Jordi: «Aproximació a les fonts fiscals de la Catalunya baixmedieval: llibres d'estimes, valies i manifests,» *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 22 (1992), pp. 425-441, especially 434-436; Morelló Baget, Jordi *et al.*: «A study of economic inequality in the light of fiscal sources: the case of Catalonia (14th-18th centuries),» in Nigro, Giampiero (ed.). *Disuguaglianza economica nelle società preindustriali: cause*

basis of these assessments, the tax burden was distributed among the different taxpayers using a distribution coefficient. Thus, in principle, Catalan wealth taxes are relatively reliable sources to study the wealth distribution within a given population. Nonetheless, scholars should be cautious when using *talles* for analytical purposes as they have two major shortcomings. Firstly, wealth taxes do not encompass all members of a society. There were certain groups, such as the clergy, the Jews and the nobility, that were exempted from contributing to the *talles* because they had alternative tax obligations. Moreover, some skilled craftsmen and those deemed too poor were also exempted from taxation.⁴⁷

The second limitation inherent in wealth taxes concerns their efficacy in capturing the wealth diversity of the taxed population. In some cases, such as that of Cervera and Igualada, wealth taxes meticulously assigned precise monetary values to each taxpayer. These *talles* contained a multitude of fiscal categories, allowing a detailed analysis of the socioeconomic distribution of the population. Conversely, in places like Girona, households were lumped together in broad fiscal categories, each encompassing dozens of households.⁴⁸ In order to assess the precision of wealth taxes, historians have recently started to use an index of fiscal dissociation. This index is calculated by dividing the number of fiscal categories used by the tax collectors, by the total number of taxpayers or fiscal units, resulting in a value between 0 and 1. Here, one represents the ideal scenario in which each taxpayer had a unique tax value attributed to them. Instead, those values closer to zero indicate a greater degree of fiscal clustering⁴⁹. In the case of Vic, the wealth taxes had a high level of fiscal clustering, which particularly impacted the taxes' ability to capture differences among the lower social groups (Table 4). While this complicates the analysis, in the absence of better sources, these wealth taxes will be employed to explore the economic distribution of the Catalan after-death inventories.

Regrettably, the City Archive of Vic has only preserved 26 wealth taxes for the first sixty years of the fifteenth century. The earliest one dates back to 1418, making it impossible to study the wealth distribution of the after-death inventories

ed effetti/Economic inequality in pre-industrial societies: causes and effects. Florence, Firenze University Press, 2020, pp. 145-166, especially, pp. 147). Unfortunately, in the case of Vic, it has not been possible to identify the exact procedure used to calculate the taxable value.

47. On Catalan wealth taxes as sources for the study of wealth inequality, their procedures and limitations, see: *Ibidem*, p. 156-160.

48. Reixach Sala, Albert: «Fuentes para el estudio de la desigualdad en la Cataluña bajomedieval: los registros de tallas de la ciudad de Gerona a examen (c.1360-c.1540).» *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma. Serie III. Historia Medieval*, 35 (2022), pp. 561-596, especially p. 578; Miquel Milian, Laura and Verdés Pijuan, Pere: «Contribución al estudio de la desigualdad económica en la Cataluña bajomedieval a partir de las fuentes fiscales: los casos de Cervera e Igualada.» in Carvajal, David, Casado, Hilario, Tello, Esther and To, Lluís (eds.): *La desigualdad económica en España (siglos XIV-XVII)*, Madrid, Silex (forthcoming).

49. On fiscal clustering and how to calculate, see: Lambrecht, Thijs and Ryckbosch, Wouter: «Economic inequality in the rural Southern Low Countries during the fifteenth century: sources, data and reflections,» in Nigro, Giampiero (ed.): *Disuguaglianza economica nelle società preindustriali: cause ed effetti/Economic inequality in pre-industrial societies: causes and effects*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2020, pp. 205-229, especially pp. 211-213.

belonging to the first sample period, spanning from 1400 to 1410. After excluding poorly preserved and non-representative wealth taxes (those covering a limited part of the population, not aligning with the sample period or belonging to the last years of the analyzed period), matching was feasible for the taxes belonging to the years 1422, 1427, 1452, 1453 and 1455. Using the last name, occupation and street provided in these five *talles*, it has been possible to identify 110 (51.9 percent) of all the after-death inventories belonging to the years 1425-1435 and 1450-1460⁵⁰. The results of this matching exercise (Table 4) reveal that only 5-10 percent of the taxpayers had an after-death inventory drawn up in the nearby years that followed the elaboration of the wealth taxes.

Additionally, Table 4 also positions the identified after-death inventories within the economic hierarchy of the town, assigning each inventory to its respective quartile. The results show a pronounced social bias towards the upper social groups, particularly in the wealth taxes of 1422 and 1427. For these years, individuals or households belonging to the top 25 percent of the wealth distribution of Vic were twice (or even three times) as likely to request an after-death inventory compared to the rest of the population. Although the mid-fifteenth century wealth taxes show a lower social bias, the likelihood of leaving an after-death inventory among the richest 50 percent nearly doubled or tripled that of men in the bottom half⁵¹. Part of this social bias can be attributed to the difficulties of identifying the taxed population and to the inherent bias of wealth taxes. Indeed, the *talles* of Vic excluded those individuals that were deemed too poor to contribute. Unfortunately, it is impossible to estimate how large this social segment was since the wealth taxes of Vic make no reference to them. However, evidence from other fifteenth century Catalan towns indicate that poor households could represent approximately 6-15.5 percent of the overall population⁵². Given that some of them were bound to make an inventory, the results in Table 4 should be nuanced. Regardless, the combined analysis of the wealth taxes and the after-death inventories of Vic clearly demonstrates that the upper social groups were overrepresented in the Catalan after-death inventories.

50. After excluding those inventories that were repeated, there are 133 inventories for the period 1425-1435 and 79 inventories for the years 1450-1460. It should be noted that these figures includes ten after-death inventories that belonged to the two components of a married couple.

51. In eighteenth-century Massachusetts, men belonging to the wealthiest 40 percent were five times as likely to leave a probate inventory as those in the bottom 20 percent (Smith, Daniel S.: *op. cit.*, p. 105).

52. Canela Soler, Joan: *Cervera a finals del segle XV. Aproximació a partir del Manifest de 1476* (Unedited PhD dissertation), University of Barcelona, 2003, p. 551; Sanmartí, Montserrat: *Los libros del manifest de Cervera de 1490* (Unedited B.S. thesis), University of Barcelona, 1972, pp. 161-162. Based on fifteenth century wealth taxes from Tuscany, historians have determined that poor or propertyless individuals represented between 10 and 30 percent of the overall population (Alfani, Guido, Ammannati, Francesco and Ryckbosch, Wouter: «Poverty in early modern Europe: New approaches to old problems,» *European Historical Economics Society (EHES) Working Paper*, 222 (2022), pp. 1-60, especially pp. 13-14).

TABLE 4. WEALTH DISTRIBUTION OF THE AFTER-DEATH INVENTORIES OF VIC ACCORDING TO THE WEALTH TAXES OF 1422, 1427, 1452, 1453 AND 1455

	1422	1427	1452	1453	1455
Urban fiscal units	754	773	605	646	614
Fiscal Categories	23	24	18	18	21
Index of Fiscal Dissociation	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03
Standard fiscal units*	648	671	532	573	554
Standard male fiscal units*	588.5	608	473.5	517.5	501.5
Quartile 1 (<25%)**	151	168	175	243	220
Quartile 2 (25%-50%)**	164	169	153	164	147
Quartile 3 (50%-75%)**	165	172	94	44	91
Quartile 4 (>75%)**	168	162	110	122	96
Urban after-death inventories	131	113	68	66	54
Non-privileged after-death inventories	115	97	54	53	44
Male after-death inventories	89	79	43	43	38
Standard urban coverage	62 (9.6%)	53 (7.9%)	28 (5.3%)	29 (5%)	27 (4.9%)
Adult male coverage	58 (9.9%)	47 (7.7%)	24 (5.1%)	24 (4.6%)	23 (4.6%)
Inventories belonging to Quartile 1	10 (6.6%)	8 (4.7%)	5 (2.9%)	8 (3.3%)	8 (3.6%)
Inventories belonging to Quartile 2	12 (7.3%)	9 (5.3%)	9 (5.9%)	8 (4.9%)	7 (4.8%)
Inventories belonging to Quartile 3	14 (8.5%)	13 (7.6%)	8 (8.5%)	7 (15.9%)	6 (6.6%)
Inventories belonging to Quartile 4	26 (16.1%)	23 (14.2%)	6 (5.5%)	7 (5.7%)	6 (6.3%)

* Standard fiscal units exclude those houses that belonged to foreigners or clergymen, houses that were rented (but not its tenants), and family units where the head of the household was an orphan.

** The first quartile includes all those individuals that paid d. 0.5, and the second quartile includes individuals who paid d. 1. The quantities paid by the wealthiest 50 percent varied according to the wealth tax. In 1422 and 1427, taxpayers belonging to the third quartile paid between d. 1.5 and d. 2.5, while those belonging to the fourth quartile paid between d. 3 and d. 17. For the wealth taxes of 1452 and 1455, those in the third quartile paid d. 1.5 to d. 2.5, beyond which they belonged to the fourth quartile. Finally, in the wealth tax of 1453, the third quartile paid d. 1.5. Taxpayers belonging to the fourth quartile paid between d. 2 and d. 15.

Note: In those cases where it was possible to document the two inventories of a married couple, they have been counted as one.

V. TESTING FOR ALTERNATIVE WEALTH PROXIES

Given the social bias of Catalan after-death inventories towards the most affluent households, it is imperative to identify a proxy that allows historians to socially classify after-death inventories without monetary valuations. With this purpose in mind, this last section aims to evaluate two potential variables. The first economic indicator to be examined will be the occupation of the head of the household. Subsequently, this section will also assess the number of rooms of the main residence, that will serve as a proxy for the size of the urban dwellings⁵³.

53. On the use of the number of rooms to socially classify after-death inventories, see: Shammass, Carole: op. cit., pp. 161-163; and Blondé, Bruno and De Laet, Veerle: «Owning paintings and changes in consumer preferences in the Low Countries, seventeenth-eighteenth centuries,» in De Marchi, Neil and van Miegroet, Hans J. (eds.): *Mapping markets for paintings in Europe 1450-1750*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2006, pp. 68-84, especially pp. 71-74.

These variables have been chosen because they are relatively easy to obtain. In most cases, Catalan after-death inventories provide both the profession of the head of the household and the number of rooms in the residence⁵⁴.

To determine the validity of occupation as a proxy for wealth, Tables 5 & 6 socially position all taxpayers from the wealth taxes of 1427 and 1455, according to their wealth and occupational category⁵⁵. Given the limited occupational data in the wealth taxes, the analysis has been complemented with information drawn from state surveys (*capbreus*) and notarial minutes. Homonyms and registration inconsistencies have complicated the identification task. Despite these obstacles, the combined data from these sources have allowed me to identify the occupation of approximately 64 percent of all taxpayers for both taxes (Tables 5 & 6).

The economic classification of the population of Vic based on the occupational categories of the head of the household reveals two different distribution patterns. Some occupations had a distinct position within the wealth structure of Vic, while others were more evenly distributed across the different economic strata. For instance, workers, known as *bracers* in Catalonia, stand out as a clear case, with 88 to 100 percent listed in the bottom half of both wealth taxes, particularly in the poorest 25 percent. Likewise, women also tended to appear more often in the lower social groups. In contrast, the economic positioning of merchants, shopkeepers and liberal professionals is less discernible. In the wealth tax of 1427, these individuals were frequently found in the upper-middle groups (76-89 percent). However, the *talla* of 1455 reveals a noteworthy shift, with 36-46 percent of merchants, shopkeepers, jurists, medical workers and officials now appearing in the lower echelons of the wealth tax.⁵⁶ Similarly, artisans, transport operators and construction workers were evenly distributed across all four quartiles, making it extremely difficult to assign them any specific position within the wealth structure of Vic. Given the relatively weak correlation between a household's occupational category and its economic position, it is possible to argue that occupation is not a very useful indicator of wealth.

54. Land ownership has not been considered a useful proxy for wealth because late medieval Catalan after-death inventories did not consistently record all immovable assets of a deceased's estate, and in the cases where they did so, dimensions were rarely specified.

55. I have chosen the two *talles* with the highest number of identified taxpayers.

56. This disparity in the results of both taxes is linked to the mid-fifteenth century proliferation of wool merchants (*llaners*), whose economic standing was notably more modest when compared to conventional merchants. In fact, all eight merchants listed in the poorest quartile of the 1455 wealth tax were identified as *llaners*.

TABLE 5. SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE AFTER-DEATH INVENTORIES OF VIC ACCORDING TO THE WEALTH TAX OF 1427

	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			TOTAL
	Talla	%	Inv.	Talla	%	Inv.	Talla	%	Inv.	Talla	%	Inv.	
Merchants and Shopkeepers	0	0%		2	10.5%	1	3	15.8%		14	73.7%	2	19
Jurists, Medical Workers and Officials	2	9.8%		3	14.6%		8	39%	1	7	36.6%	2	20.5
Service Workers	3	27.3%	1	2	18.2%		3	27.3%	1	3	27.3%	1	11
Artisans	34	13.2%	2	78	30.2%	6	81	31.4%	9	65	25.2%	12	258
Blacksmiths, Weapon Makers, and Metal Workers	10	11.1%	2**	18	19.8%	2**	38	41.8%	5**	25	27.5%	2	91
Wood Preparation Workers	3	16.7%		7	38.9%		4	22.2%		4	22.2%	1	18
Food and Beverages Processors	2	20%		4	40%		4	40%	1	0	0%	0	10
Glass, Rope and Basket Makers and Potters	0	0%		0	0%		6	100%		0	0%	0	6
Shoemakers and Leather Goods Makers	7	14.6%		21	43.8%		10	20.8%		10	20.8%		48
Tanners, Fellmongers and Pelt Dressers	0	0%		5	29.4%	2	8	47.1%	1	4	23.5%	5	17
Spinners, Weavers, Knitters, Dyers and Related Workers	8	18.6%		12	27.9%	1	8	18.6%	2**	15	34.9%	2**	43
Tailors, Sewers and Upholsters Workers	4	17.4%		11	47.8%	1	3	13%		5	21.7%	2	23
Production Workers Not Elsewhere Classified	0	0%		0	0%		0	0%		2	100%	1	2
Transport Operators	5	41.7%	1	1	8.3%		5	41.7%	1*	1	8.3%		12
Construction Workers	2	28.6%	1	2	28.6%		1	14.3%		2	28.6%	1	7
Agricultural Workers, Animal Husbandry and Related Workers	0	0%		0	0%		3	60%		2	40%		5
Workers	16	64%	1*	6	24%	2	3	12%		0	0%		25
Mixed Professions	1	25%		2	50%		1	25%		0	0%		4
Women	26	40.3%	2	16	24.8%		7	10.9%		15.5	24%	2	64.5
Undetermined	79	32.4%		57	23.4%		57	23.4%	1	52	21.2%	2	245
TOTAL	168	25%	8	169	25.2%	9	172	25.6%	13	162	24.1%	23	671

Note 1: The classification into different occupational groups follows the standards of the Historical International Classification of Occupations (HISCO) (See: Institutional Institute of Social History, *History of Work Information System*, 2024, <https://historyofwork.iisg.amsterdam/index.php> [Accessed 17 February 2024]).

Note 2: In some cases, women's inventories have been classified according to the wealth value of their spouses when the inventory was made after their husband's demise but in the wealth tax they were still alive.

* It includes the inventories of the widow, instead of the male head of the household.

** It includes the inventories of the married couple. They have been counted as one.

TABLE 6. SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE AFTER-DEATH INVENTORIES OF VIC ACCORDING TO THE WEALTH TAX OF 1455

	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4		TOTAL
	Talla	% Inv.	Talla	% Inv.	Talla	% Inv.	Talla	% Inv.	
Merchants and Shopkeepers	9	23.1%	9	23.1%	5	12.8%	16	41%	39
Jurists, Medical Workers and Officials	3	15.8%	4	21.1%	2	10.5%	10	53.6%	19
Service Workers	2	40%	1	20%	0	0%	2	40%	5
Artists	0	0%	0.5	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0.5
Artisans	72	33.3%	75	34.7%	43	19.9%	26	12%	216
Blacksmiths, Toolmakers and Metal Workers	20	29%	23	33.3%	16	23.2%	10	14.5%	69
Wood Preparation Workers	6	52.2%	3.5	30.4%	2	17.4%	0	0%	11.5
Food and Beverages Processors	4	47.1%	3.5	41.2%	1	11.8%	0	0%	8.5
Glass, Rope and Basket Markers and Potters	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	2
Shoemakers and Leather Goods Makers	11	37.9%	12	41.4%	3	10.3%	3	10.3%	29
Tanners, Fellmongers and Pelt Dressers	3	17.6%	9	52.9%	2	11.8%	3	17.6%	17
Spinners, Weavers, Knitters, Dyers and Related Workers	14	29.2%	15	30%	10	20.8%	10	20.8%	48
Tailors, Sewers and Upholsters Workers	11	40.7%	8	29.6%	8	29.6%	0	0%	27
Production Workers Not Elsewhere Classified	2	50%	1	25%	1	25%	0	0%	4
Construction Workers	2	66.7%	0	0%	1	33.3%	0	0%	3
Transport Operators	1	12.5%	3	37.5%	2	25%	2	25%	8
Agricultural Workers, Animal Husbandry and Related Workers	0	0%	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	0	0%	3
Workers	12	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	12
Mixed Professions	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	2
Women	32	61%	8.5	16.2%	5	9.5%	7	13.3%	52.5
Undetermined	88	44.8%	44	22.7%	32	16%	35	17.6%	194
TOTAL	220	39.7%	147	26.5%	91	16.4%	96	17.3%	554

Note 1: The classification into different occupational groups follows the standards of the Historical International Classification of Occupations (HISCO) (See: Institutional Institute of Social History, *History of Work Information System*, 2024, <https://historyofwork.isg.amsterdam/index.php> [Accessed 17 February 2024]).

Note 2: In some cases, women's inventories have been classified according to the wealth value of their spouses when the inventory was made after their husband's demise but in the wealth tax they were still alive.

* It includes the inventories of the widow, instead of the male head of the household.

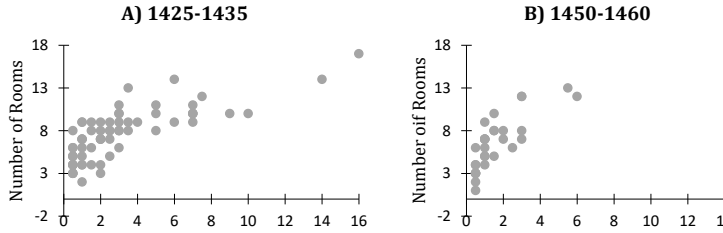


FIGURE 2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NUMBER OF ROOMS MENTIONED IN THE INVENTORIES OF 1425-1435 AND 1450-1460, AND THE WEALTH TAX VALUE IN THE *TALLES* OF 1422, 1427, 1453 AND 1455

TABLE 7. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NUMBER OF ROOMS AND THE WEALTH TAX VALUE

	1425-1435	1450-1460
Number of after-death inventories (N)	65	31
R-squared	0.594	0.614
Mean squared error (MSE)	3.749	3.585
Root mean squared error (RMSE)	1.936	1.894
F-statistic	67.807	65.150
p-value ($\alpha = 0.001$)	1.8×10^{-13}	3.7×10^{-11}

Note 1: In counting the number of rooms, every space mentioned in the inventories has been individually accounted for. These included all the botigues, cambres, caps d'escala or grau, cases, cellers or cubars, cuines, entrades, estables, estudis, menjadors or sales, pastadors, passadissos, privades, pujants, obradors, rebosts, recambres and rentadors. All (semi-)open spaces, such as corts, cortals, eres, patis, pòrtics, porxos and terrats, have been excluded.

Note 2: In cases where there were discrepancies in wealth taxes regarding an individual's contribution, preference has been given to the value of the latter wealth tax because it has been assumed that it better represented the economic position of the after-death inventory.

Figure 2 tests the significance of using the number of rooms as a proxy for wealth. Graphs A and B plot the relationship between the number of rooms recorded in the after-death inventories and the economic position in the wealth taxes of 1422-1427 and 1453-1455. Both graphs suggest a positive linear correlation between the number of rooms and wealth⁵⁷. Moreover, the Root Mean Squared Errors (RMSE) for both graphs indicates that the number of rooms can be used as a proxy to socially classify inventories according to their wealth, with a predictive accuracy of ± 2 rooms. Finally, the p-value associated with the F-statistic suggests that the regression model is statistically significant (Table 7). Based on this evidence, it is possible to conclude that the number of rooms is a valid (although not perfect) indicator of wealth that can substitute the lack of monetary valuations in the Catalan after-death inventories.

57. In a different context, J. Michael Montias found a 0.61 correlation between the number of rooms and the value of household goods listed in the Amsterdam inventories of the seventeenth century. Similarly, Bruno Blondé identified a 0.75 correlation between the number of rooms and the house rent tax assessment in seventeenth century Antwerp (Montias, J. Michael: «Works of Art Competing with Other Goods in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Inventories,» in De Marchi, Neil and van Miegroet, Hans J. (eds.): *Mapping markets for paintings in Europe 1450-1750*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2006, pp. 55-66, especially p. 56; Blondé, Bruno and De Laet, Veerle: op. cit., p. 71).

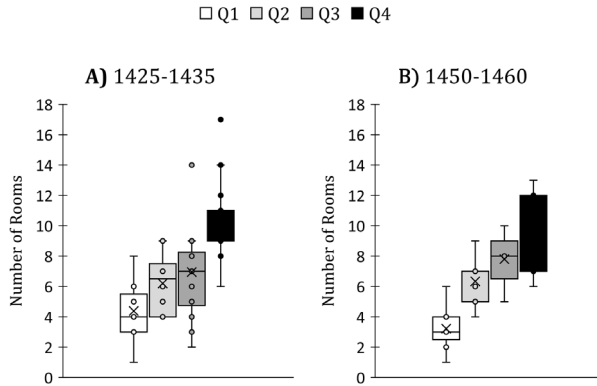


FIGURE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF ROOMS LISTED IN THE AFTER-DEATH INVENTORIES OF 1425-1435 AND 1450-1460 ACCORDING TO THE LEVEL OF WEALTH

In light of this analysis, it seems reasonable to propose a potentially valuable socioeconomic hierarchy based on the number of rooms. Drawing upon the quartile distribution of room numbers as recorded in the after-death inventories and the wealth taxes of Vic (Figura 2), this classification entails four distinct categories. The first one encompasses all those inventories with more than 10 rooms, that would represent the wealthiest members of Catalan society. Below them are all those individuals with 7 to 9 rooms, forming the next tier of wealth. The low-middle groups encompass households featuring 4 to 6 rooms. Finally, the poorest households are portrayed by those after-death inventories with less than 3 rooms. Additionally, another category could be added at the lower spectrum to represent those households with one or no rooms, that were rarely listed in the wealth taxes of Vic but whose existence is confirmed by after-death inventories.

TABLE 8. DISTRIBUTION OF THE AFTER-DEATH INVENTORIES IN QUINTILES ACCORDING TO THE ROOMS RANKS

Rooms	1400-1410		1425-1435		1450-1460	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Category I (Rooms 0-1)	17	14.9%	17	14.3%	6	9%
Category II (Rooms 2-3)	11	9.6%	13	10.9%	12	17.9%
Category III (Rooms 4-6)	40	35.1%	35	29.4%	24	35.8%
Category IV (Rooms 7-9)	26	22.8%	31	26.1%	17	25.4%
Category V (Rooms +10)	20	17.5%	23	19.3%	8	11.9%
Total	114	100%	119	100%	67	100%

Table 8 classifies the after-death inventories of Vic according to the above-mentioned room ranks. Categories I and II primarily include the working poor, servants, freedmen, widows, presbyters of modest means and monks, as well as a few impoverished shopkeepers and merchants. Category III encompasses the middling sort, predominantly composed of artisans, but it also includes clergymen, workers, widows and a handful of merchants and liberal professionals. Categories IV and V represent the upper social groups of the society of Vic, comprising successful craftsmen, affluent merchants, shopkeepers and liberal professionals, widows from well-established families and canons, wealthy presbyters and rectors. Overall, Table 8 reveals that the upper and middling ranks are the most well-represented social groups in the sample of after-death inventories for the three periods. In contrast, the lower echelons of the society of Vic were somewhat underrepresented, confirming the social bias suggested by the wealth taxes.⁵⁸

VI. CONCLUSIONS

In summary, this article has addressed one of the most crucial methodological problems in consumption studies: the social representativeness of after-death inventories and its integration into the statistical analysis. To achieve this goal, this article began by analyzing the late medieval Catalan legal framework that regulated the making of after-death inventories. The examination of juridical texts was combined with an analysis of the ‘actual’ participants involved in the elaboration of after-death inventories in fifteenth-century Vic. The results of this exercise revealed that any individual involved in the administration and transmission of a patrimony could request the elaboration of an inventory in order to protect themselves from any misunderstanding or disputes regarding the inheritance process (Table 1).

Despite the legal protection that after-death inventories offered to the people who requested them, the combined analysis of these notarial documents with the burial records of the cathedral of Vic demonstrated a large disparity between the number of burials and that of after-death inventories. It seems that only 11 to 27 percent of the burials resulted in an after-death inventory (Table 2). Moreover, these figures were probably much lower considering that not every inhabitant of Vic was buried in the cemetery of the cathedral of Vic. When occupation and gender differences were considered, the combined analysis of burial records and inventories revealed a notable underrepresentation of women and minor occupational groups. In contrast, the local nobility, merchants, shopkeepers,

58. Belén Moreno Claverías has also found a social bias in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Catalan after-death inventories by classifying them according to land ownership (Moreno Claverías, Belén: «Els inventaris *post-mortem* catalans a l'època moderna...» pp. 46-47).

and workers were overrepresented. However, it should be noted that, in absolute terms, artisans were the largest occupational category, as they were also the most numerous socio-professional group in both burial records and after-death inventories (Table 3). Instead, the comparative analysis with the wealth taxes of Vic demonstrated a significant social bias in late medieval Catalan after-death inventories towards the wealthier social groups. While poorer households were not exceptional, they were less likely to request an inventory compared to their wealthier counterparts (Table 4).

In light of these findings, the last section of this article has analyzed two alternative wealth indicators to socially classify after-death inventories without monetary valuations in order to ensure an accurate representation of the different wealth groups in its statistical analysis. The first proxy for wealth examined was occupation which, upon comparison with wealth taxes, proved to be an ineffective method for socially positioning after-death inventories (Tables 5 & 6). Despite its inadequacy, occupation might prove to be an interesting variable to consider when exploring its influence on the consumer behavior of pre-industrial Catalan society. Numerous consumption studies have demonstrated the impact that occupation and status had on the acquisition of new material objects and on the distribution of both producer and consumer goods.⁵⁹

The second wealth indicator explored in this article was the number of rooms listed in the after-death inventories, which functions as a proxy for the spatial dimensions of the main residence of a family. The cross-reference of this indicator with the wealth taxes of Vic revealed a significant positive correlation (Table 7). This suggests that the number of rooms may serve as a viable proxy to socially classify inventories without monetary valuations. Despite the potential limitations of this methodology, it is noteworthy that other historians have likewise identified a significant correlation between wealth and the number of rooms in other regions and time periods, allowing historians to establish comparisons across time and space.⁶⁰ Consequently, this article concludes by advocating for the adoption of the number of rooms as an alternative proxy for wealth when after-death inventories do not contain monetary valuations. This approach will allow historians to understand the extent to which the market of household goods reached down the social hierarchy and elucidate the socioeconomic dynamics underlying the acquisition and diffusion of consumer goods.

59. For the Middle Ages, see: Goldberg, Jeremy P.: *op. cit.* For pre-industrial Europe, see: Hiller, David and Wiedemer, Laurence: «Le rat de ville et le rat des champs. Une approche comparative des intérieurs ruraux et urbains à Genève dans la seconde partie du XVIII^e siècle,» in Baulant, Micheline (ed.), *Inventaires après-décès, et ventes de meubles. Actes du séminaire tenu dans le cadre du 9^{ème} Congrès International d'Histoire Economique de Berne (1986)*, Louvain-La-Neuve, Académia, 1988, pp. 131-151.

60. Blondé, Bruno and De Laet, Veerle: *op. cit.*, p. 71; Montias, J. Michael: *op. cit.*, p. 56. The latter has criticized this methodological approach on the basis that wealth rose more than the number of rooms in seventeenth-century Amsterdam; thus, there is a downward bias in this methodology.

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