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Abstract

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This paper presents some preliminary data on abandoned children in nineteenth century Portugal. After reviewing the history of foundling institutions in Portugal, the paper focuses on some major regional differences in the practices of child abandonment. Based on an analysis of the records of a Casa da Roda in the northwestern Portuguese district of Viana do Castelo, the paper then explores some of the major characteristics of both abandoned children and foster mothers. It attempts to trace the fate of those foundlings who survived infancy. A key question is how foundling institutions and fosterage were part of a welfare program for which significant public expenditures were made. These expendi-

(p.t.o.) tures, as well as the impact of foundling homes on public morality, were the subject of heated debate in the local press. In general, however, Portugal was characterized by a liberal attitude toward child abandonment.

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FOUNDLINGS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY NORTHWESTERN PORTUGAL : PUBLIC WELFARE AND FAMILY STRATEGIES

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In his volume of *Lusitanian Sketches*, the nineteenth-century British journalist/traveler William Kingston described an encounter he had with a peasant woman in the countryside of rural Portugal. The woman was carrying a basket over her arm, and in it were four infants. When Kingston asked her if they were all hers, the woman replied "Oh no, senhor... they are children without fathers found this morning in our village and I am taking them to the *roda* (foundling wheel)". Kingston recorded his own reactions – "It was a sight at first glance to frighten Malthus, though one at which both he and his disciples might ultimately rejoice, as the inmates of these establishments are short-lived" (1845 : 302).

In this passing remark, Kingston drew the attention of his readers to a social problem that reached crisis proportions in Portugal during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the early 1860s, a commission was set up to examine this crisis and what was thought to be its progenitor – the foundling home with its anonymous wheel. Observers noted that the number of foundlings (*expostos*) in Portugal, even taking population differences into account, was higher than most other countries of Europe and blamed it on an increase in immoral behavior and bad habits. Some fingered "mercenary individuals" who made the transportation of children to the roda "into a profession and turned a respectable establishment into a theater of indignant commerce" (Vaz 1848 : 18).

That concern about the problem had reached dramatic proportions and entered the popular imagination is evident in the fact that abandoned and illegitimate children became the subject matter of literature. The famous realist writer of the day, Camillo Castello Branco, published a short novel titled "A Engeitada" (The Rejected Child) and his col-

lection *Novelas do Minho* includes a short story titled "O Filho Natural" (The Natural Child). Less well-known is *O Selo da Roda* (The Seal of the Foundling Wheel) by Pedro Ivo, a book that dramatizes in graphic terms the unfortunate status of the child abandoned at the foundling wheel who was forced to wear a pendant around his neck that indicated his questionable origins.

This paper presents some preliminary data on the problem of abandoned children in Portugal during the nineteenth century[1]. While foundlings have been the subject of study in countries of northwestern Europe (FUCHS 1984; MCCLURE 1981; MEYER 1980) and more recently in Italy (CORSINI 1976; HUNECKE 1978; DA MOLIN 1982, 1984) and Spain (SHERWOOD 1978), as yet there has been little examination of the situation in Portugal[2]. Our own research on this subject is at an early stage. The data are therefore preliminary, and any conclusions are tentative. The paper begins with a brief historical survey of the creation of foundling institutions in Portugal. From there it turns to a discussion of significant regional variations within the country. These variations suggest different attitudes between the north and the south of Portugal about the process of abandonment and about out-of-wedlock children in general. The paper then analyzes data for a particular region of northwestern Portugal during the nineteenth century so that the characteristics of abandoned children and their fate can be discussed in greater detail. In this section, we focus on the important issue of public welfare, since it was local municipalities in Portugal that had the onus of dealing with the problem of abandoned children. Our data derive from a range of sources that are described in the process of our discussion. In our concluding remarks we address the issue of family strategies associated with abandonment and suggest some avenues for future research.

[1] A preliminary version of this paper was delivered to the Social Science History Association in St. Louis, Missouri in October of 1987. The authors would like to thank the Fulbright Foundation and the Faculty of Economics of the University of Porto for supporting Dr. Feijó's travel to this meeting. Rachel Fuchs and James Lehning offered very useful comments and criticisms on the paper. Dr. Brettell would like to thank the American Council of Learned Societies for their contribution in supporting the research on which this paper is based. The authors would also like to acknowledge with gratitude the comments and suggestions provided by Fatima Brandão.

[2] See however Lopes (1984) and Matos (1983).

A Brief History of Foundling Institutions in Portugal

The words *exposto* (lit. exposed) and *enjeitado* (lit. rejected) are the terms most commonly used in Portugal to refer to abandoned children or foundlings. Their use dates back to the thirteenth century, when the first 'hospice' was founded in Lisbon (Serrão 1963). In 1321, Queen Isabel founded another hospital in Santarém destined for the "care of children of women who reject them". Until the sixteenth century, the *câmaras* (city halls) of each *concelho* (municipality) were charged with the care of these abandoned children, but during that century, some of the responsibility was transferred to the Misericórdias or almshouses. In 1535, a position of "father of children" was created – a man charged with collecting all the abandoned children in his district. At this time, children were generally abandoned on the doorsteps of churches or private homes, or along roadsides. However, as foundling or turnbox wheels (*rodas*) became more common, they superceded doorsteps as the popular place to abandon infants.

These rodas were officially recognized by Queen Maria I in a circular of March 24, 1783. The circular called for the establishment of *Casas da Roda* in all the cities and towns of the Kingdom, "situated in a discrete place so that those who abandon (expose) children can do it without risk of recognition". The circular also called for a woman (*rodeira*) to be on hand day and night to receive the children, and suggested that a child be given the name of the saint venerated on the day that it was abandoned. No inquiry was to be made into the identity of parents. While not all cities were able to set up these Casas da Roda, enough were established in central places to serve a regional population[3].

The children abandoned on the rodas were cared for at the expense of local municipalities, although in some cities private institutions like the Misericórdia continued to share the burden. One of the motives for this official recognition of rodas, according to the inten-

[3] There were two types of Casas da Roda – those where babies remained no more than a few days (largely in small cities and rural areas) and foundling hospitals that sheltered children for lengthier periods of time (located in the big cities of Porto and Lisbon).

dent Pina-Manique, was to "avoid the commerce of abandoned children, done on large scale by the Spanish who take Portuguese children to their homes" (PERES 1934 : 635).

The Casas da Roda, some of which were equipped with beds where women could sleep while awaiting the birth of their child, were supposed to alleviate the problems of abortion and infanticide by creating "safe asylums where women who find themselves in trouble and who fear the discovery of their mistake, can bear their child with the certainty that it would never be known and without endangering their health, their honor, and their fruit" (PINTO 1828 : 79). They were aimed at women of 'respectable' circumstances. However, they were equally conceived of as institutions of public welfare and in this context they eventually became burning issues of public debate.

> The question of pauperism and public succor is one of the most difficult problems of this century. Does public aid serve to lighten the miseries of humanity or is it a pure loss for humanity, an unproductive consumption.. The foundling wheels, that are one of the most important branches of public aid, exist among us from ancient times and are a municipal institution that the municipalities support with their own income" (SILVA 1850 : 1).

Taxes on barrels of wine, on oxen slaughtered, on salt, on fish, etc. were used to pay for foundling homes (Pinto 1828). However, to reduce the economic burden, the câmaras attempted to keep a close watch on those pregnant women whom they considered most likely to abandon their child.

As the numbers of abandoned children increased during the nineteenth century, writing about the problem, of both an official regulatory and a commentary nature, also proliferated. The methods for dealing systematically with these children were laid out in a series of *Regulamentos* and *Memórias* (Anonymous 1823, 1844, 1879, 1888). Each foundling institution was to have a *rodeira* and several wet nurses (*amas de leite*) on hand to take charge of children at the moment of abandonment. However, a wet nurse in the surrounding countryside was to be found as soon as possible. Wet nurses were required to prove that they had not abandoned a child themselves and that the child who was to be replaced was either dead or weaned. Children to be wet nursed were presumably assigned at random to avoid permitting women to take their own children to the roda and then take them back as a wetnurse. According to Vaz (1848) this was not at all unusual.

Wet nurses were required to bring their foster children on the first Sunday of each month for inspection and were paid at that time. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the salary for wet nurses was 1 : 100 reis a month during the first year and 900 reis per month in subsequent years[4]. Children were kept by these wet nurses until the age of two. Between the ages of two and seven the child was kept by a dry nurse (*ama seca*) who frequently had been the wet nurse. Salaries for dry nurses were less than those for wet nurses.

At seven, those children who survived infancy and early childhood or who remained on the public rolls (who had not been reclaimed by a parent or some other relative) came under the authority of a magistrate for orphans (*juiz orfanológico*). They were to remain under his jurisdiction until the age of twelve when attempts were made to secure work or apprenticeships for them. An interest in the professional training and education of expostos dates back to the latter eighteenth century. In 1780 Pina Manique, the Intendent of Police, created the Casa Pia in Lisbon to provide apprenticeship training. However, even if a position was found, abandoned children remained legally under the protection of the magistrate until age 21.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century the regulations for the admission of expostos on the public rolls were made explicitly stricter (Anonymous 1879). Thus, only a first child of an unmarried and poor woman was to be admitted; any illegitimate child with some physical impediment that made it impossible for the poor and unwed mother to raise the child was to be admitted; any abandoned child was to be admitted[5], as was any child who was left together with the means sufficient to support it. The behavior of wet nurses was also subject to further explicit regulation. Foster children were to be treated like natural children. No work above what their strength would permit was to be required. Monetary rewards were encouraged to attract good foster mothers and ensure proper care. In each concelho it was suggested that a prize be given to the three wet nurses who presented their children in the best condition.

[4] Day laborers earned about 200 reis par day; masons and carpenters about 300. With regard to buying power, in 1851 an average cost for an *alqueire* (16.3 liters) of wheat was 742 reis, and of corn 336 reis.

[5] The word abandoned is probably used in this context to refer to a legitimate child whose parents were known but in prison, dead, or destitute (PINTO 1828).

The extent to which these official regulations were practiced is only verifiable through a close examination of the records of the foundling institutions themselves. However, before examining the system in operation in a particular district of Portugal, we would like to look at the problem of abandoned children at the national level in order to outline variations in its regional distribution.

Regional Variations : Abandoned Children and Illegitimate Children

Social historians have commonly examined illegitimacy and abandonment together, viewing them as related phenomena. However, it is not always clear whether this relationship is inverse or direct. For example, Meyer (1980 : 251), in his study of pre-industrial France, notes that the figures for illegitimacy and abandoned children complement each other regionally. Traditional France, with the exception of Brittany, Ardèche, and Lot, had few bastards, but in these regions newborns were abandoned readily. Portugal demonstrates some rather intriguing regional variations in the distribution of abandonment and illegitimacy that are worth mentioning if only because they suggest that more attention be paid to how these two phenomena are related and what this relationship tells us about social attitudes toward out-of-wedlock children.

One of us (Feijó 1985) has conducted a preliminary analysis of late nineteenth century data drawn from statistical registers. The results of this analysis indicate complex regional variations in levels of illegitimacy and abandonment. For example, the extreme northeastern district of Bragança demonstrates a high illegitimacy rate and ratio, but a low proportion of foundlings; the extreme northwestern district of Viana do Castelo shows a high illegitimacy ratio, an average rate, and a moderate proportion of foundlings; the central interior district of Castelo Branco scores low on all three phenomena; and finally, the southern district of Évora has a high illegitimacy rate, an average ratio, and a high proportion of foundlings. Furthermore, an estimate of the proportion of foundlings that were legitimate as opposed to illegitimate demonstrates distinct variation. In 1862, these estimated proportions were as follows for the districts analyzed[6].

[6] The method by which these proportions are arrived at is described in Feijó 1985.

	Bragança (NE)	C. Branco (Central)	Évora (SE)	Viana (NW)
Legitimate	47.5%	96.5%	30.4%	73.3%
Illegitimate	52.5%	3.5%	69.6%	26.7%

These figures suggest not only that legitimate babies made up a significant proportion of foundlings, but also that attitudes toward illegitimacy differed from one part of the country to the next. It also suggests that in different regions of the country, the foundling institutions appear to have served somewhat varying needs. As institutions of public welfare, rodas could harbor both illegitimate and legitimate children in times of economic distress; for some women, they helped to hide the shame of an out-of-wedlock birth; and for families or individuals in need of labor or emotional and social support from a succeeding generation, they provided a human resource.

To ferret out all the subtleties of these differences will require much more research on our part. For the moment, we would like to turn our attention to the district about which we know the most, that of Viana do Castelo. This district displayed an enormous tolerance toward bastard children (BRETTELL 1985, 1986; FEIJÓ 1983; PINA-CABRAL 1984) who constituted a large proportion of all births, despite the moderate illegitimacy rate. A woman as soon kept as abandoned her illegitimate child. Furthermore, the social tolerance for children born out-of-wedlock was matched by a significant number of legitimate babies who were left at the foundling wheel.

FOUNDLINGS IN THE DISTRICT OF VIANA DO CASTELO

The district of Viana do Castelo is located in the northwesternmost region of Portugal in the province of Minho. It is composed of ten concelhos, including that of Viana do Castelo, and its 'capital' is a town of the same name located at the mouth of the Lima River on the Atlantic coast. It is the only town of any apprcciable size in the district with a population of a little more than 9200 in 1864 when the first national census was taken. Minho has often been described as the garden of Portugal. Its lush verdant landscape and favorable precipita-

tion and climate have made the land fertile and productive, despite the pressures of a dense population. Property throughout Minho is divided into small plots that are farmed by a small-scale, subsistence-oriented peasantry. Women in the region have traditionally worked in agriculture as peasant farmers or day laborers, and in domestic service. Men are peasant farmers, artisans (masons, carpenters, shoemakers, etc), or emigrants. In fact, this region has been characterized by high rates of seasonal, temporary, and permanent emigration for over two centuries.

Perusal of parish records in the region indicate that in the eighteenth century it was not uncommon for children of this region to be abandoned on the threshold of churches or private homes, or along roadsides, although the practice appears to have varied from one village to the next. These local variations should not, however, be taken at face value. Parishes were linked into the foundling-wheel network and local children may have been deposited there at differing rates both over time and across space. Parish registers therefore become problematic as a sole source for a discussion of illegitimacy and abandonment. It is more appropriate to examine the question at the regional rather than the parish level.

Systematic regional data on expostos can be found in the records of the foundling institutions themselves. We have begun to explore these records for the roda of the town of Viana do Castelo. Although it is not yet clear to us precisely how long this roda was in operation, books for the registration of expostos and references to them in the Acts of the Câmara of Viana do Castelo date to the early eighteenth century. (The first *Book of Expostos* begins in 1706). At that time, it appears that the onus for the care of expostos fell upon the villages of the district in proportion to their wealth and number of residents. By the early nineteenth century, the Casa da Roda in Viana was apparently in full operation. In February of 1836, at a session of the Câmara of the town, a certain Maria do Carmo, wife of Manuel José da Silva and a resident of the town of Viana, presented herself as a candidate for the position of rodeira. Her appointment was approved, as was a salary of 2 : 400 reis per month.

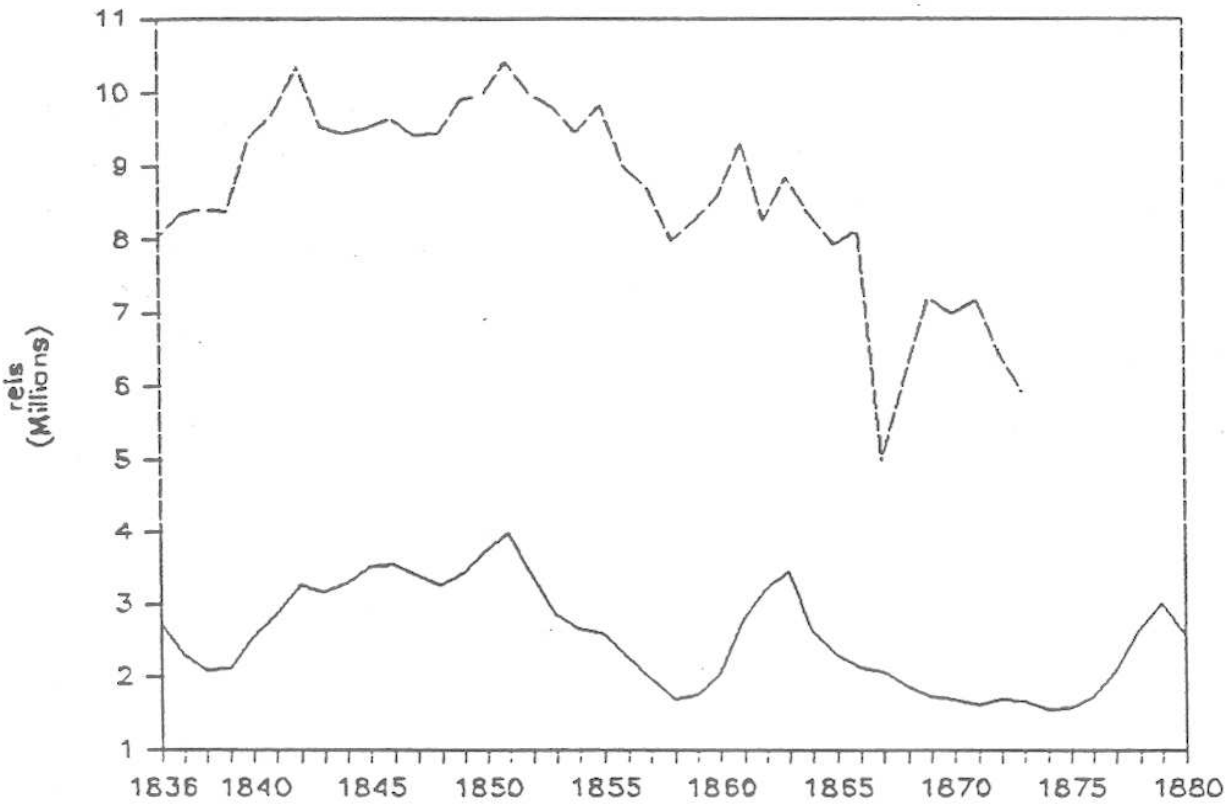
In 1839, a regulation for the administration of expostos in the District of Viana do Castelo was drawn up, probably following thc national reforms of the 1830s that destroyed the taxation system, left rodas throughout the country without means, and, according to one author, led to rising death and infanticide (SILVA 1850). Evidence of the prob-

lem in Viana itself appears in the *Actas* of May 23, 1835 where it is admitted that the payment of wet nurses was already three months in arrears. Money had to be borrowed from the coffers of the Obras da Ponte (funds set aside for bridge-building), and to pay it back a special tax was imposed on each village in the region. The administration of expostos was transferred from the county to the district level. In the regulation, a series of articles dealt with the clothing given to each new child, the qualities of the rodeira, the salaries and payment schedules for the rodeira and amas, and the clothing and medical coverage provided to the infant. It was also specified that "the câmaras should use all diligence to assure that expostos received training for a trade or some other salaried work, preferably in agriculture".

Some amendments or reiterations of these regulations appear over time in the *Actas* of the *Câmara* of Viana do Castelo. In 1842, for example, it was claimed that there were no revenues exclusively applied to expostos except the sum of 24 : 000 reis that the Misericórdia of Arcos paid to the Câmara of that concelho. The majority of foster mothers were from neighboring rural villages, and they received their foster children very soon after they were abandoned. In the following year, it was noted that in two interior concelhos of the district – Castro Laboreiro and Soajo – there were no rodas, "it being the case that abandoned children were generally illegitimate and taken to the rodas of Melgaço in the first case, and Arcos or Ponte da Barca in thc scc-ond". It was also noted that there were no establishments anywhere in the district where expostos could be educated – only Casas da Roda.

Through the enactment of these and earlier national regulations, a complex public welfare system was put in place to care for children abandoned in the surrounding villages or at the foundling wheel. Salaries, medical costs, clothing (a trousseau valued at from 640 to 1 : 800 reis), property rents all added up. Figure 1 charts the annual expenditures for expostos between 1839 and 1880 at both the concelho and district level.

The graph indicates a gradual rise in expenditures between 1840 and 1851 in both the concelho and the district as a whole, followed by a rather dramatic decline between 1851 and 1858. Between 1858 and 1863 expenditures rose sharply, and then declined once more, more rapidly at the district level than at the concelho level. Values for the district after 1875 are missing, but in the concelho, there was another increase in expenditures for expostos.



Expenses. Concelho and District

The proportion of overall annual budget that these expenditures on expostos represented also fluctuated, although during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the proportion declined gradually. Thus, in 1850, 43 percent of the annual budget of the Câmara was devoted to expostos[7]. By 1860, the proportion had declined to 22 percent; and by 1870 it was at 15 percent. Parallel to this decline in proportion of the annual budget was a decline in the amount spent per exposto. This decline was much more dramatic at the concelho level than at the district level[8]. Although 15 percent is still a substantial amount, the decline is itself important and probably a response to extremely nega-

[7] Lopes (1984) finds that in the concelho of Meda (district of Guarda) between 1852 and 1857 the proportion of the annual budget for expostos fluctuated between 41 and 48 percent.

[8] The greater 'urbanness' of the concelho may be a factor in explaining this difference.

tive feelings about the entire exposto system that erupted in the 1860s in a regional town with two important newspapers. To this point we will return shortly. It is also true that during the period between 1850 and 1870, the budget of the Câmara of Viana do Castelo had increased in total reis and thus the decline in the proportion devoted to expostos is to some extent a function of this increase.

These expenditures roughly parallel the trends in the relationship between foundlings and overall births. Between 1840 and 1844, the ratio of foundlings to registered births in the concelho was 15.5 percent; between 1845 and 1849 it declined to 12.3 percent; between 1850 and 1854 it further declined to 10.7 percent, and then increased slowly between 1855 and 1859 to 11.5 percent. This was however followed by a more dramatic increase between 1860 and 1864 to 16.2 percent. Between 1865 and 1869, it dropped to 9.9 percent and between 1870 and 1874 it was at 9.6 percent.

The increase in expenditures during the 1840's is probably related to the period of repression and violence that was ushered in with the coup d'etat of the Secretary of Justice Costa Cabral in 1842. Half a decade of social unrest ensued and in northern Portugal was manifested in a popular revolt (known as Maria da Fonte; see Riegelhaupt 1981) against the new health (forbidding of burial in churches) and tax laws of Costa Cabral. During this period, the countryside was in disarray. Maize production remained stagnant, and prices rose.

Although peace was restored after 1851, by the late 1850s and early 1860s a new economic crisis that enveloped the entire nation was at hand. Prices in the District of Viana do Castelo soared. Bread and meat had risen by 60 percent, olive oil by 45 percent, coffee by 140 percent, and wine by 200 percent between 1848 and 1863. Of the major cereals sold at the market of Viana do Castelo, wheat went from 842 reis per alqueire in 1858 to 912 reis per alqueire in 1863 (it was at 960 in 1862); rye from 380 reis to 461; and corn – the more local grain – from 428 reis to 497 reis. The rate of emigration also increased dramatically in the 1850s, suggesting that the economic constraints that influenced the rate of emigration may also have led to greater child abandonment. While the correlation between living conditions and abandonment has to be more fully explored than we are able to do at present, an analysis of the record books of the roda of Viana do Castelo at ten year intervals between 1820 and 1880 lends some insights.

Table 1 gives the reason for termination of support of expostos admitted at the beginning of each decade between 1820 and 1880.

TABLE 1

REASON FOR TERMINATION OF SUPPORT OF EXPOSTOS, 1820-1880

	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880
Unknown							
N	1	5	3	5	7	1	0
%	0.7	3.7	2.4	4.2	6.5	2.6	0.0
Reached 7							
N	58	42	27	37	21	3	11
%	40.3	31.1	22.3	30.8	19.6	7.7	30.5
Died							
N	63	52	34	63	54	20	20
%	43.7	38.5	28.1	52.5	50.5	51.3	55.5
Adopted							
N	2	5	2	1	2	0	0
%	1.4	3.7	1.6	0.8	1.9	0.0	0.0
Reclaimed by mother							
N	19	29	53	12	19	4	5
%	13.2	21.5	43.8	10.0	17.7	10.2	13.9
Reclaimed by father							
N	1	1	1	0	2	0	0
%	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.0
Reclaimed by other kin							
N	0	1	1	2	2	1	0
%	0.0	0.7	0.8	1.7	1.9	2.5	0.0
Total N	144	135	121	120	107	39	36

NOTE:
Adopted means the child was removed from subsidy before age seven because someone volunteered to assume all responsibility. At age seven many of the children apparently remained with their ama. Other kin could be a grandparent, aunt, uncle.
The dramatic decline in expostos by 1870 is a result of legislation in the latter 1860s that changed the registration system. Only those children anonymously abandoned at the wheel continued to be recorded in the books of the Casa da Roda while children brought in by an individual, parent or not, were taken before the President of the Câmara. The statistics of the Câmara and Governo Civil indicate 143 expostos for 1870. By 1880, expostos were lumped together with illegitimate children.
The total figure for 1860 is low since records between March 12th and May 31st are missing. We eventually plan to substitute the year 1861.

While our interpretation of this data must be tentative, the period of the 1840s certainly stands out. Almost 44 percent of the children abandoned in 1840 were eventually reclaimed by their mothers. Conversely, only 28 percent died. Furthermore of those children who reached age seven, the records indicate that twenty-four of the twenty-seven remained in the charge of their ama beyond age seven. Could it be that a number of these amas were in fact the natural mothers. Not infrequently, this fact was verified and so stated on the records. Furthermore, the mothers who reclaimed their infants at age seven must have had some idea of the whereabouts of the child they had abandoned – perhaps even partially cared for them. Often, when it was indicated that a child was brought in from one of the surrounding villages, an ama from that village took the child. Did she then pass the child on to the natural mother? Occasionally, an alias name is written next to that of the ama and in some cases a sure guess is that giving an alias was a method used by mothers to retrieve their child. If natural mothers were taking back their own children, the lower mortality figures make sense. It only remains to be asked what portion of these mothers were married and for reasons of poverty, during a time of political and economic turmoil, were forced to abandon their children, or at least to circulate them through the roda so that they could receive help for their support. Of course, mothers of illegitimate children may also have needed the financial help.

We are unsure how to demonstrate such motivations with the data we have at our disposal[9]. However, it is perhaps useful to point out the marital status of amas who took infants. Prior to 1860, this data was not included on the register of expostos. However, a register of amas (*Matrícula das Amas*) in the service of the Viana roda in 1853 yields the following distribution : 27 percent single, 66 percent married, and 7 percent widowed. These amas were primarily (63%) from the villages of the district rather than from the town of Viana itself (37%). The age and marital status of first amas for 1860, 1870, and 1880 (generally included on the individual records of abandonment in these

[9] Fatima Brandão has discovered in the Acts of the Câmara of Vieira do Minho, dated August 22, 1844, the exclusion of eight children from the roda whose parents were known. Five were children of married couples, two of single mothers, and one of a widow.

TABLE 2

AMAS, 1860, 1870, AND 1880 BY AGE AND MARITAL STATUS
(IN TOTAL NUMBERS)

1860	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50+	?
Unknown									12
Single	1		8	5	3	1			16
Married			5	4	2	3	1		32
Widowed				1		1			12
1870									
Single									9
Married									11
Widowed									9
1880									
Single		4	4	6	2				1
Married				3	2	1		1	6
Widowed						2			4

years) is provided in Table 2[10]. Of course, marital status may be more indicative of a societal/institutional preference (in moral terms) for married women, or of the fact that married women were at greater risk to have had an infant recently weaned or dead and therefore able to breastfeed.

The data in Table 1 also suggest an explanation of the fluctuations in expenditures for expostos, although we are only dealing here with annual entries rather than carry-over children. Whether maintained until age seven or reclaimed by a mother sometime earlier, more abandoned children who entered the roda system in 1840 were sustained for longer than those who entered in 1850. Table 3 tabulates the age at exit for children who either died or were reclaimed by their mothers for each of the periods analyzed. While the totals in some of the cells are too small to warrant discussion, the table does tend to indicate that a significant proportion of mothers who abandoned children and later

[10] Changing of amas, especially from a wetnurse to a drynurse, was not uncommon.

TABLE 3

REASON FOR TERMINATION BY AGE AT TERMINATION
1820-1880

	< 1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7+	N
1820									
Died	44%	35%	11%	3%	0%	6%			63
Reclaimed by mother	26%	37%	5%	0%	21%	10%			19
1830									
Died	35%	36%	10%	8%	6%	2%	4%		52
Reclaimed by mother	38%	35%	10%	3%	3%	3%	0%	7%	29
1840									
Died	50%	21%	15%	0%	3%	12%			34
Reclaimed by mother	36%	17%	19%	9%	4%	9%	2%	4%	53
1850									
Died	48%	25%	16%	3%	3%	10%	2%	2%	63
Reclaimed by mother	33%	17%	17%	0%	0%	8%	17%	8%	12
1860									
Died	74%	18%	6%	2%					54
Reclaimed by mother	47%	32%	0%	5%	11%	0%	5%		19
1870									
Died	50%	20%	30%						20
Reclaimed by mother	25%					25%		50%	4
1880									
Died	65%	20%	5%	5%	5%				20
Reclaimed by mother	40%							60%	5

reclaimed them waited a few years before doing so. Nevertheless, the majority reclaimed their children within the first year or soon thereafter. That is, these children may have been abandoned because their mothers were unable to sustain them. Poor nutrition in times of economic distress may be an explanation for inability to breastfeed and hence abandonment. As soon as these children reached the age of weaning they were retrieved by their natural mothers.

Notes attached to abandoned children suggest such motivating factors. In addition to indicating whether the child had been baptised or not (and if not, what name was preferred – so that they could be identified later?) and what items of clothing accompanied the infant, these

notes often gave a reason for abandonment – "because the mother had no milk"; because a couple had four other small children and was poor"; "because of the poverty and illness of the mother"; "because a husband is in prison and therefore without the means to feed three children and the mother".

Observers at the time noted the impact of poverty on abandonment, especially on the abandonment of legitimate as opposed to illegitimate chidren (VAZ 1848 : 28). More recently, those who have begun to study the records of foundlings in Portugal have suggested similar interpretations. For example, Matos (1983) documents an increase in the number of expostos abandoned at the roda of Esposende between 1818 and 1821 when hunger was widespread and suggests that the provincial rodas might have differed from those in the larger cities in the sense that the majority of children were abandoned for economic reasons rather than because they were illegitimate. Of course, and as mentioned earlier, penury rather than shame may equally have led to the delivery of an illegitimate child to the roda. Among the few pieces of correspondence saved for the roda of Viana do Castelo is a letter dated July 1, 1866 from the magistrate of the parish of Freixieiro de Soutello to the Administrator of Expostos of Viana do Castelo. In it he refers to an unmarried woman named Joaquina Lourenço who was a poor day laborer living alone who had a child to whom she gave the name Isabel. "In her misery, she has no milk and cannot feed the child". The magistrate asks the administrator to "succor this newborn who appears to be in the circumstances of Article 3, Number 2 of the regulation for expostos".

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE FOUNDLINGS QUESTION

The rise in expenditures in the late 1850s and early 1860s as well as the clear increase in the number of abandoned children caused local consternation. The regional newspaper *O Vianense* published a series of articles on the problem of expostos between 1862 and 1864. Two factors were at issue. One was the cost of the entire endeavor.

> One of the greatest difficulties with which the municipal câmaras struggle is unquestionably the obligatory expenses for expostos that absorb the greatest part of their income, making it impossible for them to undertake and realize whatever improvements are deemed most indispensible. Far be it from us to censure the institution of foundling

> wheels for abandoned children, or to contest the necessity of providing succor to unhappy innocents who, on the dawn of existence and when they need the most care, are the victims of inhuman abandonment. *O Vianense*, July 17, 1862.

Reacting to what must have been a rather vocal concern about misappropriation of funds, the Administrator of Expostos issued an open invitation in the April 28, 1863 issue of *O Vianense* to all citizens of the concelho to examine for themselves all the relevant books and documents. Apparently, the public had questioned why the total costs had risen when the salaries for wet nurses had declined. He supplied various figures to document in full precisely where the monies had been spent, as well as the fact that the net number (a rather crass accounting of admissions against deaths) of expostos in 1862 to 1863 had increased by forty-six rather than eleven as was thought.

Parallel to these monetary concerns were ethical and moral concerns. Clearly, and as in other regions of Europe (MEYER 1980), there was some feeling that the number of foundlings increased as provisions for their maintenance increased. As early as the late 1840s, abuses were recognized. Vaz (1848), for example, refers to an increase in the number of intermediaries (*espreitadeiras* – literally, those who watch) who, for a fee of 2 : 400 to 4 : 800 reis, would take a child to the wheel and then take it back so that it could be raised by its natural mother but at the expense of the public coffers.

In the district of Viana do Castelo, the *Vianense* (August 11, 1863) ultimately called for the complete extinction of rodas "because they are, and will always be, the focus of demoralization, the shelter and hiding place for all the vices and miseries of mankind, a permanent obstacle to the natural development of the population and an evident cause of the fragility and disease that characterise expostos". In another issue, the editors stated bluntly that foundling homes were "establishments that animate immorality and licentiousness" (*O Vianense* September 24, 1864).

To summarize, the debate in the local press demonstrates diverging opinions about what the enormous sums of money were being used for. Some clearly felt that it was an important system of welfare; others thought that the funds themselves stimulated immorality. Whether conceived of as an abuse or not, the recognition that at least some natural mothers were abandoning their children at the roda and then taking them (or another child) back, probably stimulated an eventual

change in legislation. In the early 1880s, a resolution of the câmara of Viana do Castelo led to the introduction of a 'subsidy of lactation' to be given to indigent parents who cannot work, to a widow or widower who was also indigent, and to natural mothers. In fact, the records demonstrate that by the late 1870s the tendency appears to have been to use funds to support the natural mothers of illegitimate children for two and a half years, allowing them to keep their children rather than to abandon them. For example, in March of 1879, a woman named Rosa Correia presented a child of twenty months, baptised illegitimately in the parish of Lanheses in June of 1877. The following day, this child was returned to the natural mother and supported until 1880 at 800 reis per month.

As early as the late 1840s such a practice of supporting the mothers themselves by giving them the money to purchase milk that might otherwise be supplied by a wet nurse was proposed by Vaz (1848 : 45). The municipality, he suggested, would gain from this system because the child would not be kept at the public's expense until the age of seven. This system, he thought, would not only combat indifference by persuading a mother to keep the child for at least a week, but also the shame "that is in some cases the cause of abandonment"[11].

In essence, the action of March 1880 seriously reduced the number of expostos kept at the public's expense beyond twelve months. This was probably a reason why in October of 1882, a piece of property that was used by the Câmara of Viana to house expostos was sold to a certain João Rodrigues Lima and his wife Maria das Dores Afonso dos Reis (CASTRO 1978).

FATE OF EXPOSTOS AFTER AGE SEVEN

While studies have documented characteristics of abandoned children as infants and of wet nurses, few studies to date have attempted to document the fate of abandoned children through the life course (see however FUCHS 1984). The fate of those who survived is an important area for research if the material is available to study the problem.

[11] A seemingly liberal thinker, Vaz also proposed that fathers – "frequently rich and lazy youths who as a pastime seduce young girls" should be identified.

Our own work on this problem is very preliminary, and in this section we would simply like to outline some of the sources that can be used, at least in the Portuguese context, and some of the questions that might be asked in such a study.

As the regulations outlined earlier indicate, children abandoned at birth remained under the jurisdiction of the State well beyond infancy. At age seven, if they had not died, been reclaimed, or been officially adopted, they became wards of the magistrate of orphans (*juiz orfanológico*). Many of the children recorded on the exposto records that we examined who reached age seven apparently remained in the care of their ama (indicated on the register by the phrase "ficou com a ama"). Whether any subsidy continued is unclear. It is likely that the services of these children could be used in exchange for a commitment to care for them.

We were able to analyze a register begun in 1893 of children over age seven who were still under State care. Seventy-seven children were entered onto the register in January of that year, and the rest during the course of the year. Forty-nine of these children were boys and thirty-five were girls. At the time of registering, 26 percent were seven years old, 19 percent were eight, 19 percent were nine, 11 percent were ten, 15 percent were eleven, and 6 percent were twelve[12]. The remaining three children were thirteen, fifteen, and eighteen, and two of these had some physical deformity.

Five percent of the children were taken off the rolls at the age of thirteen, among them one who was reclaimed; 18 percent of these children were taken off the rolls at age fourteen; 12 percent were removed at fifteen; 5 percent were removed at sixteen; 17 percent were removed at seventeen; and 24 percent were removed at eighteen. Of the eleven children who were removed from the rolls at age twelve or under, three were reclaimed by their mothers, four – two boys and two girls – were sent into service, one was "adopted", one died, one went to Brazil, and the fate of one was not recorded. Finally, the six who remained on the rolls into their twenties and thirties were all invalids of some sort[13].

[12] Those above age seven were probably already in the care of the Casa. The book analyzed is the earliest available, and by all indications the first time that the whereabouts of children who had reached seven years of age were recorded.

[13] Later, the number of children listed as "inválida" or "desvalida" far outweighs

Among those who were taken off the rolls between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, three died before age 18, two were reclaimed by their mother, one remained with the foster mother at her expense, one went to a school for sailors, one into the infantry, and nine were employed as apprentices, in commerce, or in agricultural or domestic service. In the remaining fifty cases, the reason for removal was not given, but we can assume, especially among those children who left at seventeen or eighteen, that they had found some kind of self-sufficient employment and were no longer in need of public support or supervision. In the cases of children who were 'adopted' (perusal of legal documents will be necessary to fully understand the conditions of this process), the 'adopting' parent had to promise to "feed, clothe, and educate the child without subsidy as if he or she were their own".

In only two cases were men listed as the foster parent – both married peasants (*lavradores*) who probably took these young boys to help them on their farms. The rest were cared for by foster mothers. The age distribution and marital status of these foster mothers is given on Table 4. Single and married women seemed to have participated

TABLE 4

AGE AND MARITAL STATUS OF FOSTER MOTHERS
ON THE 1893 REGISTER FOR CHILDREN OVER SEVEN

	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	?	Tot. %
Single (N = 33)	1%	17%	10%	10%	2%			40%
Married (N = 29)	1%	10%	16%	6%		2%		35%
Widowed (N = 13)		4%	6%	2%		2%	1%	16%
Unknown (N = 7)		4%	1%		2%		1%	9%
Total N	2	28	27	15	4	4	2	
Total %	2%	34%	33%	18%	5%	5%	2%	

those labeled "exposto". Is this an indication that the State was redefining the functions of the Casa da Roda and extending its support to disabled, orphaned, and impoverished children in addition to abandoned children?

roughly equally in this fosterage system. Foster motherhood began after age thirty and was extended until late in the life cycle. In the case of some single women, they may have been retrieving an illegitimate child born when they were in their twenties.

Slightly more than one-third of these women were residents of the city of Viana do Castelo and almost all of them were listed as domestics and married. We take this as an indication of middle class status. Conversely, two-thirds of these foster mothers were of rural origin and the majority were of lower class status, working primarily as day laborers. The bulk of these day laborers were single. Rural women listed as either domestics or *lavradeiras*, that is of a slightly better social position, also served as foster mothers though to a lesser degree. These women were primarily married or widowed.

A number of issues that will merit further investigation emerge from this analysis. First, foster motherhood or 'dry nursing' appears to have been a viable income-producing activity for solitaries – single or widowed women who were living alone. It may have helped to sustain a portion of the population who faced a life of spinsterhood because of the generally unfavorable marriage market for women in nineteenth century northern Portugal (BRETTELL 1984, 1986). Second, foster children provided supplementary labor for married couples and widows, a fact that may explain the small proportion of either domestic or agricultural servants that are recorded on household lists for this region[14].

Although less systematic, some substantiation of these ideas can be derived from the examination of a range of other sources that contain information on the fate of children abandoned at the foundling wheel who survived to adolescence and adulthood. One of us (BRETTELL 1986) has carried out a local study of a parish in the district of Viana do Castelo. In the church records and other historical documents pertaining to this parish, expostos are occasionally mentioned. For example, in a will dated 1822 a childless widower named Lourenço Pereira refers to a young orphan (exposta) named Rosa Maria who had been

[14] In the registers of the town of Areosa, a young man named José Exposto who was born in 1793 is listed in 1830 as living with a steward and his wife and working as a "criado de lavoura". A systematic study of military records (*Ordenanças*) could be revealing in this regard.

living with him. Lourenço designated his nephew, João Pereira, Rosa Maria's husband, as his heir. Rosa Maria herself had died four years earlier, and Lourenço Pereira stipulated that if his nephew João were to remarry, his sole hiers would be the offspring of the marriage between João and Rosa Maria Exposta. Although we have not yet had the opportunity to make an 'adoptive' link in connection with this exposta, it seems reasonable to argue that the exposta Rosa Maria was viewed and treated as a natural child by this childless couple (the pseudo-kinship link reinforced by marriage with a legitimate nephew) and that her own children were viewed as legitimate grandchildren would be.

If this is true, then the purposes of the program described by Vaz (1848 : 24) are vindicated.

> (The rodas) aim to give to these beings, isolated in the world, not only a second mother, but also brothers and sisters, an adoptive father, a farm, a paternal homestead, in short, that which the misfortune of his birth deprived him. This is what happens especially in the village : the *engeitado* seated at the same table as the child of the house, indentifying himself with the condition of his hosts. Since his mouth could pronounce a few words, he became accustomed to saying, *our* house, *our* field, *our* hens.

In a region where age at marriage was late and where it was not uncommon to find childless couples, the distribution of children abandoned at the foundling wheel through a program of organized fosterage filled a definite void.

A second example is contained in the will of a spinster named Luisa Gonçalves Marinho who died in 1833. Luisa was forty-six at her death, one of five surviving children of Manuel José Marinho and Antónia Gonçalves. She designated her immediately elder sister Ana as her universal heir. In the process of naming other siblings, nieces, and nephews as recipients of certain sums of money she also mentioned a certain Margarida Exposta, an orphan living with her. To Margarida she left 60 : 000 reis in metal money, "a sum which she obliged her brother Manuel to bestow on her the day of her marriage or, if this did not occur before she reached twenty-five then at that age with interest counted from the day of Luisa's death". In addition, she left her sister and heir 40 : 000 reis and asked her to "take charge of Margarida as if she were her own daughter" and that Margarida, until she married or reached age twenty-five was to give her sister Maria the interest on the

60 : 000 reis to cover expenses. This case suggests that single women, whether as a wet nurse or a dry nurse, who accepted an exposto into their home also may have treated them as their own children. They had someone to keep them company and care for them and in return bestowed a legacy upon them at their death. In a society where rates of permanent female celibacy were extremely high, the links established between spinsters and expostos could have been very important.

The marriage records tend to indicate that some of these children grew up in the villages and were integrated as full-fledged members of the community, as were their children. They married and raised their own families there. They appear, however, to have been generally confined to the lower social groups of local village social structure.

While no census manuscripts survive in Portugal, lists kept by parish priests to keep track of Easter duties (*Róis da Desobriga* or *Róis dos Confessados*) recorded village households beginning with the head of household and then all members of that household and their relation to the household head. Expostos were included on these lists. In the list for 1850, one three-generation household headed by a widow contained two expostos, a young woman of 20 and a young man of 18. Another three-generation household included three expostos of undetermined age, two young men and a young woman. In a third three-generation household, a female exposto and two servants were listed as members. These expostos probably worked as domestic or agricultural servants, and some had great longevity in particular households. Their labor input may have been crucial at a certain stage of the life-cycle of the household. It is interesting that a labeling distinction between exposto and servant is maintained. However, this may not always have been the case.

As has been demonstrated, single women were also likely to take in expostos. On the 1899 *Rol da Desobriga* for Lanheses, an exposto named Paolo was living with Rosa Gonçalves, an unmarried mother whose daughters and a grandson were living with her that year. The *Matrícula das Amas* indicates that Rosa, a jornaleira, took Paulo in 1893 when she was forty-three and he was nine. She was paid to keep him until he was fourteen, but at sixteen he was still listed as a resident of her household. By 1907 however, he was no longer present. We do not know precisely why Rosa took in Paolo but the subsidy that she received to care for him for five years no doubt supplemented the paltry income of a jornaleira.

Clearly, the material presented in this section is simply meant to be suggestive of what we might learn about abandoned children in this region of Portugal by linking the records of the foundling home or of orphanages with records of the parishes themselves. In a primarily rural area such as the one we have described it seems quite apparent that those foundlings who survived infancy were distributed back into the countryside and contributed to the productive, reproductive, and emotional lives of the northwestern Portuguese peasant household.

Conclusion: Family Strategies and Public Welfare

Aquilino Ribeiro's (1957) fictional account of several generations of a Minhota family includes the story of an exposto named Telmo abandoned in the early nineteenth century. Telmo is the illegitimate son of an aristocrat, Luis de Azevedo, and Maria Montenegro, a servant in his household. Only after Telmo had been abandoned at the roda of Braga did Luis de Azevedo lose both his legitimate children. Preferring not to leave his property to a nephew, Luis de Azevedo undertakes a search for his illegitimate son Telmo. Telmo had been retrieved from the roda by a candlemaker whose wife was unable to have children of her own. They treated him as their son, and when confronted by the natural father claimed that losing Telmo would be like death. Although Telmo becomes Luis de Azevedo's legitimate heir, he maintains contact throughout his life with his foster parents who also designate him as their heir. The compromise satisfies both natural father and foster parents.

This story illustrates a number of family strategies associated with the abandonment and retrieval of children in nineteenth century northwestern Portugal. Telmo was taken to the roda because of the shame and embarressment that his illegitimate birth might have brought to an enobled family. Of course, as this paper has suggested, this was not the only reason for abandonment. Married, as well as single mothers abandoned children for reasons of penury, a motive made clear by many of the notes attached to these children when they were left at the roda. Where differences in the proportions of urban as opposed to rural women abandoning children can be determined, a higher rate of abandoment among urban women, particularly those who were single and working as servants in a town like Viana do Castelo, may have been the result of the absence of the kin and community support that

existed in the countryside and that made it easier for rural women to keep their illegitimate children.

The entire process of abandonment in northwestern Portugal has to be viewed in the context of a demographic regime where limitation of family reproduction occurred through the restriction of the number of women who were able to marry and the age at which they married rather than through contraception. Thus, not only were a significant number of women left outside the marriage market, but also fertility within marriage went unchecked. If more children than desired, whether legitimate or illegitimate, were produced, the roda provided a legal and humane solution.

This demographic regime of late marriage coupled with infant mortality (admittedly moderate in nineteenth century northwestern Portugal) equally resulted in a number of childless couples like the candlemaker and his wife, or couples who had an insufficient number of children to meet their labor demands. In this context, the roda served as a mechanism by which children could be redistributed in order to meet various family needs. These needs were of two sorts – emotional and economic – and they could have operated in conjunction with one another. The candlemaker and his wife were clearly motivated by a desire for a child to whom they could leave their property, but also from whom they could receive some emotional and social support in old age. For Luis de Azevedo, heirship was supreme. For Telmo's natural mother, who eventually married Luis de Azevedo, retrieving her own child was the major motivation. All of these motives emerge in the data and cases discussed in the paper.

The economic motives are, however, more complex than the single issue of heirship. A woman who served as either a wet or dry nurse may have been attracted by the salary associated with this occupation. Women who took children after age seven probably did so for a number of reasons depending to some extent on their social position. Middle class urban women might have been looking for a servant whereas the jornaleira may have viewed a foster child as potentially income-producing within the rural economy. Whatever the motivations for either abandoning or retrieving a child, the Casas da Roda clearly influenced behavior in nineteenth century northwestern Portugal. Expostos must be considered together with other facets of demographic and social life in this region.

It would seem that despite the criticism that emerged in the 1860s, there was, in general, in Portugal a rather liberal attitude toward child

abandonment. Funds were spent, eyes were turned when mothers cycled their children through the rodas, and expostos were to a large extent integrated into society if they were lucky enough to survive infancy and early childhood. The care of these children was recognized as being an important function of the State, and represents therefore, an early attempt at a form of welfare in a country that only recently has reached out to its rural populations to extend other forms of social support.

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