The 10th Century in Western Europe

Change and Continuity

edited by

Igor Santos Salazar
and Catarina Tente

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São Gens rock-cut graves necropolis from the 10th century. Celorico da Beira, Portugal. ©Danilo Pavone Câmara Municipal de Celorico da Beira.

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Introduction

The Early Middle Ages was one of the most astonishing political and social laboratories in Europe's history. Within this period, the 10th century represented a kind of "mistic" time: a century which was central in most of every interpretation of historical development, from the "crisis" of the Carolingian Empire or the formation of the English kingdom, to the "birth" of the *incastellamento* or the beginnings of Castile as Iberian political centre. In the last decades, historians and archaeologists of medieval society have become more aware, thanks to the influence of other social sciences, particularly anthropology and sociology, on the importance of much complex methodological approaches, such as theories on *scale change* and political and economic *coopetition*. Furthermore, the approach to the sources has change thanks to renewed and more critical interpretations: from the *linguistic turn* to the studies devoted to the memory. Finally, Archaeology has contributed also to the growth of our knowledge of early medieval societies and polities.

Bearing this in mind, the editors of this book organized two sessions on the 2018 Leeds International Medieval Congress devoted to "Change and continuity in 10th century western Europe". The first one was dedicated to *The resources of central authorities; the identities of local leaders*, focusing its interests mainly in written sources, while the second was archaeological record-oriented session titled *Archaeological record and historic explanation*. The aim of the Leed's sessions was to debate different societies and scales of analysis in the tenth century Western Europe, from both written sources and archeological records. In those days, some of the authors of the book presented their studies and a fruitful debate was created regarding the social, economic and political complexities on a continental scale. In the session dedicated to the archaeological record, Frode Iversen, from Kulturhistorisk museum, Universitetet i Oslo, presented a paper entitled *Viking elites in the tenth century*. Unfortunately, his text could not be included in this pages, which really impoverished the whole volume. Frode Iversen played a very relevant role in the advancement of studies on the Early Medieval Scandinavia, on which he published several titles. Frode will be missed. This book could be only dedicated to him.

Since 2018 we have invited other colleagues to contribute to the volume, and there were many who wanted to participate in this beautiful challenge. Sadly, the pandemic situation has delayed the publication of the book two years.

Including studies devoted to Iceland, Ireland, England, France, Portugal, Spain and Italy, the book brings new perspectives on the 10th century over several processes, embracing a variety of methodological approaches and geographical scales, and scrutinizing numerous and diverse types of sources, including archaeological findings along with textual evidences such as historical narratives, hagiographies, cartularies etc. The contributions to this volume have revise, challenge and enhance the existing scholarship on early medieval societies and its political and social complexities, while making readers aware of the wide-ranging and intertwined processes which defined change and continuity in tenth-century Europe.

Thus, the studies gathered in this volume address the dialogue between the different sources that support historical interpretations. A dialogue which is not always easy and faces many challenges. Moreover, those approaches show the complexities of analyzing various scales of a century in which possible to observe the actions of various actors (from the central authorities to the peasantry), whose interests were articulated along three axes: the forms of exercising power, the social articulation of the elites, and the relationship between central powers, local strengths, peasant agencies, and memory.

Finally, we would like to thank the authors for their work and for their willingness to participate in this volume. Our thanks also go to the Institute of Medieval Studies (Universidade NOVA de Lisboa) and to the *Marie Skłodowska Curie Action* CALOSEMA (agreement grant n. 748161) which supported the sessions celebrated at Leeds.

Special thanks must be given to the Departamento di Lettere e Filosofia of the Università degli Studi di Trento, which provided the means for the publication of this volume. Finally, we would like to thank the publisher Archeopress for their availability, speed of editing and publication, and to the scientific board of the HAS (Historical Archaeologies Series), being this book one of the first volumes of this new series.

Igor Santos Salazar and Catarina Tente

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Rulers and Resources in Early Medieval Iberia from c.800- c.1009: Umayyad state fiscality and Astur-Leonese landed politics compared

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Abstract

This chapter examines the chronology, development and incidence of taxation in al-Andalus in order to shed light on the resources available to the Umayyad emirs and (after 929) caliphs of Córdoba. It argues, in contradistinction with an established historiographical position that imagines efficient fiscal structures to have been imposed only during and after the rule of the 10th-century caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III, that by the 9th century the Umayyad state was already able to extract very significant amounts of taxation in both kind and coin from its Muslim and *dhimmī* communities. Finally, in order to set these findings in a broader context, this chapter offers a very brief review of the resources available to the Astur-Leonese kings with whom the Umayyads of Córdoba uneasily shared the peninsula.

Keywords

taxation; state infrastructure; fiscality; landed politics; comparative history

About the year 830, Louis the Pious sent a letter to the citizens of Mérida, in which he sympathized with the plight of the Emeritenses and drew attention to the cause of their suffering – unjust taxes and tributes [*iniustis censibus ac tributis*] – before offering them the tantalising prospect of relief at the hands of a Frankish army (Einhard 1899).

> We have heard of your troubles and various hardships, which you suffer because of the cruelty of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [II], who has many times oppressed you most violently with his excessive lust for your possessions, which he has indeed tried to wrest from you. We know that his father Abū al-'Āṣ [al-Ḥakam I] did much the same, for by imposing unjust taxes, he compelled you to make payments to him though you were not in his debt. Thus he made enemies out of his friends, and disobedient, unruly types out of those obedient to him, since he undertook to steal away your freedom and to burden and humiliate you with unjust taxes and tributes [*iniustis censibus ac tributis*] ...We therefore wish, with the help of omnipotent God, to send our army to the [Spanish] March next summer.

This rather unexpected missive poses many problems with respect to its survival and date of composition (seemingly assigned by its editor in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*), but there are no obvious reasons to doubt its authenticity. It reaches us in the sole surviving manuscript (Paris, B.N., lat. 11379) of a collection of the letters of Einhard and has attracted some, albeit relatively little, scholarly attention. Paul Dutton (Dutton 2004: 144) has characterised the letter as 'subversive' and reflected upon whether we might call it a 'secret letter' (although its rhetorical qualities perhaps suggest otherwise, and in any case it is hardly a shining example of subtle diplomacy, much less sophisticated cryptography). Ann Christys (Christys 2002b: 39) has suggested that the letter was perhaps a response to a call for help from the citizenry of Mérida, a conurbation we know from the Arabic sources (James 2009:118) to have been a hotbed of dissent and factionalism for much of the 9th century (Salvatierra and Canto 2008:72-3; Collins 2012: 39-45), its leading citizens frequently at odds with their theoretical superiors in Córdoba. Jonathan Conant (2014) has persuasively set out the case for seeing Louis's letter as a wily manoeuvre in a bigger political game, the Carolingians at the time of the letter's writing finding themselves embroiled in something of a to-and-fro with the emirate of Córdoba over control of the Catalan March. Conant was surely right to argue that the letter allowed a beleaguered Louis the Pious to project Carolingian – and by extension, his own – power beyond the borders of his kingdom; how useful, then, to draw upon that old chestnut – unfair taxes – in order to ratchet up the rhetoric.

There has been little discussion, though, of the actual cause – if we are to believe Louis the Pious – of the complaint of the Emeritenses: burdensome taxation. To some degree, this is unsurprising. Historians tend to interpret complaints about ruinous taxation as literary conceits designed to paint a dismal picture of the grasping hand of government and its agents: capricious, corrupt, and unfair. After all, protestations of being overloaded with taxation, of longing to hide from the tax-collector, perhaps even to do him mischief, are a commonplace of late Roman and early medieval literature, the roots of which are arguably found in Jesus's trip to the house of Zacchaeus in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 19: 1-10). To list just two further examples, consider Ammianus Marcellinus's wry observation (*Res Gestae*, xxxi. 6. 6) that the Visigothic uprising of 376 came about because the Goths 'could no longer endure the heavy burden of taxes', or the weary expostulations of Salvian of Marseille (*De gubernatione Dei*, v. 7; for an English translation of *The Governance of God* [in *Selected Writings*], see O'Sullivan, v. 7), who lamented the 'incessant and even continuous destruction' caused by 'public tax levies'. In these examples, and indeed in Louis the Pious's letter, punitive taxation appears as a harbinger of a greater and more persistent structural evil – the state's desire to menace the prosperity and appropriate the resources of its citizens.

But although Louis the Pious's letter to the citizens of Mérida can hardly be considered decisive proof of the emirate's imposition of *iniustis censibus ac tributis*, a number of other sources – including, most notably, a series of excerpted tax registers of early 9th-century date, preserved by the 11th-century Andalusi geographer Al-'Udhrī (al-Ahwānī 1965; Monés 1957; Barceló 1984) – provide detailed fiscal information on taxation in Umayyad Spain which suggest that the state's capacity to raise revenue in tax outstripped that of any other polity in early medieval western Europe. These sources are cumulatively compelling in the picture they paint of a society in which Muslim and *dhimmī*, though forced to pay different *kinds* of tax to the state (tax being imposed upon the basis of faith), were both subjected to very great fiscal exactions from the first half of the 9th century. This realisation changes our perception of Louis's letter and at the very least makes it imperative that we think again before we dismiss it out of hand as so much hot air, the febrile ramblings of an emperor looking to project his power far and wide. Indeed we know that Louis's court enjoyed close diplomatic relations with the rulers of al-Andalus, and we can posit that his diplomats were relatively well informed about events in the Iberian Peninsula (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAlī Ḥajjī 1970; Sénac 2002).

The questions raised by a more sympathetic reading of Louis's letter do not stop there. This chapter aims to address one of those questions by commenting on the structural significance of resources in the construction of political authority in early medieval Iberia. It will do so by focusing primarily on al-Andalus, and on tax, because this latter was the principal resource of the Umayyad emirs and, from 929, the caliphs, of Córdoba. But it will also look to contextualise Andalusi developments by comparing them with an evaluation of the much more limited resources available in the northern Christian world of Iberia, the crucible of the *Reconquista*, where fiscal and governmental infrastructure of any real kind was in much shorter supply. The much more limited resources at the disposal of the kings of Asturias-León in northern Spain in the 9th and 10th centuries stands out in sharp relief when set against the background of developments in al-Andalus. But a comparison of two states of such differing structural complexity serves a purpose beyond mere interest: it allows us to see how the collection and disbursal of resources was central not just to an early medieval state's ability to project its power, but to its capacity to conceptualise and display its public persona. For the Umayyad emirs and caliphs of al-Andalus, state infrastructure, underpinned by capillary fiscality, and 'made public' by an elaborate culture of hierarchy and ceremonial (Safran, 2000), was the very basis of government and self-identity; for the Christian kings of the north, who were unable to collect and distribute resources on a significant scale, the public arena became little more than a stage for political legitimation and justice. Resources were integral, in short, to the stability and reach of government, but also to its presentation.

Al-Andalus: Fiscal Structures and Political Stability

The public arena in al-Andalus operated on a scale that western medievalists, programmed to look to the Carolingians for economic revival in the 9th century and thereafter, often fail to appreciate. By any definition, the Umayyad polity was a functioning state of some sophistication: fiscal receipts were estimated in gold *dīnārs*, as were the salaries of administrative agents, the payments of troops, and the taxes on luxury items and goods (Canto and Manzano Moreno 2020: 182). Such was the complexity of the Andalusi fiscal system that, although ubiquitous in written documents, the *dīnār* was used primarily as an accounting unit which corresponded to a fixed amount of real and circulating silver *dirhams* (Canto and Manzano 2020:182-83), one *dīnār* thought to be worth about eight *dirhams*. It is clear that this is not merely a reflection of the wishful thinking of our chroniclers, historians and geographers. The wide circulation of Umayyad Andalusi *dirhams* is witnessed by dozens of hoards from the late 8th and early 9th century. In contrast to the early period – the initial phase of the conquest after 711 – these hoards contain almost no coins from Oriental or North African workshops, but consist of coins minted overwhelmingly in al-Andalus (Canto and Marsal Moyano 1988). In terms of numbers, emiral hoards regularly contain several hundred coins. In short, this was a highly monetised economy in which the structures of politics and the movement of goods had a substantial fiscal motor.

Evidence for tax-raising is relatively abundant too, if anecdotal. References begin as early as the Latin *Chronicle of 754*, the principal near-contemporary source on the conquest and its aftermath. This text informs us (López Pereira 2009: §62) that one of the very first governors of the province, al-Ḥurr (716-19), restored property to the Christians in a move designed to boost revenue by making their estates taxable (López Pereira 2009: §64: 'resculas pacificas Christianis ob vectigalia thesauris publicis inferenda instaurat'). Shortly after, the governor al-Samḥ (718-21) arranged the first tax census of al-Andalus (López Pereira 2009: §69; Barceló 1979: 252), and one of his successors, ʽAnbasa, doubled the taxes paid by Christians in 721 (López Pereira 2009: §74), his thinking perhaps influenced by the information that al-Samḥ's census had provided. Information-gathering exercises of this kind were essential to effective taxation, and Manzano Moreno (2010, p. 589) has noted that censuses took place in al-Andalus at intervals of fifteen years (after al-Samḥ's first census), in accordance with standard practice elsewhere in the Islamic empire. The much-feared governor ʿUqba ibn al-Ḥajjāj (734-40) oversaw one of these censuses and also took pains to enrich the fisc (Lopez Pereira, 2009, §82: 'fiscum ex diversis occasionibus promptissime ditat'). These signs point to the fact that the conquest of 711 was not the result of mere adventurism, but a carefully planned and executed operation, the costs of which had to be justified.

Be that as it may, just a couple of decades after the conquest, 'the foundations of the fiscal administration of this territory had already been laid' (Manzano Moreno 2010: 592; Chalmeta 1994), a truly impressive feat. Christians living in the Asturian kingdom certainly seem to have associated the early stages of the conquest with fiscal oppression, the subject peoples of al-Andalus – we are told – paying tax 'to the king of Babylon' for several years already by 714 (Gil *et al.* 1985: *CAIII*, §8: 'pluribis annis Bavilonico regi tribute persolberunt'). Admittedly, narrative sources, some – such as the late 9th century *Chronicle of Alfonso III* – characterised by a marked agenda, play a predominant role in our vision of events on the ground, but the picture they paint can at least be compared with that provided by a treaty struck in the wake of the conquest between the Visigothic potentate Theodomir, a lord of the region of Murcia, and the conquerors. Theodomir was left *in situ* by his new masters, his religious freedom unmolested, on the condition that he pay tribute, an arrangement that must have been replicated elsewhere. All the same, maintaining the obedience of taxpayers beyond Córdoba was to prove a continual thorn in the side of the governing class, whose presence in the peripheries called for strategic measures of no little logistical complexity. The first major step towards the fiscal integration of the regions lying beyond Córdoba was taken when detachments of the Syrian army (*jund*), summoned to the West to quell the rebellious Berber populations challenging Umayyad authority in North Africa, were settled as quasi-functionaries and tax-collectors (Manzano Moreno1993: 330-31) throughout al-Andalus in the 750s. This must have stimulated *dirham* production, since this was to be the principal coin in which these troops were paid. Certainly, within a generation or two, silver *dirhams* were being produced on an impressive scale: Al-Bakrī (in Lévi-Provençal 1938: 250), for example, claimed that the Córdoba district alone furnished an annual total of 142,000 *dīnārs*, that is, approximately 1,136,000 *dirhams*, during the reign of al-Ḥakam I (r. 796-822).

The foregoing shows that the early governors of al-Andalus took steps to raise tax from very shortly after the conquest, though the constant references to new initiatives and redoubled efforts may point to the fact that, for all their travails, the first few governors of al-Andalus considered their takings 'a poor fiscal harvest' (Manzano Moreno 2010: 588). Yet a few turning points with regard to structural complexity can also be identified, and it is clear enough that the first half of the 9th century was a period of fiscal consolidation. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II (r. 822-852), the scourge of the citizens of Mérida, set about consolidating his own position as well as the fiscal foundations of the state by overseeing the increased production of silver *dirhams* and the creation of an expanded class of state functionaries, including treasurers (*khuzzān*) (Kennedy 1996: 51). The 11th-century historian Ibn Ḥayyān (2001: 182), apparently reproducing facts derived from the works of earlier writers, claims that annual tax income almost doubled under ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II, reaching one million *dīnārs* annually, far outstripping the 600,000 *dīnārs* collected on a yearly basis during the rule of his father al-Ḥakam (r. 796-822). Such prosperity was predicated upon political stability however, and most historians accept that by the late 9th century, a period of *fitna* ('unrest', 'revolt') had extended throughout al-Andalus such that 'disintegration of the emirate was far advanced' (Kennedy 1995: 270), leaving state infrastructure moribund.

We should not imagine, however, as some historians mistakenly have, that the crisis of the late 9th century reveals a state *without* fiscal infrastructure, and our sources indeed caution against such a view. The pioneering studies of Pedro Chalmeta (1992), Miquel Barceló (1984), and, more recently, Manuel Acién and Eduardo Manzano Moreno (2009), have made it abundantly clear that state fiscality had already reached levels of complexity in Umayyad Iberia by 850 that would only be matched in the entire Mediterranean by the Byzantine Empire. Al-'Udhrī's excerpted tax registers, to which we shall return shortly, provide information on taxes levied in the 9th century in the *kūras* of Córdoba and several outlying regional centres, and they demonstrate that at the very least fiscal infrastructure facilitating tax collection was robust and extensive, possibly as early as the 820s (Barceló 1984: 126).

In the light of this knowledge, perhaps we most persuasively explain the collapse of the emirate's authority in the final decades of the 9th century by emphasising that it was not due to the structural underdevelopment of its fiscal infrastructure but simply its desuetude. In other words, tax receipts fell as a direct result of the state's faltering ideological hold over regional subordinates, a state of affairs unambiguously attested in the sources (Collins 2012: 48-9), for it was these 'link men' in the provinces that the state relied upon to channel resources to the centre. Indeed it has been persuasively argued that it was the weight of taxation, or at least its attempted imposition upon reluctant peripheral powerbrokers, that provoked rebellion in the outlying zones of al-Andalus from *c.* 880 to 920 (Marín-Guzmán 1995: *passim*). In this light, the almost total disappearance of minting during the reigns of al-

Mundhir (886-88) and ʿAbd Allāh (888-912) should be interpreted as the reflection of a political crisis (Canto, 1991, p.111), not, *stricto sensu*, an economic one.

This crisis would only be remedied when ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III (r. 912-929 as emir; 929-961 as caliph) re-established political control in the 910s and 920s. Once he had achieved this (partly thanks to a series of military campaigns), he turned to stabilising the apparatus and mechanisms of state fiscality. Quite apart from the practical benefits they brought, these measures were also the principal means of projecting central authority within and beyond Córdoba: subsequently, minting resumed and tax receipts flowed to the centre on an unprecedented scale. Our sources are clear on the effects of this renewed commitment to state-imposed fiscality: Ibn Ḥayyān (1981: 185-86) tells us somewhat approvingly that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III's major contribution to fiscal centralisation was the creation of a new mint and the appointment of a string of capable and ambitious men (Canto 1986-87) to the office of 'prefect of the mint' (ṣāḥib al-sikka). Ibn Ḥawqal (1967: 108), writing in the 10th century, states that in 951 the Andalusi state's *jibāya*, or total takings in taxation, equalled not less than the astonishing sum of 20,000,000 *dīnārs*. Ibn ʿIdhārī (in Dozy 1951: 231-32), writing in the 13th century, revises that figure down to 5,480,000 *dīnārs*, plus 765,000 *dīnārs* recouped as tax on market transactions (*zakāt al-sūq*), giving us a ballpark figure of between six and six and a half million *dīnārs*, a figure thought to be wholly reasonable by leading commentators and numismatists (Barceló 1984; Salvatierra and Canto, 2008: 90).

Tax in Umayyad Iberia

So much for the scale of state revenue; let us now focus on the workings of the fiscal system. Perhaps surprisingly, we can actually say a reasonable amount about the forms that fiscal levies took, as well as the variety and incidence of them. The crucial distinction between taxes of different kinds was that some were applied only to the Muslim community, while other burdens fell solely upon the *dhimmī*. Muslims paid the *'ushr*, a tithe levied in kind, collected by an official known as the *qābiḍ* (Chalmeta 1992: 745). It was calculated on the basis of the amount that each fiscal subject actually produced and was not, as such, a land tax, meaning that Muslims who chose not to cultivate their lands for a year would not be liable to pay this particular exaction. The *'ushr* formed one part of the *zakāt*, a tax that was in fact a religious obligation demanded of all Muslims. It was complemented, at least on occasion, by the *ṭabl*, which was levied in coin, the *'ushr* and *ṭabl* between them forming the total *zakāt* owed by each and every given Muslim. The *ṭabl* was an orthodox land tax, originally imposed – according to Barceló (1984: 126) and Chalmeta (1992: 747) – on converts to Islam (*muwalladūn*). It was probably designed to replicate the *kharāj* (Khazna Katbi, 2010), a land tax levied in coin which was paid by *dhimmī*. In other words, converts to Islam would cease to the pay the *kharāj* but would thereafter be expected to pay the *ṭabl* alongside the *'ushr*. When one considers that *dhimmī* were also obliged to pay a capitation tax (*jizya*), collected by the head of the local community (a bishop, or a *qūmis*), and that Muslims were potentially liable to pay tax a) on their livestock (*ṣadaqa*), b) to be excused from the *jihād* (*nāḍḍ*), or c) for the privilege of hunting with falcons (*bayzara*), something of the complexity of the fiscal system becomes apparent.

This complexity is best demonstrated however by an examination of the information provided to us by Al-'Udhrī (1003-85), a jurist and geographer from Almería in south-eastern Spain. Al-'Udhrī's *Kitāb tarṣī' al-akhbār wa-tanwī' al-athār* contains information excerpted from a fiscal register (*magram*) which describes important aspects of tax-collection in twelve districts (*iqlīm*) of the *kūra* of Córdoba during the emirates of al-Ḥakam I and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II. Fiscal liability within this scheme seems to have fallen on the village communities (*qaryah;* modern Castilian*, alquería(s))* in each district, although whether this burden was shared equally is unknown and perhaps unlikely. For the kūra of Córdoba, thanks to Al-'Udhrī, we know about the tax affairs of 773 villages (Barceló 1984: 127-128). Practically half (49.68%) of the amount of state revenue collected in coin from the villages in the rural districts of Córdoba came from payments made by those wishing to avoid military service *(nāḍḍ);* alongside this, the land tax *(ṭabl)* accounted for 45.61%, and minor taxes made up just shy of 5% of the total (Barceló, 1984:129).

In real terms these percentages translate to very significant amounts of tax, as Eduardo Manzano Moreno has convincingly shown (2018: 414) by examining in detail the Cordovan *iqlīm* of al-Qaṣab (listed in Al-Udhrī's register), where 'the amount of annual tax estimated in cash amounted to more than 7,660 *dīnārs* (around 61,300 *dirhams*), an average of about 712 *dirhams* per village'. In other words, this far from negligible sum was collected in just one district of the *kūra* of Córdoba, albeit a district comprised of 87 villages. This amount of taxation in coin was compounded by taxation in kind, the scale of which can be appreciated by the details provided by Al-Udhrī, who tells us that 56 of the 87 villages within the *iqlīm* of al-Qaṣab (presumably populated entirely or largely by Muslims) were responsible for paying annual quantities of *'ushr* equalling 142 *mudd* (1 *mudd* = approximately 0.8kgs) in wheat and 111 *mudd* in barley. Chalmeta (1992: 746) has shown that the twelve *kūra* of Córdoba listed in Al-Udhrī's account paid more than 8000 *mudd* in cereal taxation alone, and one must wonder, given the proximity of these rural districts to the city of Córdoba, whether these resources fed the urban population of the emiral capital.

Thanks to information that this same writer provides for the fiscal arrangements of a handful of other southern *kūras* [Morón, Niebla, Shiḏūna (Jerez), Sevilla, Algeciras, and Ilbīra (Elvira, Granada)], we can contextualise these figures to some extent, although they do not allow for like-for-like comparison. Nonetheless, they seem to imply that estimation of the tax burden for a given area corresponded to census and survey work on the ground that reflected population and settlement density. So while Algeciras's annual tax income in coin was estimated at the startlingly precise but relatively modest figure of 18,973 *dinars* and 6 *dirhams*, more populous and prosperous districts paid much higher amounts, as the following entry from Al-Udhrī makes plain (Sánchez Martínez 1975-76: 67-8):

> During the reign of al-Ḥakam and his son ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [II], fiscal income from the *kūra* of Elvira reached 109,603 *dīnārs*, 1000 pounds of silk, and 1000 pounds of safflower [a dye used in the textile industry]. Totals from the mines were 42,000 *dīnārs*, from the mills 1000 *dīnārs*, and 1,200 barrels of oil.

The figures provided by the register are imperfect and we should perhaps not place quite the confidence in them that Barceló did when calculating total amounts of revenue flooding into the state's coffers, but even so, the general impression is unmistakable: fiscal intervention in the first half of the 9th century was impressive in the uniformity of its reach, *'ushr*, *nāḍḍ*, *ṭabl*, *ṣadaqa* and *bayzara* (or some combination thereof) featuring among the imposts paid by villagers across the entire *kūra* of Córdoba in the first half of the 9th century. Furthermore, as we have indeed seen, significant sums were amassed elsewhere too: the 109,063 *dīnārs* from the *kūra* of Ilbīra equalled something in the order of 875,000 *dirhams*. That these burdens led to disputes between individual tax-payers and the wider community is made clear by the surviving notarial formularies which deal with, among other matters, precisely how to resolve such problems in line with Koranic injunction (Chalmeta and Corriente 1983; Guichard and Lagardère 1990; García Sanjuan 2007: 424-28).

What though of the *dhimmī,* who theoretically paid *kharāj* and *jizya?* Our information on the exactions demanded of Christians and Jews is meagre (Chalmeta 1992: 745), perhaps because the fiscal arrangements pertaining to them were of little interest to Muslim writers. *Dhimmī* may too have had their tax affairs recorded in separate registers, further complicating matters. There are reasons to believe, however, that by the middle of the 9th century, the fiscal pressure on *dhimmī* was considerably greater than that placed on the Muslims (Salvatierra and Canto, 2008: 52; Barceló 1984:147). For a start, individual persons of non-Muslim faith were counted for tax purposes as individual fiscal subjects; so whereas fiscal pressure insofar as it pertained to Muslims fell on the entire village (*qaryah*) in which they lived, Christians and

Jews each paid a poll tax (*jizya*), in addition to a fixed land tax (*kharāj*). Christian apologetic literature from the middle of the 9th century, while clearly unimpressed with the effects of Muslim suzerainty in *Hispania*, nonetheless provides some useful information on these particulars. Leovigildus (in Gil 1973 vol. 2: 668), author of a stirring tract on the 'Habit of Clerics' (*Liber de Habitu Clericorum*), decried the monthly (not annual) tax burden that befell Christians ('aut inquisitio censuum vectigalis, quod omni lunari mense pro Christi nomine solbere cogimur'), as indeed did Eulogius (in Gil 1973 vol. 2: 385), famed martyr and curmudgeon, who lamented the tax demanded of his coreligionists by the Muslim authorities 'at monthly intervals' ('lunariter') (Tieszen 2013: 101). We might also consider the hostility with which Samson, abbot of St Zoilus, replied *c.*864 to Bishop Hostigesis of Malaga's accusation that he (Samson) had strayed from doctrinal acceptability in his teachings. This response focused on two of Hostigesis's supposed shortcomings. The first of these was Hostigesis's imperfect command of Latin, a consequence perhaps of the shallow collaborationism that Paulus Alvarus (in Gil 1973 vol. 1: 270-314), acolyte of Eulogius, also identified as a major social malady of the age. The second – which really put Hostigesis beyond the pale – was his involvement in the creation of a census of Christians in his diocese (in Gil 1973 vol. 2: 551), which he later handed over to the Muslim authorities so that they might more effectively tax *dhimmī.*

It would be easy to dismiss these concerns as trumped-up but insubstantial charges which reflect nothing more than the neuroses of Christian churchmen perturbed by the changing world around them (Coope 1995), but to do so would be a mistake (Fernández Félix and Fierro 2000). A sense of the building pressure of state fiscality is patent in the few Latin sources we have from mid-9th-century al-Andalus, a picture which at least accords with what know of the reign of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II. Moreover, the one piece of evidence we have which attempts to quantify the tax burden of the Christians, this time from the reign of Muḥammad (r. 852-886), suggests that they were subjected to extremely significant fiscal levies. In his Preface to his *Apologeticus II* (in Gil 1973 vol. 2: 554), the aforementioned Samson claims that all Christians in the 'patrician city' (that is, Córdoba), were obliged to meet the sum of 100,000 *dīnārs* ('omnes Xpianos prefate urbis patricie in centum milia solidos dari sibe postulavit a rege'), some 800,000 *dirhams*, a figure comparable with that demanded of all of the inhabitants of the entire *kūra* of Ilbīra. Barceló (1984: 134, 147), extrapolating from his own calculations, argues that the *dhimmī* of Córdoba paid something in the order of three times the amount of fiscal dues than the inhabitants of the Muslim villages ('alquerías musulmanas'). Clearly, our evidence is fragmentary and patchy, but it is not nugatory, and it provides a context in which the putative suffering of the Emeritenses that Louis the Pious aimed to remedy may not have been so far-fetched after all. And in this adventurous spirit, perhaps we might even speculate that the 9th-century Martyr Movement (Coope 1995; Wolf 1988, 2019; Sahner 2018) – when nearly 50 or so Cordovan Christians, many of them landowners, sought martyrdom and with it escape from the desperate straits in which they found themselves, were worrying not only about their souls, but on meeting the tax burden under which they, and their coreligionists in Mérida toiled.

North by Northwest

What, by way of very brief comparison, can we say about the resources enjoyed by the rulers of the northern Christian kingdoms? Frustratingly little. Even the origins of the kingdoms are shrouded in myth (Besga Marroquín 2000). Early territorial gains, according to a cycle of Latin chronicles produced in or near the Asturian royal court (Gil *et al.*, 1985), probably in the last few years of the 9th century, were made thanks to the activities of raiding parties, apparently despatched with royal sanction (Isla Frez 2002: 15-20). Lists of settlements apparently taken and annexed by the Asturian kingdom might well reflect wishful thinking more than concrete reality but whether one accepts this or not, encounters between Asturian agents and – say – local strongmen in Galicia or Castile, were likely contested, and the chronicles certainly offer hints in this direction (dressing up resistance as revolt or rebellion); in short, the integration of areas on the fringes of the kingdom as it grew must have depended on the co-option of local elites by Asturian agents (Isla Frez 2015; Estepa Díez 1991). Relationships of patronage were one manifestation of this process. Land grants also followed, and can be tracked in the charters, as kings awarded regional followers the rights to land which such followers might, admittedly, have considered their own anyway, the diplomatic niceties of the documents hinting at the complexities and inevitable conflicts that such take-overs always occasion. The sum total of royal lands, let alone its productivity, can only be guessed at, since no census information or anything similarly useful survives (and was likely never produced). Pinning down the rhythm of such developments as we can locate in the sources is therefore beyond us but a recent study draws our attention to the period running from about 850 to 950, a century which seems to have seen royal holdings increase (Martín Viso 2019).

The wider economy remains hard to reconstruct. Recent contributions to the economic history of northern Spain by Wendy Davies (2002), and Alberto Canto and Eduardo Manzano Moreno (2020), suggest that while metal-based notions of value were known and used to varying degrees across the Christian north, there may well have been more coin washing about than was once thought. *Solidi* were used as an accounting unit, and some silver, described as 'de argenteos' or just 'argenzos', clearly circulated; Canto and Manzano Moreno (2020) have recently argued that where they appear in charters these *solidos/solidi de argenteos* were references to the *dinar darāhīm*, the ideal accounting unit of the Andalusi south. From this we must suppose that some of the millions of Andalusi coins in circulation made their way to the north; as did, presumably, their accounting measures – a sure sign of the need to document and quantify growing agricultural surpluses in future studies. A note of caution to sound here, of course, relates to the scarcity of coin hoards found in these northern territories, but there are, on the other hand, further documentary indications of increasing economic complexity and, following in its wake, increasing social stratification, a process which seems to have picked up pace in the 10th century.

For example, the expansion of cereal cultivation in this period is clear in practically all of the northern areas for which we have documentation. There is plenty of evidence of land being brought into use or else repurposed. I have recently argued (Portass 2017) for the existence of a dynamic peasant land market in parts of Galicia and Cantabria – a world in which exchange was commonplace, its very ubiquity aiding the process by which large institutions would eventually make inroads into peasant holdings. Monasteries tried to formalise such arrangements by means of written contract, but although there is occasional reference to the rents imposed by these institutions, they are surprisingly scarce in the charters. As is perhaps to be expected, those who worked properties owned by the king were likely to pay a tribute of some sort too: in 968 Ramiro III and his aunt Elvira gave Rosendo of Celanova (Sáez and Sáez 1996-2006 vol. 2: 152-54), who happened to be her uncle, the 'uilla quam dicunt Gallecos', plus another village named Requeixo, where Celanova already owned salt-pans and 'homines persolvant censum quod regi usu soliti fuerunt persolvere.' The term *villa*, it has recently been hypothesized, may have indeed sometimes referred to a unit of tributary management, aiding the collection and storage of renders (Carvajal Castro 2019).

But where monasteries were clearly rich, was some of this wealth funnelled back to the centre (via proxies) as taxation? There is little sign of it, and this reality must have limited the political compass of Astur-Leonese kings. However, the crucial thing here is to remember that tangible resources were but one part of a more complex game. The king would likely consent to alienating some of his land (losing the resources it brought with it), if it meant forging relationships with the greater lords of his wider kingdom. By the same token, links to the king, if peaceable, were clearly of benefit to local aristocrats, some of whom held honorific titles or were charged with the administration of one or more of the kingdom's counties ('comitatus'; terms like 'mandationes' or 'commissa' may have implied more or less the same thing). These privileges (Sánchez-Albornoz 1972; Estepa Díez 1991; Davies 2020) brought genuine material advantage as well as prestige: an example from 949 (Sáez and Sáez 1996-2006 vol. 2: 49-51) saw Ramiro II award Celanova 'omne censo quod persolvere consuetas erant in usu vel debito regis'.

Just how robust such measures were cannot be known with any certainty, but the putative survival in parts of Galicia of fiscal exactions based on late Roman precedent – the *tributum quadragesimale* discussed by Sánchez-Albornoz in an influential paper (1951) – poses the problem of why Roman-vintage imposts appear in 10th-century documents having been absent from Asturian documentary contexts theretofore. An absence of evidence, perhaps? Or the artful use of language designed to give the impression of stable fiscal structures, unaltered since time immemorial? Whatever the case may be, archaizing terminology of this kind points to the existence of an aristocratic class in the Atlantic north-west firmly embedded in Asturian structures by the early 10th century, and perhaps characterised by a strikingly conservative cast of mind, a notion mooted in more recent literature (Portass 2013).

Evidence for urban prosperity before 1000 is extremely thin (Gautier Dalché 1979; Estepa Díez 1978; López Alsina 1988). Artisanal goods, ceramics and textiles seem to come mostly from al-Andalus, which manufactured such objects from the 9th century on an entirely different scale to anything seen in the north (Rodríguez Peinado 2012; Gutiérrez González and Miguel Hernández 2009). Yet we know little of whether customs duties were involved in their arrival in the north in this period, and by the standards of much of Western Europe the urban market of northern Spain was somewhat underdeveloped (Sánchez-Albornoz 1965). The Fuero of León (1017) (García-Gallo 1969) tells us that the city's inhabitants were to hold a market on Wednesdays, but little more than that.

So, although schematically drawn for the purposes of this short paper, the overall picture in the north is one of very slowly increasing economic complexity; the prevalence of rent-taking (which we must surmise was more extensive than the documents would suggest); and the near although not total absence of centrally sanctioned taxes. One could theorise here along the lines of Wickham's (2005) distinction between tax-based and land-based societies, Christian northern Spain before the year 1000 being closer to the latter; its kings made fairly desultory attempts to collect tribute when and where they could, but to talk of fiscal demand would be misleading. Ready exchange and simple commerce were a feature of this society, but there was no single body capable of imposing systematic taxation on any meaningful scale. This fits with what we know about the kingdom if we look at its structures from a more top-down perspective too (Carvajal Castro 2017): there was no central bureaucracy as such; and there were few, if any, salaried officials, at the royal court. This relative lack of resources limited the capacity of a series of kings to compete with the Umayyad powers to the south. And though the Asturian kings and their chroniclers, not to mention later commentators, have been obsessed with recycling and promoting the idea that a Visigothic substratum persisted in the Christian kingdoms of early medieval Iberia, it is ironic that in the Umayyad state's implementation of a sophisticated tax-raising apparatus and salaried bureaucracy (Banaji, 2010), it is to Córdoba and not Oviedo that we must look to find the clearest legacy of late antique government in early medieval Hispania.

Conclusion

In sum, the successful implantation of the fiscal infrastructure of the Umayyad state began in the 9th century, only to be interrupted by the late 9th-century crisis. It was not brought into being *ex nihilo* by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III, whose efforts instead betoken an attempt to reinstate the state's political authority by expanding the already extensive tax-raising capacities of his forebears. Al-Udhri's tax register testifies eloquently to the substantial fiscal levies collected by the state in the early and mid-9th century. In this light, Louis the Pious's letter, whether a shot in the dark or a carefully considered diplomatic play based on accurate intelligence, may well have hit closer to home with its intended audience (if it ever reached them) than historians imagine. In any case, his contemporary, al-Ḥakam I, father of the putative author of the Emeritenses' humiliation, was in no doubt about the basis of his power, reminding his son ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II (in Makki and Corriente 2001:128-29) that 'money is the basis of all your power, conserve it, taking it from legitimate sources, and spend it justly, since it is akin to the soul of the kingdom which indeed governs its body.'

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Constructing Christian Polities in Northwestern Iberia (711-1109): an overview[1]

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Abstract

This very general overview of the most important changes that affected the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula Christian rulership, roughly from 711 to 1109, is intended to give a framework for the more detailed study of 10th century Western Iberia. For that purpose, it looks at the ways in which the Christian political entities shaped themselves against a background of authonomous communities, local and supra local powers and elites and specific political and economic realities, in two different sections. The first one, looking at the period that runs from the beginnings of the Muslim rulership in the Iberian Peninsula to the beginnings of the Cordoban Caliphate, and the adoption of León as *civitas regia*, examines the ways in which the several powers in place have had to negotiate their respective places and status with one another, and the resulting diverse political forms, still open to many possible outcomes. The second section approaches the "new deals" brought into the territories under Christian control as the reinforcement of the Asturian Kingship grew hand in hand with quite a successful conquest of the territory, and as a consequence of the taking over of the Leonese Kingdom by Fernando I and his successors. Their new ways found for connecting with both the people and the territories under their dominion were to impress upon the whole land new forms of political alliance. The extraordinary amplification of the territories under their rulership, and the integration of Muslim towns in their dominions, the capacity to attract and incorporate local magnates as allies, as well as others coming from beyond the Pyrenees -whether noblemen or churchmen with their reforming inclinations- would transform the ways in which power was to be exercised and reshape the political structure.

Keywords

Christian Polities; Royal power; magnates and local elites; 9th-11th centuries; Iberian Peninsula

As so many authors have been showing since the 1990s, it would only be from the times of Alfonso III (866-910) onwards, that the until then self-styled Asturian Kings began consolidating a polity that had so far been an almost unnatural political construct in north-western Iberia: kingship. For this to happen, it would be necessary for the recently created and still not sufficiently legitimized "Kingdom of Oviedo", just as much as for the "Asturian kings", to embody the capacity of leading a successful conquest towards South, East and West, and to imprint its power on the social, religious, and economic scenarios over which they badly needed to ascertain their right to rule. In other words, the need to articulate royal power with the pre-existing multi-layered social, economical and political reality of the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula during the 8th and 9th centuries seems to have taken up entirely

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the agenda of the emerging royal rulers, from creating their own power networks, to constructing legitimating strategies that would support their rights in theoretical terms.[2]

The 10th and 11th centuries brought in an altogether different scheme of things: "new deals" for the territories, reflected in the permanent negotiation between new and old powers and their respective forms of adapting and adopting the social and economic dynamics of each territory whilst developing multiple forms of polities, institutionalizing social interactions and rearranging the ways in which markets, taxes, production, circulation and commerce all evolved in a conflicting and conflictual environment. The traditional autochthonous social organization had to commune with new and diverse societies, polities and economies. The 11th century, with the accession to the throne of Fernando I, who ruled over the unified Castile and León, would mark a brief moment of temporary appeasement in the endemic permanent state of turmoil and internal strife that had marked the 10th century search for peaceful rulership. Although the ensuing episodes would prove that the struggle for unity was destined to fail time and again, the acceptance of the Leonese kings as one of the monarchies to be considered in the complex Iberian scene of the time, would no longer be an issue.

1. Negotiating accommodation: c.711- c.910 A.D.

Until around the beginning of the 10th century, the population of what can be considered the Iberian Northwest, i.e., the territory which runs from Galicia to the Meseta and spreads Southwards to the River Mondego and the Central Plains of Castile, had been evolving in forms different from the ones attested for the Upper Ebro Valley, Aragonese and Catalonian regions.

Traditionally, most authors agreed that either the Roman or the Visigothic rulers of Hispania neglected the area of the Asturian Mountains, the Castilian plains and the north-western corner of the Peninsula proposing that the same tendency continued during the Muslim conquest and settlement.

Such views have been revised in the last twenty years, mostly because of the input of archaeological evidence in conjunction with fresh new approaches to the documentation of the period. Nonetheless, it is still true that those territories seem to have been less extensively occupied and exploited than the more "central" territories. That, however, must only be taken as derived from local conditions, and is not to be confused with any programmed man-made Christian desertion of a large stripe of land, designed to create an area of *despoblamiento,* a no-man's land that would protect "the Christians" from the progression of "the Muslims". That idea is a historiographical construct- even if a very complex one- that needs to be definitively assumed as such (Escalona and Martín Viso 2020) and permanently repudiated.[3]

[2] Although with some distinguished antecedents, it would be García de Cortázar (1988:115-125) to set the tone, when stating how difficult it had been for the first Asturian kings to ascertain themselves as kings of a region that wasn't too willing to befriend them. His generation of historians, and the ones that followed, have deepened this critical approach to the forms of dominion of the Asturian kings over the human settlements of the region. Georges Martin (1992) and Peter Linehan (1993), analyzing the historiography of the period, reached similar conclusions as to how the narrative texts of the period tell us a very different story from the one proposed by mid-20th century francoist historians, namely in what regards the *despoblamiento,* the invention of the *Reconquista,* and that of the Kingdoms of Asturias and Castile from as early as the 8th and 9th centuries. More recently, the works of Á. Carvajal Castro, W. Davies, J. Escalona, I. Martín Viso, R. Portass and J. A. Quirós Castillo, to mention only a few, have been seminal in illuminating dark spots of the previous heroic-led approaches for this particular region. Archaeology, Historiography, Diplomatics, Textual Criticism and plain general revision of the written evidence have been shifting our attention to the early communities of men and their behavior vis-a-vis of the changing circumstances and of the emergence of new powers.

[3] Linehan (1993: 108-115) had already detected in 1993 that Portuguese medievalists dismissed the *ermamento* as a myth sooner than their Spanish colleagues, ascribing it to different political circumstances in the Portugal and Spain of the 1970s.

Instead, what we attest for those territories, is a continued although not too widespread occupation of the land, in line with the very old traditional forms of settlement and dominion over the territory, and the correlated social stratification. Classified by recent historians and archaeologists alike as typical of an "internal periphery", the diverse reality of human settlement in such area included communities occupying the old *castros* that hadn't been abandoned (Lixó Gómez 2019; Martín Viso 2006), land and people enclosed by rural churches or family monasteries, village-like communities, and other settlement markers, like lay residencies and fortifications, towns and town churches or cathedrals (Carvajal Castro 2017; Davies 2016; Escalona 2016; Marques 2014; Martín Viso 2009, 2017; Portass 2017; Quirós Castillo 2013a, 2013b; Quirós Castillo and Santos Salazar 2015). Occupying either the upper lands or the more fertile river valleys and plains, the latter seem to be the successors of the ancient network of Roman villas and other rural settlements, which archaeology is proving as having been far more numerous for that area than until recently acknowledged. All that helped to shape a varied and multi-layered form of social and economic landscape for this period and in this area. The reinforcement of such small but numerous communities -which even included towns of lesser or greater scale– were also being promoted by post Roman and post-Visigothic elites and magnates, whose origins are mostly unknow and unclear, but whose power becomes more and more apparent throughout the period, with special emphasis on the last half of the 9th century, when the documentation starts providing insights on how their political agency and dominion over the land seems to have been a widespread common feature (Carvajal Castro 2017).

Since very early in the 8th century the men who wished to settle themselves as a lineage of rulers in the Asturian Mountains had to negotiate their dominance over the rural and urban communities of the region, and needed to fight the traditional and often resilient forces of communities whose internal organization seems to have had very little connection with the model and patterns of hierarchical rule which the 'newcomers' were trying to impose to the rest of the population (Garcia de Cortazar 1999).

The efforts of the self-styled Asturian rulers to predominate over a population of local lords, peasants and villagers, was a tough fight, fought less with sheer violence than with pacts, agreements and grants (Carvajal Castro 2017). The rising monarchy would not have achieved any real progress, if the successive rulers, from Pelagio, Fáfila and Alfonso I to Alfonso III and Fruela II hadn't managed to integrate in their own sphere of influence and rulership, the local elites and their respective -often independent- efforts of conquest, domain and occupation of the regions adjacent to their original settlements. Such collaboration would prove to be a win-win strategy, either for the kings of Asturias or for the local lords, who all ended up by enhancing their status and authority with such alliances (Martín Viso 2009, 2018).

The economic systems of these vast areas of mountainous hills and deep valleys articulated a social environment where the internal organization and hierarchies remained very much indebted to the traditional forms of interrelation and the techniques used either to produce agricultural or artisanal products quite similar to those in the rest of the Iberian Peninsula. The distinction would be more apparent in the mechanisms of exploitation of the land and the social fabric of the modes of production, for the area over which the Asturo-Leonese Kings would rule, far greater than just the Asturian area.

As mentioned above, the inbred elites had to find a way to communicate and get along with the "new rulers", who surely wished to try and impose their superiority resorting more to the traditional schemes of gifts and donations, settlement of disputes and peace arrangements with the rural and urban communities, than to the ideologically driven attempt at persuading them of their entitlement to an invented throne or crown, on the grounds of their legitimate right to rule over the local peasants and magnates because of their Visigothic ancestry. The famous and much explored "Neogothic ideology" would have to mature for more than a century after the advent of "king" Pelayo, before being created for invented openly and circulating in erudite circles of reduced impact in the general population. In pragmatic terms, the strengthening of the idea of a monarchy ruling over a wider territory and exerting fiscal as well as military power over the autochthonous populations, came only with the territorial expansion. New forms of economic and social dominion over the local villagers and peasants also had to be redesigned for the dominion of the new Kings to be accepted and recognised. The support of the Church in towns, rural churches and monasteries, and the role of the economic agents connected to that network of local powers, would also be fundamental for the reproduction of the social system in a terrain which had so far been immune to such forms of organization and hierarchisation of production. Urban growth depended not on commercial exchange as such, but on the political/ecclesiastical role of the towns, and their expansion was residual during these centuries, although far more active than until recently thought. Interestingly, in roughly the same chronological period, the church of Iria-Santiago of Compostela was also inventing for itself yet another array of self-legitimation myths of origin. The alleged discovery of the body of the Apostle in Iria was to lead to what would soon become an organic narrative, destined to enhance and promote Compostela not only within the Iberian ecclesiastical context, but -perhaps even more - as the (new?) leading beacon of support for the asturo-leonese Kings, who would further enhance their authority and status from collaborating closely with such a prestigious diocese. In due course, it would even assume the patronage of the Christian Conquest, with the creation of Santiago Matamoros (Diaz y Diaz 1985). The two historiographical constructs of the 9th century developed by ecclesiastical hand, neogothicism on the one side and the discovery of the apostolic body of Saint James on the shores of Iria on the other, would end up reinforcing the legitimacy of both the Iberian Church and the kings of Asturias. The lavish gifts of the early Asturian Kings to the see of Compostela, may very well be seen as yet another form of enhancing their power in terms of furthering their alleged but still quite frail rights to general rulership.

The role of local and supra-local elites in organizing the territory and its economic and fiscal functioning has been stressed in recent times by historians and archaeologists alike, but the role of local priests in prolonging traditional forms of society, as well as their informal institutions and ways of functioning is being reviewed it promises to open ground for new approaches that will enable us to envisage a society far more self- sufficient, independent and even in contact with the surrounding political and economic environment than we thought (Davies 2016; Martin Viso 2017; Portass 2017; Quiróz Castillo 2013b; Quiróz Castillo and Santos Salazar 2015, Wickham 2005, 2011).

It was also during this period that local elites started to collaborate and intermix with the Asturian Kings, their families and their court - an important indicator to consider when we analyse the forms of appropriation of the symbolic and effective power by those same kings. The donations being made by the Kings, namely in land, seem now to have equalled in number the integration in the King's love and courtly structure of those who had handled the *presuria* of their own lands in quite an independent manner until then. The most famous case was obviously to be that of the future counts, later kings of Castile, who would need to wait for the 10th century to assert themselves an ominous local power in the rise, conquering land extensively and subsequently entering in the Kings of Asturias's good graces (Escalona 2016). But the same thing happened a little everywhere, in the expanding territory of the Asturian monarchy, from Viseu to Amaia, from Santiago to Astorga, to Osma. Conquest and settlement were far from being an exclusively royal initiative (Martín Viso 2018).

The mountainous characteristics of a considerable part of the region, as well as difficulties in performing profitable agriculture in many of those places, determined an exploitation of natural resources focused on farming of small cattle and transhumance and of commerce in a small scale, although findings of luxury artifacts and treasures of minted coins keep on reminding us of how inexorable the circulation of people, goods, and coins kept on being, and of how the story of economic dynamics in the region for this same period is still a work in progress (Portass 2017). This doesn't mean to say that the fertile valleys and considerable parts of the Meseta, where the soils were far more productive, could not display a different, more lucrative and complex social and economic reality.

Small scale farming survived side by side with independent property owners and smaller exploitations, as it did with larger traditional *villas* where the terrain allowed it. Recent archaeological work has enabled the study of some of such villages and larger settlements alike, as well as the characteristics of urban development and construction. And the work done on graves, either in mountains, in the plains or the towns, continues to tell us a story of a hierarchical society, that is reflected in the different forms that burial sites assume, depending on the status of the deceased, whether we are looking at peasants or aristocrats.

In sum, an economy ruled by agriculture and herding, with a low urban development but with local elites, with local free and dependent communities of peasants, with rural and "urban" churches and monasteries as alternative propellers of development. A society in which rural dominion marked the fixation of lordship of different types and scales, and the construction of an economic and social network which tended to become more uniform as centuries went by. A society upon which the political dominion of the Asturian kings, the local magnates and the aristocracy of the royal curia had started to prevail, alongside with the new possibilities for territorial expansion that the end of the 9th century brought with it.

2. Accommodating new realities: the 10th – 11th centuries *turn*

This period is characterised by a greater contact with the Muslim world and its economic reality - whether through war or through the circulation of people and goods- and by the complexification of the social occupation of the territory, as well as by the reinforcement of new forms of political and ecclesiastical powers, which transformed the social and economic reality - in the sense of accelerating the circulation of economic models- to an unexpected scale. All this accompanied a progressive institutionalization of royal powers in León, Castile and Pamplona, whose reciprocal influence, and real roles in the areas over which their kings ruled, ended up by changing the shape and functions of a monarchy that for the first time ascertained itself as the superior ruling power, articulating the widespread and powerful lords under a single head: the kingdom and kings of León-Castile. This was to be more of a theoretical construct than a reality, as the brief periods of "unity" and "peace" were preceded and followed by the endemic strife and rivalry that would also propel the ambitions of local elites and their claims to sovereignty and full power over their lands. Nonetheless, weak as it may be, the documentation issued by the Kings of León, Pamplona and Castile, tell us a story of rulers who push the affirmation of their dominion in progressively stronger terms, and who use the documentation issued under their authority, written in their own chanceries, as yet another powerful way of imposing their authority in the terms delineated in the words of the documentation issued under their own *aegis.* These are also the centuries that witness the earliest "royal-lead" narrative texts trying to reconstruct the history of the previous asturo-leonese kings. The image we can withdraw from the work of the authors of the Chronicle of Alfonso III, the Chronicle of Albelda and the Chronicle of Sampiro shows just how deeply committed to promoting the image of that royal lineage they were (Escalona 2016).

The expansion of the conquest *impetus* towards the South, as seen from the ruling Christian Kings' viewpoint, fostered the development of the affirmation of the several different Christian "central" rulerships in the Iberian Peninsula, as well as their immediate subsequent rivalries (Escalona 2016).

The outburst of several lordships with considerable political ambition, would be fed by the rise of groups of noble families whose lives depended on royal magnanimity for wealth and on royal service for the maintenance of their status (Carvajal Castro 2017; Martín Viso 2018). The magnum effect in accelerating economic circuits played by the promotion of Santiago de Compostela, and León as catalysers of royal presence, royal favour and economic activity, as well as the important role of some of their most active bishops and magnates is also connected to the recuperation of the concept of *urbs regia*, and all that such concept brings with it (Linehan 1994; Estepa 1977; González 2022).

The first major shift happened around 910 and consisted of the translation of the *sedis regiae* from Oviedo to León, accompanying the political rise of the three sons of the conquering Alfonso III. It came within twenty years of the transformation of the Emirate of Córdoba into a Caliphate, by the hand of Abdelrahman III, in 929. Such fundamental political moves, seem to point to a logical, although somewhat troublesome conclusion: that the conquest efforts on both sides of the Christian-Muslim divide in the Iberian Peninsula was feeding and sustaining the growth of power of both the Kings of León and the Califs of Córdoba, in a naturally synchronic form.

The growth of importance of the counts of Castile as collaborators and subsidiary lords of the kings of León, mediated by pacts and intermarriage with the Leonese lineage, would also bring up another important change. The crowning of such progressive path, initiated with "count" Fernán González and his lineage, in the early 10th century, would be accomplished when Fernando I – who inherited the county of Castile via the maternal line, defeated all his rivals and gained the rulership of the Kingdom of León after the battle of Tamarón (1037), thus managing to incorporate and unify under his crowned head, the kingdoms of León and Castile. Much has been written about Fernando I and the differentiated form that royal power took under his guidance. Indeed, the promotion of different *clienteles*, in his curia and in administrative roles outside the court, jointly with a successful conquest effort and new ways of promoting the settlement of people in the areas newly added, came hand in hand with new policies vis a vis of the Muslim territories and pacts with the taifa Kingdoms that were to be long lasting. Fernando I's time also witnessed a reinvestment in the role of León as *urbs regia*, as the centre for the monarchical ceremonial and see for its royal curia. Towards the end of his reign, the translation of St. Isidore´s relics from Seville and the capitalization of such translation as a means to reinforce the legitimacy of the new royal power and its unitarian ambitions - transforming the most "Spanish" Saint into León's patron saint and, as such, as the putative patron of the new dynasty- reveals as much of Fernando I's ambitions to provide his rulership with prestige and long lasting authority outside the battle field as the funding of the construction of the new collegiate church (1063), which was to become a favourite place of burial for the royal family and especially for its women (Martin 2016, Pick 2017), or as the sponsoring of the production of the richly illuminated famous *Beatus* of Fernando I and Sancha, and similar works of art and architecture.

The reorganization of the territories conquered and being conquered, the contacts with the taifas from 1031-4 onwards, the new role of the royal curia, as well as the "making", or rather the "confirming" of counts, governors and magnates by royal will, paired the endemic lack of men to populate the expanding Kingdoms and demanded new policies both for populating and domesticating the vast territories which were being annexed to the Kingdom at a fast pace. In many cases, the preexisting local powers were simply acknowledged and integrated via royal recognition in a wider reshaping of the ways in which the region was being ruled. All this brought with it some major changes to the ways in which the land was being organised and to the production and circulation of products, techniques, and men (Martínez Sopena 2007).

Royal policy seemed to start determining the ways in which towns were established and functioned, too, just as much as royal fisc, royal law and royal court paced the rhythm of a growing supremacy for the royal power. Fernando I's connections with France, also promoted the approximation to the Cluniac *millieux* that was to prove so fruitful after his death (Henriet 2004). This tendency might just be the last and durable major shift of the troubled 11th century in this part of the Iberian Peninsula.

It is well known how troubled the succession of Fernando I was, due to his partition of the realm by his three rivalling sons Sancho, Alfonso and García, in 1065. The institutionalization of León, Castile and Galicia as realms, ephemeral as it may have been, resulted in civil war, but it also resulted in constituting political differences that would resuscitate in the following centuries (Conde *et al.* 2019). In the end of the complex period that followed the death of Fernando I, with García and Sancho out of his way, King Alfonso VI of León and Castile would rule yet again over a unified territory, even if a hardly settled one, as the ensuing quarrels after his death in 1109 would prove so eloquently. His conquest of Toledo in 1085 was considered a major step in the way southwards in its own time, as it still is today. The symbolic restauration of Christian power so far South, in a town that could and was considered the centre of the Christian Visigothic rulership, the home of the Toledo Councils and the primatial see of Hispania, was to have a lasting repercussion in the ways in which the first part of the kingdom of Alfonso VI was to be run. Having spent many months in Toledo during his exile, he surely knew the city and the Muslim way of life quite well, and it is no surprise if such experience was to determine the continued policy of pacts and treaties with the taifas that were to characterize also the first part of his realm (Barton 2008; Barrett 2016). The "French" influence in his rulership, although not all that undisputed in those days, must be considered an important choice in his way of ruling. His three "French" wives, his "French" sons-in-law and his early adoption of the Cluniac-led reformation, were to be just as important in the making of the newly refashioned Leonese Kingdom as his self-intitulation as *Imperator Hispaniarum* or the centralization of the issuing of documents in the royal chancery (Gambra 1997; Henriet 2008; Mattoso *et al.* 1989; Reilly 1988).

Even if challenged on many grounds, the introduction of the so-called Gregorian reformation in Spain in the second half of the 11th century, would provide ample ground for new forms of organizing and exploiting the territory - lay and ecclesiastical- and would be instrumental in fomenting new quarrels and new rivalries, that would eventually shape the problems of the end of the 11th and the 12th century, just as much as they introduced new forms of hierarchical power and provided Alfonso VI with a useful tool for controlling otherwise powerful magnates and for breaking up the strength of old traditionally influential families, including or excluding them of his own network of vassals (Ayala 2008).

Lords and overlords, peasants, serfs and freemen were now in competition or in accordance with royal powers which tried to rule over their subjects to a greater extent than before. The case of the counties granted to the two "French" sons-in-law, namely Galicia and Portucale, respectively to Raymund and Henry, are just very good examples of how royal will was beginning to change the ways in which the territory was to be organized, and an even better example of the unexpected political consequences which the "creation" of such wide territorial endowments could have as well as of the ambitions and expectations that such magnates cherished. Concomitantly, the incorporation of a considerable quantity of Muslim towns and cities into the Christian dominion promoted an even further widespread of contacts with an urbanised, commercial world, already well known in previous centuries, but now incorporated in the King's domains. The maintenance of the previous population and the assimilation of the different ways of life is responsible for important changes to the production, the circulation and even the taxation system in Iberian context, in which markets and market became daily life realities and, in the context, we are analysing, it provided the kings with the possibility of widening their dominion and presence even further, to towns of a dimension and dynamics previously unknown to them.

As the Leonese Kingdom became an unquestionable reality throughout the long Iberian 11th century, the exercise of diverse forms of ruling and rulership, acceptable and accepted by a very diverse lot of people under their dominion, were also defining the composite reality of the Christian Polities that were to emerge in the following centuries, in the Westernmost corner of the Iberian Peninsula: León, Castille and finally Portugal.

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The contributions of the settlement to the understanding of the rural societies of Northern Gaul in the 10th century

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Abstract

The purpose this article is to discuss about the 10th century from archaeological data and especially those concerning rural settlements located in the northern half of France. Settlements with military (clods, sites of height, etc.) or religious (monasteries, priory, etc.) character are not addressed in this study without being ignored. Based on a corpus of 383 sites attesting an occupation in the 10th century, the study attempts to analyze successively the dynamics of occupation, the composition, the topography and the economy of the settlements in order to identify singularities peculiar to this period. The examination of the dynamics is carried out starting from the creations, abandons and duration of the occupations. Through the composition of the settlement, it is particularly the buildings, the equipment, the religious buildings and the burials which are approached. The topographic analysis focuses on the organization of farmstead as well as that of the agglomerations while the analysis of the small finds discovered on the sites makes it possible to sketch hypotheses on the social and economic nature of the habitats.

Keywords

Northern France; rural settlement; 10th century; social distinction; possession.

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the 10th century has been the subject of several archaeological studies in France rural settlements, thanks in particular to the development of preventive archeology, which has led to the acquisition of many new data. Indeed, before this revival in which this book is inscribed, the 10th century was mainly perceived through a particular type of site, "aristocratic or seigneurial settlements", being one of its forms, the motte, was particularly studied (Bourgeois 2006).

In the late 1980s, the commemoration of the advent of Hugh Capet was a pretext for the holding of a major international conference Hugh Capet, *La France de l'an mil* bringing together historians, archaeologists and historians of art. This meeting is at the origin of several publications taking stock of the 10th century (Barral i Altet 1987; Barral i Altet *et al.* 1991; Iogna-Prat and Picard 1990; Parisse and Barral i Altet 1992; Riché *et al.* 1987; Zimmermann 1987). It is in the volume devoted to *Paysage monumental* that Gabrielle Demians of Archimbaud draws up a report on the village and the rural settlement (Démians d'Archimbaud 1987). His study shows that the archaeological data in 1987 are still scarce and question researchers who are often prisoners of the concepts defined by historians from written sources, such as *encellulement* where the importance of the church and castle are put forward for the "stabilization" of the settlement and its transformation into "village". The author proposes to designate the settlements found as "protovillages". Several regional contributions illustrate the different sites then known. It is in another volume from this same conference that Patrick Périn proposes a radically different analysis of settlement sites and in opposition to the hypotheses formulated by Robert Fossier and currently accepted (Périn 1992). If in the 1990s, the publications dedicated to the rural habitat multiply in France, they remain most often monographic or regional value like the catalog consecrated to the Île-de-France *de Clovis* à *Hugues Capet* in which Jean Chapelot raises a synthesis on rural settlement (Chapelot 1993). On this occasion, he particularly insists on the abandonment of the settlements in the 10th century that he puts in relation with the introduction of the feudal system. Jean-Marie Pesez questioned also this phenomenon of desertion of habitats in his review of the state of archaeological research on the northern French settlements of the High Middle Ages, proposed at the first conference of the Ruralia association, held in 1995 in Prague (Pesez 1996). It is only from the 2000s that some syntheses on settlement in the 10th century are proposed (Zadora 2009; Peytremann 2010; Peytremann 2014) The main results show not only that desertions are not systematic in the 10th but that the sites are multiform and the levels of wealth in finds are extremely various. Séverine Hurard's thesis on *Archéologie des élites Rurales ordinaires dans le Bassin parisienne (III^e^-XVIII^e^ siècle)*, although it does not focus on the 10th century, nevertheless provides innovative elements for thinking about rural societies through their settlements (Hurard 2017).

Despite all these works, the perception of the 10th century through settlements remains difficult insofar as the partitioning of archaeological studies (rural archeology, castral, religious, fortifications, etc.) does not allow to have a vision overall, with the exception of the synthetic work done by Christopher Loveluck at European level (Loveluck 2013: 215-235, 286-290).

In this study, rural societies of the 10th century will be approached through the prism of the rural settlement devoid of military or religious functions (the famous partitioning of studies!). After a critical examination of the corpus available, the components, the topography and the finds of the settlements are studied in order to propose hypotheses on these societies of Northern Gaul.

2. The corpus of occupied sites in the 10th century and its chronology

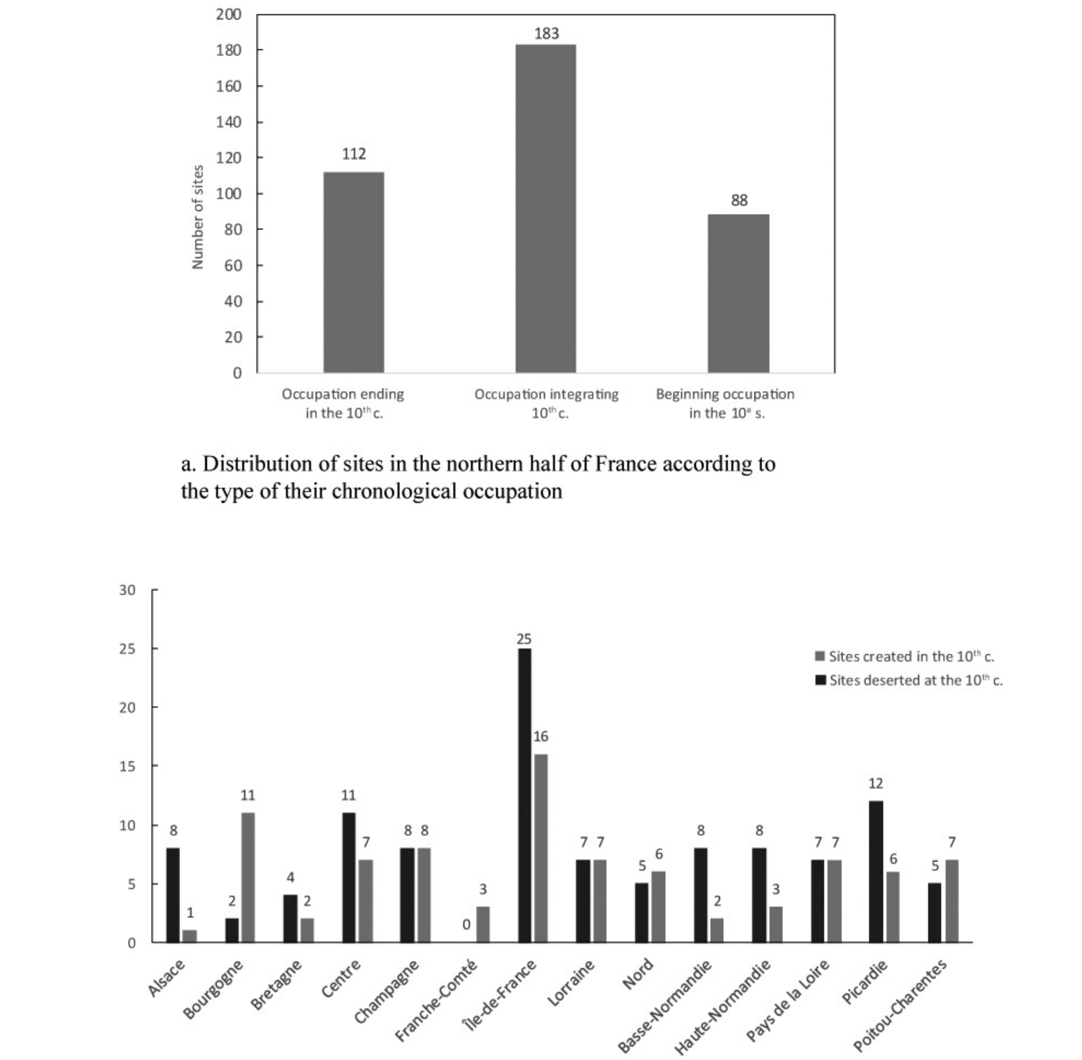
The corpus on which this study is based mainly consists of sites that have been the subject of an archaeological excavation, in the context of preventive archeology, and more rarely in that of programmed archeology. This means that in the vast majority of cases, the sites are not studied in their entirety. This corpus is also distinguished by the fact that the bulk of excavated sites have been definitively abandoned. The sites which have survived and which are currently included in villages or current towns are a minority, although progressively French archaeological research is taking them into account better and better (Peytremann 2019). The quality of the dating of the corpus is variable insofar as it depends on the state of the research on ceramics. Nor can this corpus claim to be exhaustive, as it is difficult at this supra-regional level to centralize the data. In addition, the figures used in this study correspond more to a trend than to a quantified reality.

On a corpus of 714 sites of rural settlements located in the northern half of France, 383 sites, or 53.6%, attest an occupation in the 10th century. Several possibilities are identified concerning the chronology of the occupations: the occupation of the site ends at the 10th century (112 sites), the occupation of the site starts at the 10th century (88 sites) or, last possibility, the 10th century is integrated with the duration of occupation of the site (183) (Figure 4.1). The proportion of sites abandoned in the 10th century compared to the entire corpus is 16%[1] while the percentage of creation is around 12. These first figures relativize the generally expressed hypothesis of a massive abandonment of rural settlements in favor of new creations associated with a place of worship or power (Fossier 1982, 160-163). The data collected over the past twenty years have made it possible to underline the duration of occupation of the habitats, since 25% of the sites of the high Middle Ages (4th-12th century) have a duration of occupation, which integrates the 10th century. Only a dozen sites are only occupied during the 10th

[1] This figure is slightly lower than figures previously published from a smaller body of 286 sites (Peytremann 2003, vol. 1: 266).

century. Comparisons between the different regions show a large number of dropouts in Île-de-France (Figure 4.1b). If this information had already been underlined, it appears that with a larger corpus of sites, the phenomenon is less important. Recent works by François Gentili in the Paris region show that the phenomenon of abandonment certainly starts in the course of the 10th century but continues until the end of the 11th century (Gentili 2017: 261). The observation concerning the short duration of occupation (one to two centuries) of settlements created in the 10th century, carried out in a previous study (Peytremann 2003: 273), is confirmed by the new data.

The chronological examination of the rural settlements attesting an occupation in the 10th century indicates a relative continuity of the latter, characterized by a large number of abandonments, with however important regional variations, and creations in rather large numbers.



a. Distribution of sites in the northern half of France according to the type of their chronological occupation

b. Regional comparative graph of the number of sites created and deserted in the 10th century

Figure 4.1. Analytical graphs of the corpus of sites (© E. Peytremann).

3. Composition of settlements

The examination of settlement components makes it possible to identify more concretely the continuities and breaks that reflect changes affecting both lifestyle, agrarian techniques and social organization.

3.1 The buildings

Four types of construction coexist (Figure 4.2). Buildings built on wooden posts according to a plan of one to four naves, possess for some, two or three pieces. It is from the 9th century but especially

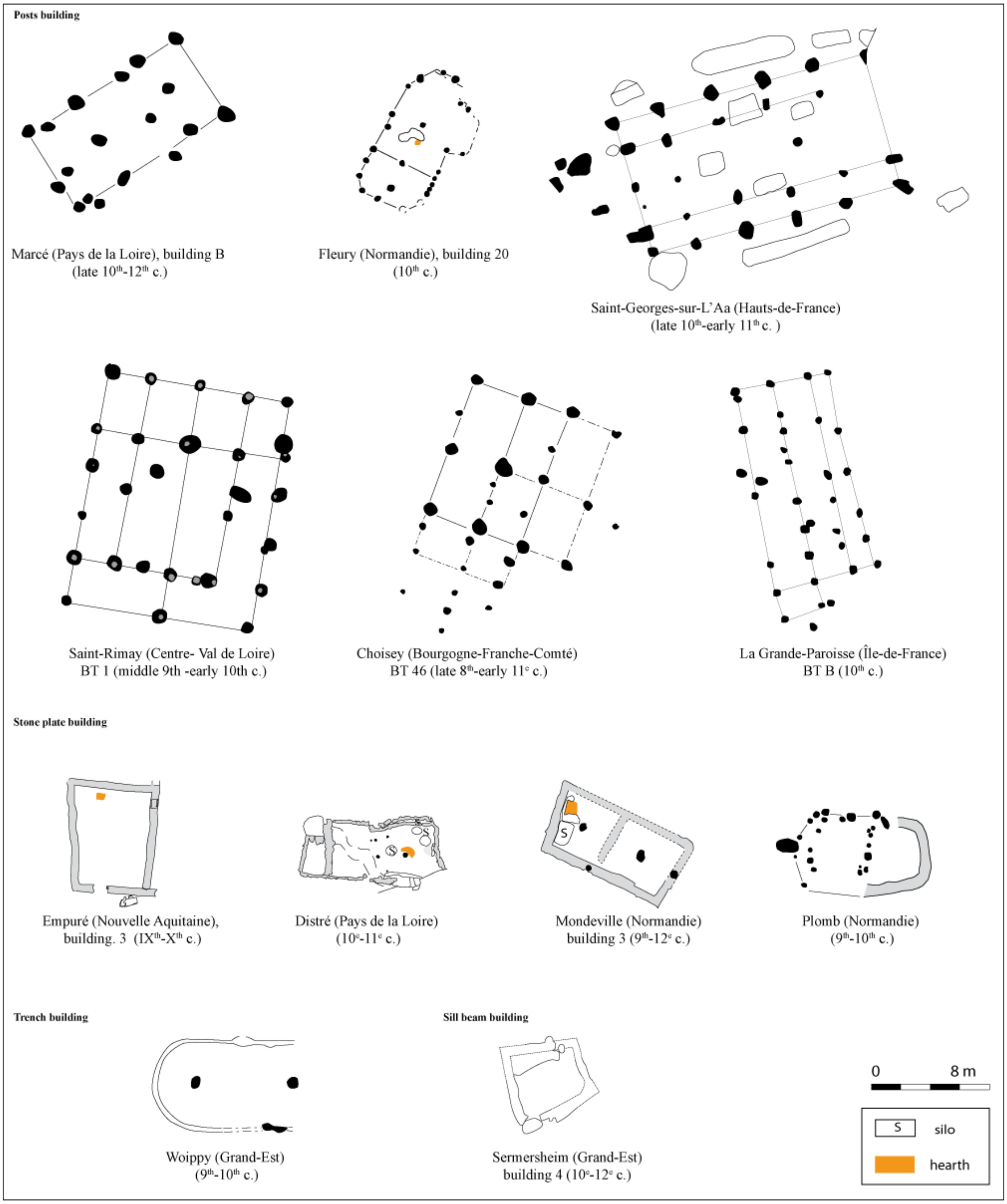


Figure 4.2. Examples of building dated to 10th century (© E. Peytremann).

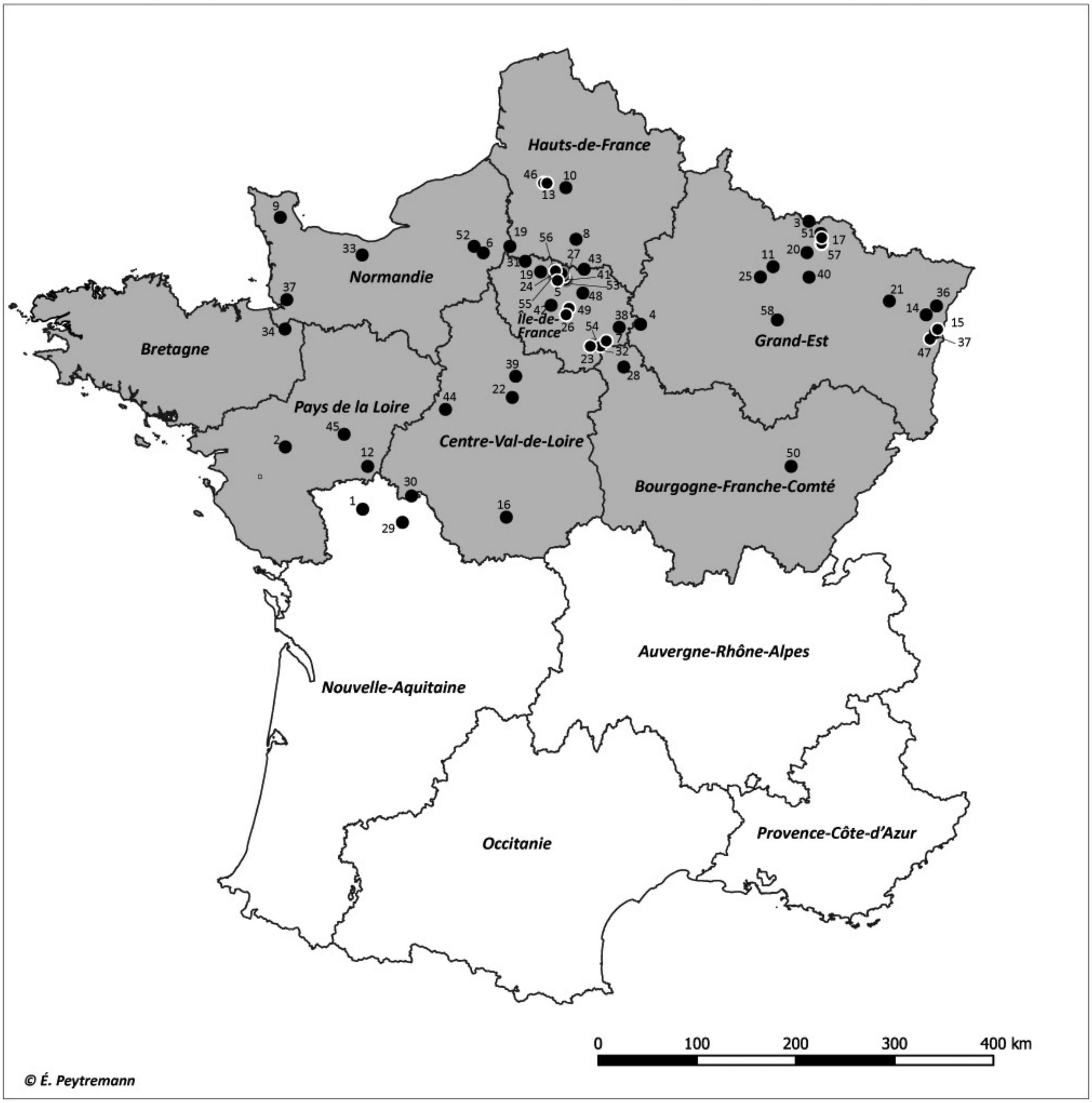


Figure 4.3. Location of sites mentioned in the chapter (© E. Peytremann).

in the 10th-12th centuries that constructions with three or four naves or complex buildings develop[2] (Figure 4.3) (Peytremann 2013a). More generally, it appears that buildings have a larger area than those of previous centuries. The constructions on sill-beam remain little attested. On the other hand, it is difficult to know if these few occurrences are related to a weak use of this construction technique or to the frequent erosion of the sites. Structures on wall-trenches are more particularly attested in Lorraine[3]. Construction on dry stone-footing or clay-related flashings is more common in western

[2] For example: Saint-Rimay (Joly 2006) in the Centre-Val de Loire, Louvres (Gentili 2017), Saint-Pathus (Hurard 2011), Servon, La Grande-Paroisse (Petit 2009) in Île-de-France, etc.

[3] For example: Thionville-Veymerange, Trois Domaines in the Grand Est (Blaising 2005)

France. They may have two or three rooms and be equipped with a wall fireplace[4]. The plans of the buildings, generally rectangular [Mondeville (Lorren 1989), Louvres, etc.], sometimes have one or two semi-circular apses [Plomb in Normandy (Carpentier 2007), etc.]. A last type of building can be mentioned. These are buildings on posts or sill-beam with a cellar dug in the ground. These buildings appear at the beginning of the 10th century. They are currently known in Alsace[5] and in Île-de-France[6] (Peytremann *et al.* 2022). It should also be noted that the use of plaster on wattle in the region of Ile-de-France has replaced daub (Gentili 2017: 262). The identification of the function of these constructions, in the absence of preserved soil level, remains always delicate. In a number of cases, however, it has been possible to offer the functions of dwelling (Saint-Rimay, Saint-Pathus, etc.), stables (Trois Domaines in Lorraine) or sheepfold (Barbuise, in Grand East) (Guicheteau 2015: 185), mixed buildings, housing under the same roof men and animals, or attics for small buildings and barns (Bonneuil in Île-de-France).

3.2 The sunken-featured buildings

These constructions are attested in the 10th century on many sites throughout the northern half of France, with the exception, however, of the Breton tip and the Pays-de-la-Loire where these structures are nonexistent. The majority of 10th century SFB have two axial postholes and sometimes stone walls. The function of these huts remains difficult to identify despite the large number of structures discovered. Recurrent assumptions make weaving workshops, annexes for storage or parking small animals. They are found in agricultural units as well as in specific activity areas. Some decrease in its employment is noted from the 10th century in some areas.

The rapid examination of the buildings of the 10th century reflects an improvement of the building with more spacious constructions or very imposing for some, the occasional use of window glass and the introduction of element of comfort such as the chimney or at least the wall fireplace in some cases.

3.3 Equipment structures

Among the most frequently discovered equipment structures are the water wells, whose construction techniques vary: in dry stone (Vitry-sur-Orne in the Grand Est, Marigny-Marmande in the Centre Val-de Loire), wooden using corner-timbering or using hollow tree trunk (Sermersheim in the Great East). Wells are located both within farmstead, in specific activity areas and in public spaces (place). More and more latrines are identified[7], probably reflecting an improvement in comfort.

Food ovens are particularly well represented in Île-de-France, Picardy and Champagne. Largely dug underground from wall of a pit, in the 10th century they have a thinner floor that probably indicates better control of the source of heat. It is also at this time that the big ovens are the most numerous (Bruley-Chabot 2003). Silos and granaries on posts are not only present in farmstead, but are also frequently attested in specific activity areas where they are sometimes the only types of structures thus forming storage areas. The latter are known from previous centuries and a number of sites have silage zones with more than 50 silos[8]. The storage capacity of silos is also greater than in previous centuries (Peytremann 2013b). In some regions, a new storage mode appears. These are undergrounds in which are stored the food (Marigny-Brizay in New Aquitaine, Distré in the Pays de la Loire, etc.).

[4] Mondeville (Peytremann 2003), Distré in the Pays de la Loire (Gentili and Valais 2007) or La Grande-Paroisse (Petit 2009, p. 32 et 41).

[5] Pfulgriesheim, Osthouse, Ergersheim and Erstein.

[6] Saint-Pathus, Rungis, Villiers-le-Sec.

[7] Démuin in Picardie, Florange in the Grand Est, Bonneuil in Île-de-France and Poupry in the Centre-Val-de-Loire), etc.

[8] Mesnil-Aubry, Roissy-en-France, Bonneuil, Tremblay *Le Chemin des Ruisseaux* in Île-de-France, Dury, Chevrières in Hauts-de-France, Distré in the Pays de la Loire, Poupry in Centre-Val de Loire, etc.

The 10th century watermills currently known, are generally located away from settlements as evidenced by the remains found on the sites of Audun-le-Tiche in the Great East, Thervey in Burgundy-Franche-Comté and Colomby in Normandy (Jaccottey and Rollier 2016).

3.4 Burials, cemetery and religious buildings

Finally, three elements complete the composition of settlements in the 10th century. They are burials installed in the settlement outside of the cemetery, the cemetery and buildings with funerary and / or religious function. Burial practice in the domestic context, now well known, has been documented since the middle of the 7th century and generally continues until the end of the 10th century. The topography and number of burials is variable. The burial can indeed be isolated, installed within a cluster of a dozen other burials or within a larger funeral group. These burials are often installed along a path or ditch as in Pfulgriesheim (Peytremann and Réveillas 2015) or in the filling of abandoned structures. Examples of 10th century sites associating a religious and / or funerary building are not common. Some sites have a building whose date of foundation is prior to the 10th century[9]. In other cases, the building is contemporary with the occupation[10]. These buildings are systematically associated with a cemetery.

The different components of the settlement testify not only to a great diversity especially in the constructions and the organizations, an improvement of the comfort but also an increase of the capacities of storage and cooking. The singularity of the corpus to rest mainly on abandoned sites unfortunately does not allow estimating the importance of religious and / or funerary establishment within the settlement. Many, however, are the sites that are totally lacking.

4. Topography of settlements

The most common forms of settlement in the 10th century are settlement grouped loosely or densely. Isolated farms remain a minority nevertheless present in Lorraine, Brittany, etc. Generally, the settlements consist not only of a farmstead, with variable sizes (from 350 to 2500m2) (Peytremann 2006) but also of specific activity areas that generally include structures related to agricultural and / or artisanal activities. (Peytremann 2018: 288-302) and sometimes a religious building and a cemetery. Different organizations have been identified. Farmsteads can indeed take place in elongated plots that are arranged in parallel (Florange in the the Great East, Malay-le-Grand Les Pâquis in Burgundy Franche-Comté) or perpendicularly from a traffic lane (Figure 4.4) (Vitry-sur-Orne, Demange-aux-Eaux in the Great East (Gérard 2012), Val-de-Reuil in Normandy). Small ditches or fences materialize often the plots, especially in the west of France. The organization of the farmstead around a central courtyard within an enclosure, delimited, again, by a ditch or even a fence, or a plot is also well attested (Saint-Rimay and Sorigny in the Centre-Val-de-Loire, Prény in the Great East) (Figure 4.4). This type of arrangement around a courtyard has continued since at least the Merovingian period. The courses vary in size according to the importance of the property and the social level of the inhabitants (Peytremann 2013a; Hurard 2017: 249–250). The setting up of new plots is relatively frequent in the 10th century, particularly in Brittany or Île-de-France. These creations, however, should not be overestimated and often have a local significance (Watteaux 2008: 524–525). In parallel with the development of new plots and ditches to delimit spaces (enclosures), the establishment of new roads axes of varying importance (Etrechet in the Centre-Val-de-Loire. Some oval-shaped enclosures[11] containing a post-building are sometimes interpreted as representative of some elites. Road junctions continue to be privileged locations for habitats.

[9] Tournedos-sur-Seine, Mondeville en Normandie, Saleux in the Hauts-de-France, Serris et Poigny in Île-de-France et Imling in Grand-Est (Peytremann 2003; Catteddu 2009).

[10] La Grande–Paroisse en Île-de-France (Petit 2009) et Airvault en Nouvelle Aquitaine.

[11] Especially on the sites of Frépillon, Villiers-le-Bel, La Grande Paroisse, Serris or Marolle-sur-Seine in Île-de-France.

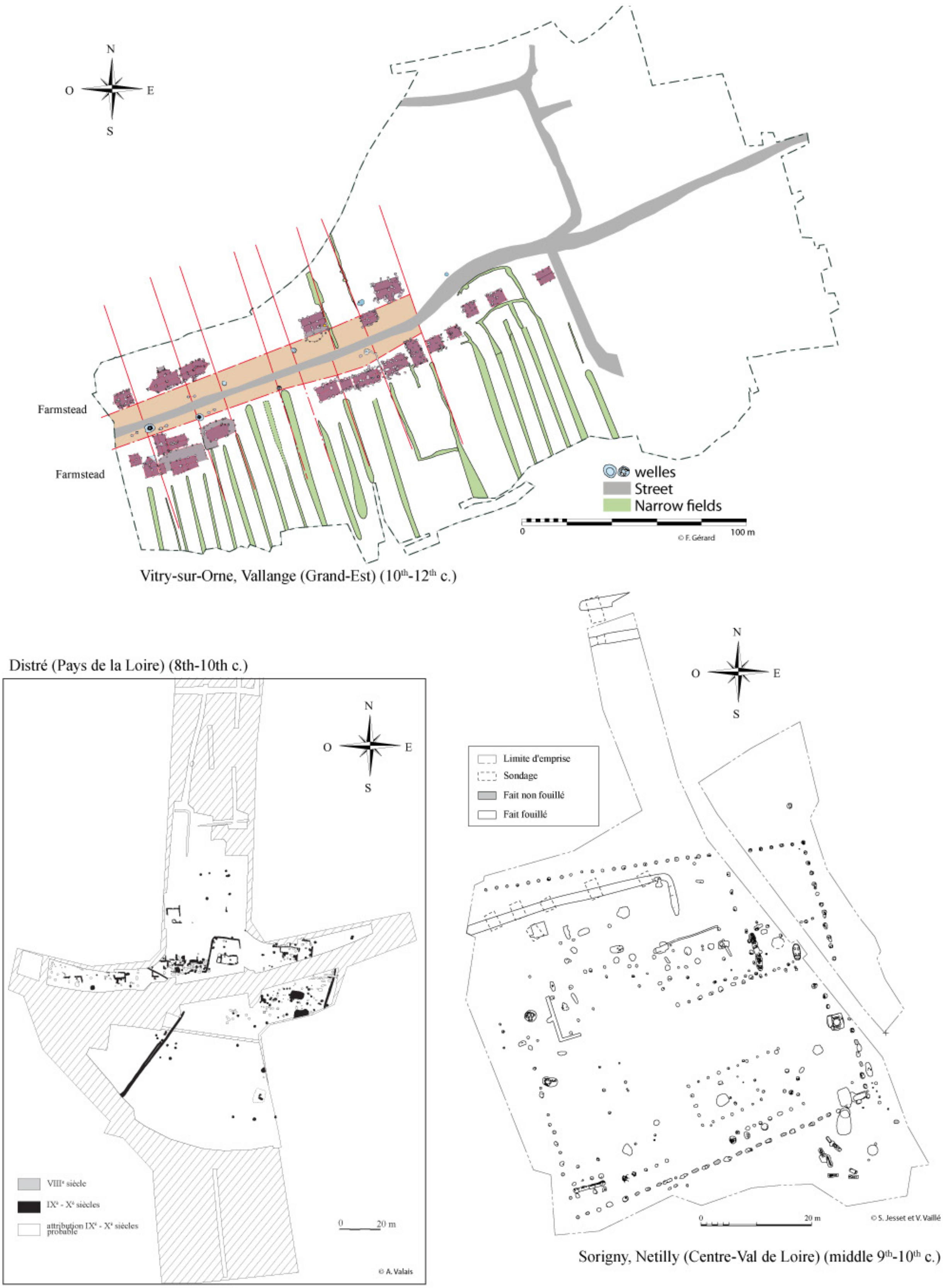


Figure 4.4. Examples of sites dated to 10th century (© E. Peytremann).

5. Economic activities and social levels

Examination of exhumed small finds brings new elements to the knowledge of rural societies of the 10th century. The find is more abundant from the 9th century but even more in the 10th century, especially the metal small finds. What is indeed noticeable for this period is an increase of the tooling indicating by the same a greater specialization by profession. The tools required for the textile industry, which was widespread before the 10th century, knew little change. Note, however, the development of glass smoothers and that of the use of the weaving loom with legs and double bar at the expense of the vertical loom weight, which continues nevertheless to use. The craft of wood, fur, as on the site of Dieue-sur-Meuse (Great East) where the squirrel skin has been worked (Rodet-Belarbi and Gazenbeek 2016), leather and metal is more visible within the settlements. The work of the stone can also be cited as the manufacture of grindstones attested on the site of Distré (Gentili and Valais 2007). This visibility tends to show that a certain number of settlements include farms as well as workshops and dwellings of artisans. Regarding agriculture, it turns out that most of the discoveries of plowshares and / or iron plows[12] date back to the 10th century. The majority of sickles, spades, hoes, pruners or forks found in rural habitats date back to the 10th century. The equestrian equipment also undergoes transformations with the appearance of the horseshoes and the collar of shoulder, which allows an improvement of the traction. A copy has been unearthed on the site of the Grande-Paroisse in Île-de-France (Petit 2009: 130-133). The spur discoveries in a settlement context are, again, more numerous[13]. Some of this equestrian equipment show a particularly neat realization such as the damascened horse bit discovered on the site of La Chapelle-Saint-Mesmin in the Centre-Val de Loire region. Among the most frequently discovered finds on the sites, note the presence of weapons for military or hunting purposes. Generally, it is arrowheads and spearheads. It should be noted that generally, sites that have delivered abundant metal tools are also those on which equestrian or armament elements have been discovered. Monetary discoveries on 10th century settlement sites are, again, significantly larger but not abundant. Finally, the ornaments and accessories of the metal garment are generally more common (fibulae, ring, etc.). Another type of object, the glass, ceramic or stone lamps, are also mentioned more often.

At the scale of the northern half France, it is unfortunately not possible to analyze data from archaeozoological and carpological studies as the regional differences are important.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Diversity of occupations

At the end of this brief study, one of the most striking results is the extreme diversity of rural occupations, probably accentuated by a greater visibility of the spatialization of settlements. At the various military and residential establishments, generally associated with elites and religious and residential institutions (abbeys, monasteries, priory, etc.) add a whole range of establishments, which goes from the isolated establishment to the village through smaller groupings. Within these main distinctions, various cases can be presented as isolated elite settlements organized or not around a court but generally delimited by an enclosure, materialized by a ditch or a palisade (Saint-Rimay, Pourpy). These elite establishments can sometimes also take place within a group of farmsteads such as in La Grande-Paroisse or Saint-Pathus where the religious function is advanced for the elite establishment (Hurard 2017: 364-365). The topography of the occupations itself is variable. Organizations in row village (Vitry-sur-Orne, Tournedos-sur-Seine, Dury etc.) (Figure 4.5), majority, alongside more nuclear arrangement as in

[12] Saint-Sylvain-d'Anjou « Les Grandes Valinières » in the Pays de la Loire, Malay-le-Grand in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Varennes-sur-Seine, Villepinte et Bonneuil-en-France in Île-de-France.

[13] Châtenay-sur-Seine « La Rigoulotte », La Grande-Paroisse, Serris, Le Mesnil-Aubry, Marines and Lieusaint in Île-de-France, Pfulgriesheim in Grand-Est, Gisors in Normandie, etc.

Mondeville, Pfulgriesheim or Distré. Within these villages or hamlets, again there is a great diversity with the presence or not of specialized activity areas (Sermersheim, Tournedos), scattered burials or even cemetery (La Grande-Paroisse, Mondeville) (Figure 4.5), buildings religious, or places. Diversity observe also in buildings, whose plans are varied even if there is a certain standardization of buildings complex plan.

6.2 Improved comfort

Another sensitive result, that of highlighting the increase in buildings confort. The buildings are better and can have cellars and some are equipped with wall hearth and has glazed openings. It seems likely that these improvements are due to the diffusion of architectural practice in vogue among the rural upper elites, within the ordinary elites. The mention of latrines at several sites probably contributes to the same element of diffusion of comfort elements.

6.3 Increased level of equipment

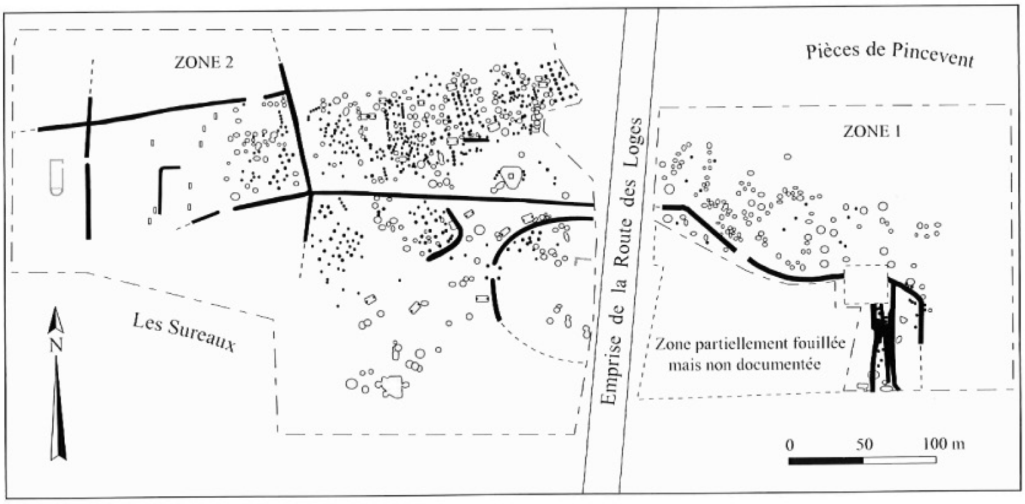
Another aspect revealed by this study, the improvement of the level of agricultural and artisanal equipment. The much more abundant presence of iron tools but also establishments with forges and even reduction infrastructures testify to the importance of the development of metallurgy since the 8th century, even if it is true that it is generally the sites with elite characters that have the most metal find. Moreover, the diversity of the tools compared to previous centuries tends to show the presence of artisans specialized as well in the work of wood, leather, fur, textile as metal in the village. It is also from the 10th century that there is evidence of technological improvements (modernization of sickles, horseshoes, etc.). More spur discoveries from the 10th century indicate a likely increase in the number of riders. The more abundant luminaire on the sites also contributes to this improvement.

6.4 Increased storage capacity

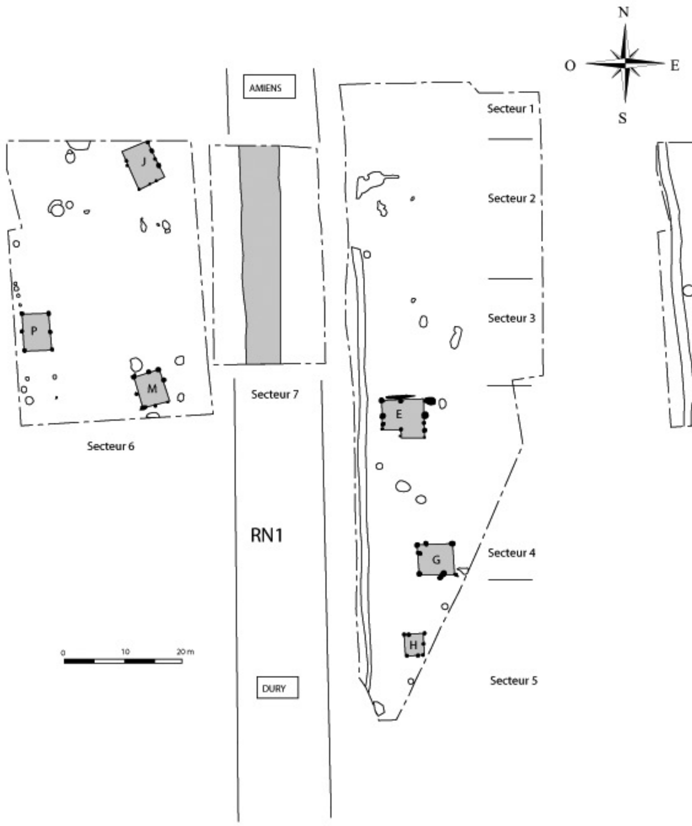
Here again, the study shows that from the 10th century the number of silos or granaries within establishments and / or farmsteads increases as their capacity testifying to a hierarchy of society (Sahlins and Clastres 1976) and improved farming techniques. This increase also shows to a change of mentality, which finds a resonance in the written documentation a little later according to the study of Nicolas Perreaux (Perreaux 2022).

All these elements show a rural society in the 10th century attached to the possession and social distinction that is displayed not only through his residence, but also by his dietary, hunting, playful and military practices. These last ones also testify of a more violent society where clashes are frequent. The development of fortified rural sites (motte, *castrum*, etc.), not studied here, confirms this observation. Various signs point to an increase in wealth, particularly from agricultural production and probably inequalities, and a transformation of commercial practices with increased use of money, including in rural areas. The indices are weak from only the studied corpus of sites but, added to the monographic studies of the churches, the development of the churches in the 10th century also constitutes an index of enrichment. The development of monasteries and the growth of their possessions is another indicator.

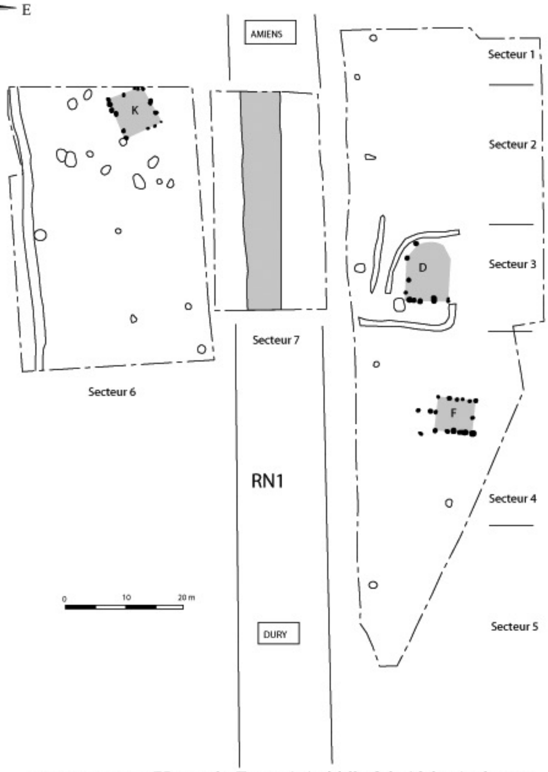
Finally, the image of rural societies of the 10th century, revealed by the archaeological study of the settlements, is close to that given by the study of the written documentation even if the fuzziness and the sharpness are done on different points.



La Grande-Paroisse (Île-de-France) (10th c.)



Dury, Le Moulin (Hauts-de-France) (middle 9th-10th c.) phase a



Dury, Le Moulin (Hauts-de-France) (middle 9th-10th c.) phase a

Figure 4.5. Examples of sites dated to 10th century (© E. Peytremann).

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Transforming Rulership in Tenth-Century Ireland: paradigms, problems and prospects

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Abstract

The 10th century is crucial to several established and emerging paradigms within research focused on the evolution of society in early medieval Ireland. In particular, it has been proposed as a period of centralisation and administrative re-organisation within principally historical work, while within archaeological literature it is increasingly highlighted as a period of systemic decline and economic contraction. This article explores these major competing hypotheses, examining their evidential basis in terms of recent syntheses. It is established that the 9th to 11th centuries were a period of key change, but that the exact drivers can only be determined through focused re-analysis of archival material and new fieldwork. It traces the evolution of key royal sites from early medieval Ireland, which either fell out of use or transformed dramatically in the 10th century. When situated within broader analyses and on-going debates, it is suggested that these changes are related to changes in the nature of authority in the 9th to 11th century, which are likely to have been key drivers in settlement dislocation and the evolution of new forms of regional rulership.

Keywords

Rulership; settlement; governance; radiocarbon data; landscape

Introduction

During the period AD 400-1100, Ireland stands out as a region of Europe where source material is most rich, but also, as a region where society often seems archaic, unusual and peripheral to mainstream developments (Bhreathnach 2014; contrast Loveluck 2013; Wickham 2005). This is especially true with regard to ideas of rulership, where Ireland is denote through the period by a hierarchy of kings, competing with each for control of territories big and small, and where no true 'state' emerged in the 9th to 12th centuries, as often held to be a key characteristic for the period in Anglo-Saxon England, Carolingian Frankia or amongst the polities of Viking-Age Scandinavia (for overview: Davies 1993; Wormald 1986). Such characteristics often characterise rulership in Ireland as small-scale, under developed, and lacking governmental apparatus or nascent bureaucracy. Regardless of whether these should characterise the early medieval period as a whole, the impression that Ireland was some Celtic backwater, in a state of stasis for much of the period (pace Hodges 1982:, 193-194), is certainly untrue. The perils of periodisation, together with nationalistic historiographies, mean a tendency to characterise large swathes of time or bodies of evidence, in somewhat teleological terms. Yet, there were marked periods of change within the early medieval period, where society in Ireland and elsewhere, underwent significant social, cultural and economic transformations (see Wickham 2005). The 9th to 11th centuries have emerged in recent decades as one period of such change in Ireland, albeit with considerable debate and uncertainty about the exact character of that transformation, its drivers, and evidential basis (e.g. O'Brien 2020 for burial; O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013 for general trends; see Doherty 1998; 2000; Lynn 1994). The tenth century, therefore, is a key period for understanding society in medieval Ireland within its longer-term trajectories, and this article explores the changes that characterise this period, with specific reference to the nature of rulership, models that have been proposed for these developments, and the problematic nature of the evidence for addressing these transformations from an holistic evidential base. It will address some recent broad-scale analyses synthesising archaeological data, and their implications from a thematic and methodological point of view.

Paradigms and Problems

As much as Ireland is often characterised as idiosyncratic and peripheral to mainstream developments amongst European polities, it is nevertheless a region of medieval Europe with some of the most spectacular and comprehensive evidence for the nature of local and regional politics, the character of society within a locality, and the wider conditions of social structures and lifeways. This includes the largest corpus of vernacular literature in northwestern Europe, as well as a substantial array of Latin sources spanning hagiography, saga, genealogies, treatises on the morality of rulership, biblical exegesis, classical learning, the reckoning of time and a number of chronicles, variously compiled, redacted and added to from the 6th to 17th centuries (for an accessible introduction and overview, see Ó Cróinín 2017). Naturally, distinguishing early from later evidence, or the degree to which commentary or redaction has been shaped by contemporary realpolitik, are pressing concerns (e.g. Ó Corráin 1985; 1986). Nevertheless, the chronicles in particular, alongside a corpus of genealogies (secular and ecclesiastical) encompassing some 40,000 personal names, mean that the evolution of local politics, and moreover, the growth of supra-regional rulership, is particularly well resolved (e.g. O'Brien 1962; Ó Riain 1985 for genealogies; for chronicles, e.g. Charles-Edwards 2006). Correspondingly, from an archaeological standpoint, early medieval Ireland has the richest settlement archaeology of any region of early medieval Europe (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013; Stout 1997), and perhaps some of the most extensive evidence for ecclesiastical organisation and pastoral care of any region of Europe (see Ó Carragáin 2009; 2010b; 2015; Etchingham 1999). The settlement archaeology in particular, bears some consideration, with a variety of ringforts (enclosed farmsteads), cashels (stone-built ringforts), crannogs (human-made islands) and souterrains (underground tunnels) characterising the period. By and large these various monument types are easily recognisable and survive in the modern landscape as field monuments, while they each have relatively well resolved chronologies due to an upsurge of excavations as a part of large infrastructure projects in recent decades (see O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013, 48-70; Clinton 2001; Stout 1997). This means we can estimate that some 60,000 or more ringforts from the early medieval period survive today, with at least 1,200 crannogs, and 3,500 souterrains. Alongside these ostensibly domestic structures, ecclesiastical establishments in 5th- to 9th-century early medieval Ireland number in the thousands, with recent regional surveys estimating a much higher density that found in Britain (various studies in Ó Carragáin and Turner 2016; Ó Carragáin 2010; 2009; contrast Blair 2005: 75). While this extensive archaeological dataset mirrors the equally extensive documentary and annalistic record, there is much greater evidence for social, economic and political disjuncture within the archaeological evidence from the 9th century AD onwards (O'Sullivan and McCormick 2017, 126-9).

This archaeological evidence follows a period of great expansion, principally in the 5th to 7th centuries, when new settlement forms like the ringfort and ecclesiastical establishments, sit alongside complex multi-functional enclosure sites, often with cemeteries, that may have represented places of local, kinship based assembly (Gleeson 2015). This period witnessed the emergence of a range of new site types and settlement forms, with the 60,000 or so ringforts perhaps the most striking example (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013: 48-70; O'Sullivan and McCormick 2017: 107-24). Even more striking than the relative uniformity of this archetypal settlement structure, is the fact that there is clear evidence for a hierarchy in the architectural style of these settlement enclosures: the vast majority are univallate, or encompassing a single ditch and external bank formed from the upcast (for overview, see Stout 1997; for an alternative assessment about settlement morphology and diversity, see Kinsella 2010). Yet, a considerable number of these sites were bivallate or trivallate, and in some exceptional cases quadrivallate. It is generally accepted that while the number of enclosures may not map strictly onto the categories of society detailed in contemporary 7th- and 8th-century law tracts (e.g. *Críth Gabhlach*), they are nevertheless an indicator of relative status (e.g. Lynn and McDowell 2011; also Ó Carragáin 2015; O'Sullivan 2008; O'Sullivan and Nicholls 2011). In general terms, this is backed up by excavation evidence, with a greater degree of fine-metalworking or high status imported goods and elite materials present in multivallate settlement enclosures than univallate. As striking as the clear hierarchy and scale of this settlement enclosure phenomenon, is the fact that the period of construction for the vast majority of ringforts seems to be relatively concentrated: occurring in the period AD c.600-850 (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013: 65). These settlement enclosures then, if they manifest an existing social structure, or perhaps more likely, are complicit in the creation of social structure and increasingly stratified society, are a chronologically proscribed phenomenon. There are of course many exceptions: some ringforts, as well as crannogs and cashels, could be constructed very late, or occupied and re-modelled well into the later medieval or early modern period (Comber and Hull 2008; 2015; FitzPatrick 2009; O'Sullivan 2001; O'Conor 1998). Regional patterns too have been convincingly argued for in recent years, with stone-built cashels in the west having a longer currency (e.g. FitzPatrick 2009; Kerr 2009). Yet, the central message that the vast majority of settlement enclosures were *built* c.600-850 suggests an expansion before AD 900 that is at least as dramatic as the 'decline' in *visible* construction thereafter. This is all the more telling because that 'decline' is evident archaeologically right across society: settlement cemeteries and other multi-functional enclosure complexes cease being founded in the 8th century, while many went out of use by the 9th or 10th centuries. Analysis of ecclesiastical sites too suggests that the 9th to 11th centuries may have seen contraction and the abandonment of local churches across the island (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013; O'Sullivan and McCormick 2017; Ó Carragáin 2009; 2010b). Most strikingly, this decline is visible in radiocarbon data right across the evidence base for the period, where AD 800 marks the threshold of a dramatic drop-off in archaeologically visible activity from major recent excavations (Hannah and Mclaughlin 2019; McLaughlin *et al.* 2018).

Collapse or Continuity?

How we interpret this data is a point of some importance. Some very plausible recent analyses argue that this broad-scale decline is evidence of a dramatic population decline (Hannah and Mclaughlin 2019; McLaughlin *et al.* 2018). Moreover, it has been argued that this decline is detectable within multiple and mutually independent datasets, including environmental remains, radiocarbon dates and historical sources (e.g. chronicles). A key question is the degree to which this data is evidence of abandonment of settlements, population decline and attendant contraction of economic and social activity, or whether, perhaps, this is at least in part a result of archaeological bias and post-excavation strategies. A decline in reporting and numbers of individual entries in chronicles from the 8th century AD onwards cannot be read as a straightforward indicator of declining activity, for instance. Instead, this likely reflects a change in the place of compilation and geographical focus of recording for the *Chronicle of Ireland*, which occurred during the mid-8th century AD (see Charles-Edwards 2006). With regard to archaeological proxies for decline, given the scale of expansion evident in the ringfort phenomenon, the origins of the ringfort has loomed large in the historiography of the period in recent decades (e.g. McCormick 1995; 2008; 2012; 2014; Kerr 2007; 2009; Kerr and McCormick 2013; Mytum 1992; McCormick and Murray 2007). As a result, there has been a general bias towards start date for ringforts in post-excavation strategies, rather than end dates. The social dynamics and life cycles of early medieval settlements has increasingly become a focus of conceptual analyses (e.g. O'Sullivan and Nicholl 2011; FitzPatrick 2009), but as yet this has not been backed up by systematic dating of late and terminal horizons with radiocarbon dates. Dating programmes as a facet of post-excavation strategies, therefore, have generally tended to be biased towards basal layers and the early phases of settlement complexes, where multiple dates will commonly be secured. There has not been a corresponding emphasis on dating upper and middle fills of ditches, for instance. This is an issue not just affecting the ringfort, but more generally evident in other newly emergent complexes or monument types discovered in recent decades: complex settlement enclosures, cemeteries and indeed, ecclesiastical sites (see Kinsella 2010; Ó Carragáin 2010b; Gleeson 2018). This is not to say that ringforts or other complexes ceased being constructed or used entirely; there are many examples where continuity of activity is clear in artefactual material, or in limited cases with radiocarbon data, while there are also sites with relatively late dates for construction. Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognise that caution is needed when working with such large radiocarbon datasets, when culture-historical and interpretive paradigms more generally, have demonstrably affected post-excavation strategies. Radiocarbon dates, therefore, have generally not tended to be obtained for later phases and upper fills of ditches in research- and developer-led post excavation strategies, meaning that these phases are under-represented. It remains feasible, therefore, that there is considerable evidence for 9th, 10th, 11th century or even later activity at a number of excavated ringforts or other early medieval complexes, which may simply not be borne out by radiocarbon data alone. Indeed, in many cases, these later phases are explicit in excavation reports, where late phases may be inferred from material culture. Yet, because they are not accompanied by radiocarbon dates, these late horizons are necessarily excluded from syntheses based on large C14 datasets. For example, at Site 25ii, Hughes' Lot and Gortmakellis (both near Cashel, Co. Tipperary), ringforts established in the 7th to 8th century were significantly remodelled in the 10th to 12th centuries, (Ó Droma 2011; Moore *et al.* 2010). For this reason, we must be wary of models that are too heavily weighted towards a 'decline' and calamity explanation, and which explain complex and multi-faceted data in demographic terms. Nevertheless, a central point emerging from this research remains, that the 9th and 10th centuries emerge as a period of key change, both in terms of a cessation of construction (and by inference, investment) in new, highly visible settlement architectures. Potentially in many cases, even if not in all cases, this change occurred alongside the abandonment of settlement enclosures constructed in earlier centuries. This latter point, however, remains to be verified by rigorous assessment of archival data and new fieldwork (see now O'Sullivan and McCormick 2017: 124-125; Fitzpatrick 2009).

Even before the surge of excavations associated with the Celtic Tiger era in Ireland, a shift in settlement dynamics during the 9th to 11th centuries had already been hypothesised by several scholars (e.g. Doherty 1998; 2000; Lynn 1994; O'Keeffe 2000; O'Connor 1998). One of the material indicators of this change may be souterrains, normally dating to the 8th to 11th century AD, and of which c. 3,500 exist in the Irish landscape today (see Clinton 2000). The function of these underground tunnels has been debated, but a role as a place of refuge, as well as an locus for underground storage for foodstuffs, remain the most widely accepted interpretations. Hence, these monuments may form a proxy for settlement in the 9th and 11th centuries. Some were clearly added to earlier ringforts, enclosure complexes or even ecclesiastical sites that remained in use; they may be cut through the ditch of a settlement enclosure, for example, or even keyed into a structure. Nevertheless, excavation has failed to demonstrate that souterrains are commonly associated with unenclosed settlements, and many recently excavated examples are seemingly isolated. While present throughout the island, they can also occur in dense concentrations in particular areas, like Co. Antrim in the northeast, which suggests regional trends. Even excepting the principle that they form a proxy for settlement or at least human activity in their immediate environs, we are still faced with the issue that any hypothetical new form(s) of settlement, whether enclosed or unenclosed, associated with these monuments, has yet to be recognised, either as a field monument or within excavation data.

Against this background of clear evidence for change, and new monument types emerging, arguments have been forwarded hypothesising a shift towards nucleated settlement associated with new forms of lordship from the 9th century onwards. In a very influential paper Charles Doherty (1998: 323) argued that a new settlement dynamic should be recognised from the 9th century onwards, whereby open unenclosed settlements became the norm for large proportions of the population, rather than just the poor, servile or unfree, as often assumed for earlier centuries. In Doherty's view this was part of a wider process by which the clientship system bound up with the ringfort as a phenomenon, broke down, to be replaced by a more 'feudal' form of social organisation, in which large proportions of the population were relocated from ringforts to unenclosed settlements. Several scholars have also advocated a settlement dislocation in the 9th to 10th centuries (Edwards 2005: 299; O'Keeffe 2000: 26-27; Ó Carragáin 2010: 222), but the degree to which this should be seen as an aspect of a proto-feudal development, or as a phenomenon that was in any way organised or directed by elites, remains to be demonstrated conclusively. For scholars like O'Keeffe (2000) and MacCotter (2008), this proto-feudal process nevertheless involved not just settlement re-location, but new forms of taxation and landscape re-organisation, including estate division. There is much to commend the idea that land (re-) organisation and the networks of obligation associated with same, underwent drastic change in the 10th to 12th centuries in particular, but as yet, the evidence for settlement re-location specifically, and moreover, widespread nucleation has proved slim or exiguous at best (for example, Killaloe: Bradley 1994). In Anglo-Saxon England good evidence for a move towards settlement nucleation from the 8th century onwards has emerged from grey literature and excavation within villages and townships around the English countryside (Wright 2015a; 2015b; see also Reynolds 2002; Loveluck 2013 for general background to 7th- to 9th-century settlement change). Yet, to date, the same cannot be said of semi-rural or urban excavations in villages and towns around Ireland, excepting the major urban centres and Hiberno-Norse port towns of Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Wexford and Limerick (e.g. Bradley 1985). Even where documentary sources refer to *baile* or 'townships' in association with lordly and elite residences of the 10th to 12th centuries, excavation has not provided clear or substantial indications of associated settlements, whether nucleated or not, from the period (e.g. Duneight: Waterman 1963; Killaloe: Bradley 1994).

Despite, therefore, the merits of these models that present a transformation in forms of lordship as a driver of settlement dislocation and the disjuncture currently detectable within the archaeological evidence, this period remains exceedingly problematic from a material perspective. The very fact that the 9th to 11th centuries has emerged in recent decades as a major issue in terms of archaeological visibility and settlement remains is at least as striking as the scale of the ringfort phenomenon and wider settlement boon of the 5th to 8th centuries. Nevertheless, issues with post-excavation bias at least for this author undermine ideas of collapse, systemic decline or a major demographic shift (e.g. Hannah and McLaughlin 2019; McLaughlin *et al.* 2018). There is scope for both targeted analysis of late horizons within excavated assemblages, and for nuanced alternative models to be developed. In particular, arguments centred on collapse or decline narratives become even more problematic when considered against the backdrop to other key argument about this period, namely: (i) that proto-feudal process hypothesised by some authors as affecting 10th to 12th century Ireland; and (ii) the fact that the period AD 800-1100 is the period within which we have the greatest evidence for royal power, the existence of refined, and generally well-developed bureaucratic and governmental apparatus.

Royal Power and Governance

In a seminal contribution, the late Donnachadh Ó Corráin (1978) tracked developments with regard to royal governance in Ireland in association with the crystallisation of a national identity. A threefold hierarchy of kings characterises the early medieval period in Ireland, with the pinnacle of that hierarchy being a series of supra-regional rulers, often (although not invariably) encompassing major provincial territories. These rulers were usually drawn from large-scale dynastic confederacies claiming descent from a single common ancestor (e.g. Uí Néill). Ó Corráin argued that from the 7th century onwards, these supra-regional (*a quo* provincial) rulers, began to extend their power over sub-ordinate kings, such that lower order kingships were ultimately relegated to the status of dukes or lords. In some cases, this change was effected through the usurpation of minor kingships by collateral lineages of higher order ruling dynasties (e.g. Ó Corráin 1973). The implication within this was that local kingdoms which had been ruled semi-autonomously during the 5th to 7th centuries, became constituent territories within wider, territorially-defined systems of rulership. Within Ó Corráin's model, these new systems of rulership were increasingly disassociated from personal relationships during the 8th to 10th centuries (for critique, see: Etchingham 1996: 128-36; 1999, 146–7; Zumbuhl 2005: 275-84; Gleeson 2017). Alongside these 7th century and later developments, indications from at least the 8th century suggest a growing corpus of royal officials and bureaucrats: a royal reeve or steward, individuals tasked with administering justice, governing constituent territories or collecting renders and dues (Ó Corráin 1977-9; 1978). The 8th and 9th centuries thus emerge within this data as the period within which we have the some of the earliest evidence for these titles and offices, but, during the 10th and 11th centuries in particular, the chronicles present a much more formalised, pervasive and commonplace account of these individuals and their actions. Similarly, by at least the 7th century there existed some semblance of an idea of the inhabitants of Ireland as a single *natio*, with clear evidence for aspirations on the part of pre-eminent kings at the head of the major dynastic confederacies to rule throughout the island of Ireland (e.g. Bhreatnach 1995; 1996; Binchy 1958; 1970). In many respects, this aspiration to island-wide rulership in the secular sphere, was entangled with aspirations towards a single ecclesiastical hierarchy centred on the See of St Patrick at Armagh. Thus, the Uí Néill, who ruled much of the north and midlands of Ireland directly, and could fairly claim at points of the 7th and 8th centuries to dominate the eastern seaboard and Connaught in the west, courted the support of the Church of Armagh, and forwarded the idea of their pre-eminent royal site, the Hill of Tara, as the seat of a kingship of Ireland since time immemorial (Doherty 1991; Swift 1994; see also Mac Shamhráin 1996). The main opponents to the Uí Néill hegemony in the north, were the Eóganachta kings of Cashel in the south, whose control of Munster saw them patronise Emly as a major ecclesiastical centre, and equally forward Cashel as the seat of a nascent kingship of Ireland. The 8th and 9th centuries is in many ways characterised by the struggles between these rival polities, with the Uí Néill generally the more successful. Although many kings claimed to be rulers of all of Ireland up to this point, few made that claim into anything approaching reality before the 9th century. Yet, from the 9th century, and particularly during the rule of kings like Maelseachnaill mac Máel Ruainid (ob. 862) of the Uí Néill, or Feidlimid mac Chrimthann (ob. 842) of the Eóganachta, those claims were increasingly matched by realities in the practice of rulership. Perhaps the first kings to truly exercise effective control of the entire islands of Ireland, however, belong to the 10th-century scions of these dynasties, namely Máel Seachnaill mac Domhnaill (ob. 1002) and Brian Boru (ob. 1014) (further Gleeson 2014; Mac Shamhráin 2005; Binchy 1970; Ó Corráin 1978)

It would be going too far to state that these kings were completely effective rulers of the entire island of Ireland in anything approaching direct rule, but nevertheless, their pre-eminence was backed-up and predicated on the existence of relatively well integrated supra-regional territories. A small but important group of retainers provided an effective form of proto-bureaucratic governance for these same territories. Of course, the exact character of non-royal bureaucratic offices, and their effectiveness in reality is a point of some debate. There are many elements to Ó Corráin's analysis and model that are now open to challenge. For instance, some of the rulers titled *dux* or *tigerna* in 7th to 9th century chronicles belonged to lineages that did retain royal status later, when their descendants were again titled *ríg*, 'king' in later centuries (e.g. Etchingham 1996; Zumbuhl 2005). Similarly, the degree to which offices were commonplace or effective at an institutional level of rulership, and tied to a particular office of kingship (i.e. of Ireland, of Cashel or Tara), is certainly open to debate; many may have been honorific, aspirational, personal and charismatic in origin, or indeed, simply wishful thinking. Nevertheless, regardless of whether aspirations matched reality, the point remains that the 10th century emerges as a period where we have some of the best evidence for royal bureaucratic power and the existence of a governmental apparatus. This is also when we have the clearest indication of kings who aspired to rule effectively throughout the island as kings of Ireland, and perhaps even realised that ambition on occasion (above). This makes the dislocation evident in the archaeological evidence even more compelling, especially so in light of the models proposed by Doherty (1998; 2000), O'Keeffe (2000) and others (e.g. MacCotter 2008) regarding transformations in lordship and the emergence of a feudal-like society that directly impacted settlement patterns.

It is perhaps too simplistic to imagine that we should link the archaeological evidence for dislocation, with the documentary evidence for expanding, precocious and relatively expansive royal governance; as it stands, our evidence remains much too slim, coded and problematic for any certainty. Future excavations, and in particular more close-grained analysis of later phases, will hopefully clarify the character of settlement too, but currently, our understanding of this material is highly exiguous. Nevertheless, within the context of these two key paradigms affecting broad-scale understanding of the early medieval period, and centering on the 10th century AD, it may be useful to consider the evidence for royal centres and other 'places of power' during this period. As we will see, this evidence is also problematic, and indeed, much further work is needed, but there is nevertheless some interesting patterns within the archaeological data that allow tentative hypotheses to be presented.

Transforming Places of Power

The principal royal centres of early medieval Ireland which have seen substantial programmes of excavation are mainly Garranes, Clogher, Knowth, Lagore and Moynagh Lough. These sites span a range of functions, being both royal residences, ceremonial foci used for inauguration, and assembly places. Importantly, these functions were fluid, and could shift through time, with important changes in the nature, character and role of sites manifested in their archaeological horizons too (for further discussion, see Gleeson 2021). The recent publication of a major research programme on the Garranes landscape has demonstrated that while activity at the ringfort of Lisnacaheragh, Garranes, does terminate during the 6th century AD, other settlement enclosures in the immediate hinterland evidence activity down to the 10th century (O'Brien and Hogan 2021; Ó Ríordáin 1941). While similar levels of excavation have not occurred in the hinterlands of other major royal sites, excavation evidence from these sites does demonstrate more long-lived chronologies, and many similarities in terms of their material culture and overall development. However, there are also important differences between these royal sites. Clogher and Knowth might be regarded as sites that overtly 'use' the past (e.g. Bradley 1987; 2002). Clogher is a ringfort enclosed within an Iron Age sub-rectangular hillfort, itself remodelled in the early medieval period (Warner 1979; 1988; 2000; 2006). Knowth is a major Neolithic passage tomb surrounded by a series of passage tombs, and re-used from the 7th century onwards as a place of royal ceremony, perhaps residence and resource concentration (Eogan 1968; 2012; Gleeson 2018, 111-2). Lagore and Moynagh Lough are crannogs, namely human-made islands in lake shallows used for activity since the pre-historic period, but seeing marked changes in the 6th to 8th centuries, when they became royal centres (Lagore: Hencken 1950; Warner 1985/6; Lynn 1985/86; Moynagh: Bradley 1991; 1993; 2011). In all of these cases, there is substantial evidence that the use of these sites as royal residence and/or seats of power followed protracted periods of sacralisation and ritualised activity (see Gleeson 2012: 1-5; 2021). At Lagore, for instance, concentrated periods of deposition of human remains culminates at the start of the early medieval period, when a period of deposition of occipitals (the back of the skull) is followed by a transformation of the site into a centre of production for elite high-status material culture, possibly now with a residential focus (Gleeson 2012; 2021; Carty and Gleeson 2013). Moynagh Lough too, has at least five early medieval phases, and while the early 6th- to 7th-century phases are characterised by high status material culture (including imports) and very small buildings, the 8th to 9th century phases describe the use of the site for the manufacture of penannular brooches in defined metal-working areas

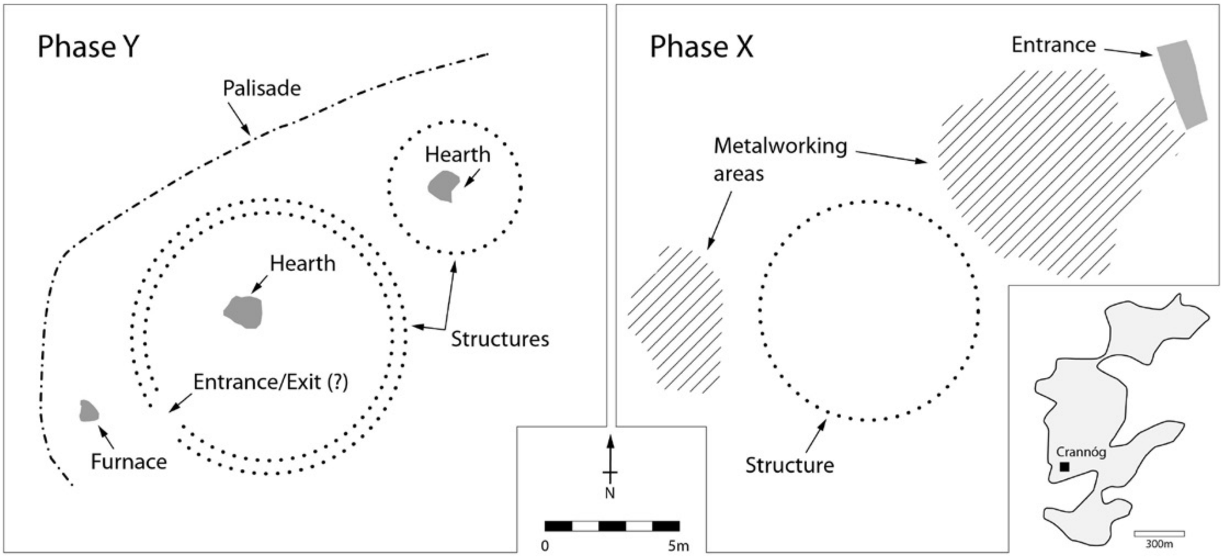

Figure 5.1. Schematic plan of the eighth- and ninth-century phases at Moynagh Lough, showing the large centrally positioned structures and metalworking areas in relation to the palisades (after Bradley 1991) © author

surrounding a large structure, very likely a royal house (Figure 5.1; Bradley 1991; 1993; 2011; see also O'Sullivan 2008).

Like the 7th to 9th century phases of Moynagh Lough and Lagore, Clogher (Warner 2000) is characterised by high status material culture, including imports in earlier phases, and the production of elite objects (zoomorphic penannular brooches: see Kilbride-Jones 1980). The possibility that a natural knoll was scarped into a mound abutting the royal ringfort, suggests the possibility of royal ceremonies, perhaps inauguration, being performed at the site (Warner 1988). A similar status is perhaps indicated by an iron bull-head object that may have represented a standard found in the ditch of the site. The excavator similarly suggests that the interior of the ringfort enclosure was occupied by an extraordinarily large royal house, but as the site is not fully published, what would be a very unusual structure cannot be independently evaluated (Warner 1988; 2000).

Knowth paints a somewhat different picture to Moynagh, Lagore or Clogher. Knowth had long been identified as a royal site of the Síl nÁedo Sláine, a dynasty who ruled Brega, a kingdom approximating to modern day Cos. Meath, Dublin and Louth. Two principal phases of activity in the first millennium AD were identified by the excavator, George Eogan (2012; Figures 5.2 and 5.3). The first saw the development of a cemetery in the 7th to 9th centuries in which the satellite tombs of the great passage tomb mound were opened and used as vaults (Figure 5.1). Shortly after the earliest burials, two large ditches were dug around and cut into the passage tomb mound. The excavator interpreted these ditches as the remnants of a ringfort, and namely a royal residence, but, in fact, they might better be interpreted as designed to create a large stepped mound used for ceremonial activity, perhaps as an assembly or inauguration mound from the 8th century AD onwards. The 8th and 9th centuries also saw the passages of the tomb entered, with the orthostats inscribed with inscriptions in both ogham and half uncial script (Swift 2009b; Byrne 2009; Gleeson 2018, 111-2; contra Eogan 2012: 45-82). The excavator suggests that there was thereafter a hiatus in the 9th century, followed by a second major phase in the 10th and 11th century (Eogan 2012: 73-81). The date of the inscriptions, as well as the absence of radiocarbon dated material or closely dateable material culture from the later phase suggest that the evidence for a hiatus may not be straightforward; the second major phase of activity may better therefore be dated to the 9th to 11th centuries (see Gleeson 2020: 77-82). Regardless, this phase marked a very drastic change in the nature of the site: it is characterised by a series of rectangular buildings and souterrains, not all of which may have been in contemporaneous use together (Figure 5.3). While some of the buildings are substantial, at least some are also unlikely to have been dwellings, and some may have been for specialist activities or storage (Wallace in Eogan 2012: 713–20). The arrangement and positioning of these buildings too, following the line of the earlier ditches, enhances the impression of a terraced arrangement. More crucially, the souterrains which characterise this phase are underground tunnels, commonly understood as being for refuge and/or storage (further Clinton 2001). The latter function, storage, is apt when the numbers of souterrains in use contemporaneously are considered at Knowth, as they would have facilitated the storage of large amounts of agricultural produce, and potentially the renders paid to a king and therefore stored at the heart of a royal estate and administrative seat (e.g. Gleeson 2018: 112). The kings of North Brega in this period, for instance, were styled metonymically 'king of Knowth' (Swift 2009a for context). The possibility that Knowth was an assembly place in the 7th to 9th centuries may provide an important context for the concentration of storage facilities here in the 9th to 11th centuries, given that assemblies were traditionally locations and occasions for rendering and redistributing tribute (further Gleeson 2015; 2018: 111-112). Yet, the 9th century marks a major change in the character of the site whereby it becomes more akin to what we might expect a *villa regalis* to look like. Regardless of whether the buildings at Knowth are seen as residential or not, they are unlikely to have been royal halls, and the concentration of souterrains built into the great passage tomb itself, marks a clear disjuncture with earlier phases, where the mound might be accorded a symbolic and ceremonial role.

This 9th century disjuncture is, moreover, something that Knowth shares with the other well excavated royal sites of Moynagh Lough, Lagore and Clogher: there is only limited evidence for activity at these sites from the start of the 10th century. Even within the Garranes landscape, evidence for activity from the 10th century onwards in limited (see O'Brien and Hogan 2021). Lagore has perhaps slightly more evidence, albeit in the form of 9th- to 10th-century finds lacking clear contexts, either from the excavations or in the early 'pre-excavation' finds from the site. As at Moynagh Lough, the absence of 10th century and later phases may well be linked to truncation, with the disturbance of significant areas of the upper stratigraphy of the crannog mounds prior to excavation (both as a result of looting, agricultural action and bull-dozing). Nevertheless, while this is a very real issue at these sites, we might still expect a greater degree of 10th- to 11th-century material culture to be known from these sites if there were significant late phases. At Clogher too, activity seems largely to have ceased by the end of the 9th century.

It does seem, therefore, that AD 900 marks an important change in the character of excavated royal sites in Ireland. Notwithstanding the caveats raised above regarding: (i) the degree to which titles like *dux* and *tigerna* permanently excluded minor, lower order polities from kingship; and (ii) whether there remains considerable evidence for continuity in excavated settlements through the 10th century, the evidence of royal sites themselves is somewhat less ambiguous. They either ceased being used as places of royal power and performance in the 10th century (Lagore, Clogher, Moynagh), or changed drastically (Knowth). One element of the transformation that these changes imply, is perhaps a shift in the locus of power towards new regions within Ireland, new polities and new foci of royal power. The emergence of Dál Cais, saw the Éoganachta replaced as rulers of Munster in the 10th century AD, while the Cenél nÉogain and Clann Cholmáin exercised an increasing monopoly of the kingship of Tara at the expense of Cenél Conaill and Síl nÁedo Sláine from the latter 8th century AD onwards. The royal centres of these ascendant dynasties were sometimes re-located as a facet of these geopolitical transformations, with Aileach and Tulach Óg (Co. Tyrone) amongst the Cenél nÉogain, Cró Inis and Dún na Sgiath (Lough Ennel Co. Westmeath) for Clann Cholmáin, or Killaloe and Kincora on the River Shannon for Dál Cais.

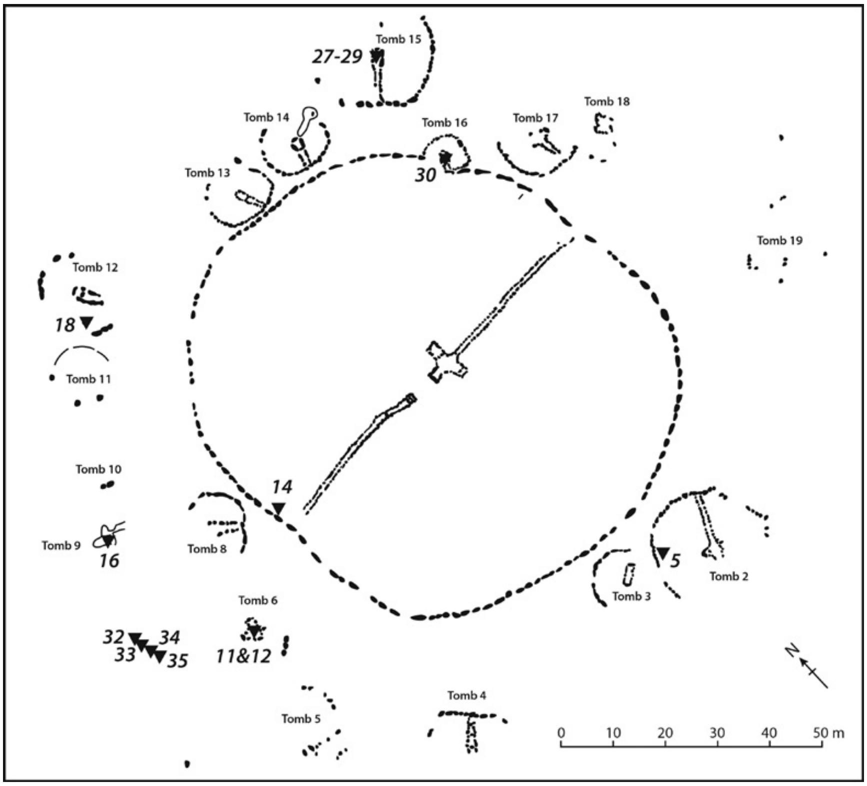

Figure 5.2. Plan showing central and satellite passage tombs at Knowth. The position of seventh to ninth-century AD burials is noted, and numbered in larger italic font. (after Eogan 2012, Figure 3.1). © author

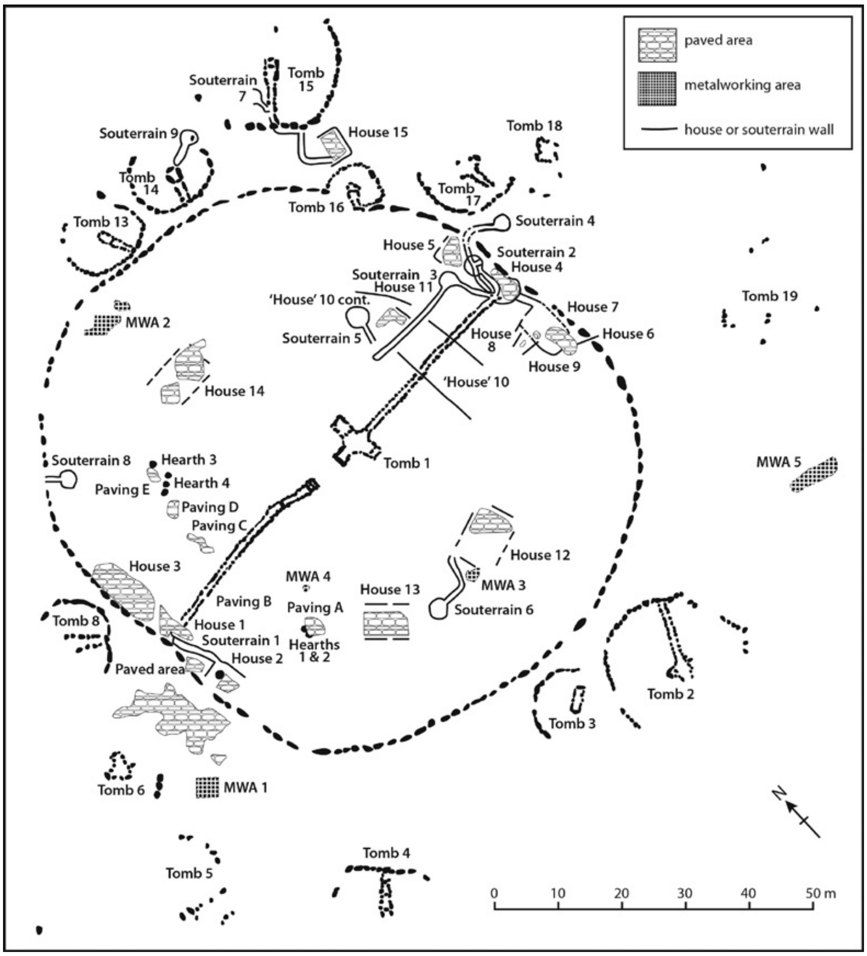

Figure 5.3. Plan of the main features of early medieval Phase 2 at Knowth, 9th to 11th centuries AD (after Eogan 2012, Figure 4.1). © author

It is telling that there has been very little fieldwork or excavation focused on these major centres of power in 9th- to 10th-century Ireland (excepting Karkov and Ruffing 1997). Similarly, this period also witnessed a much closer relationship between these leading dynasties and major churches within their kingdom or political orbit (see Hughes 1966: 111-122, 134-142; Ó Corráin 1973; Ó Carragáin 2010, 120-134 and 242-252). So, for instance, the Cenél nÉogain may have maintained a royal seat at Armagh, the Clann Cholmáin at Kells, and the Dál Cais caput at Kincora was adjacent to the major church of Killaloe (see Herbert 1988; Bradley 1994). It is perhaps no coincidence, therefore, that the 9th to 11th centuries is not only a period of drastic settlement change and abandonment of old royal sites, it is also the period when we have the greatest evidence for patronage of the church in the form of high crosses, pre-Romanesque stone churches and round towers, the vast majority of which date to the period AD 800-1100 (further Ó Carragáin 2010a).

The use of major ecclesiastical centres as seats of royal power has an established pedigree in Europe during this period too, with evidence of church patronage part and parcel of a broader change to which we can imagine Irish trajectories were equally aligned (e.g. Bernhardt 1993). This perhaps allows us to better contextualise the evidence adduced by Ó Corráin (1978; 1973) for the 8th to 11th centuries being a period of growing royal power. Nonetheless, one aspect of Ó Corráin's (e.g. 1973) argument that may help to explain the cessation of activity at minor royal sites is the relegation of the dynastic polities ruling minor kingdoms and collateral lineages to subsidiary royal or administrative offices and nascent bureaucracies. We might wonder, for example, whether these developments are best understood as expressing a fundamental change in character and role of royal places? Two late 8th or 9th century texts which appear to formalise the relationship between subsidiary yet royal subject polities and their regional overlords include the *Airgialla Charter Poem* (see Bhreathnach 2005) detailing the privileged position of the Airgialla relative to the Uí Néill, and the *Frithfolad Muman* (O'Keeffe 1932), a text detailing the offices within the royal household of the king of Cashel. The *Frithfolad* in particular is highly schematised and unlikely to bear much resemblance to reality. Yet, it is nevertheless notable that the offices described in the text (e.g. steward, doorkeeper, etc.) are specified as being held by the kings of subsidiary polities, namely subject kings of the province. One may wonder whether texts such as the *Frithfolad* imply a transformation in the source of authority and legitimacy for local, minor kings. In such a scenario, authority attained through the use of ancestral royal sites within their own kingdoms in earlier centuries, was replaced with a legitimacy conferred by regional overlords, who authorised a hierarchical structure of inter-linked kingships through the use of offices and administrative positions within their royal households.

Conclusions

Where all sources of evidence for early medieval Ireland are agreed, is that this was far from a period of stasis, but one defined by fluid and dynamic socio-political and economic landscapes. A number of periods where key changes can be identified are identifiable in historical and archaeological evidence. In order to understand the archaeological evidence of the 10th century we must necessarily look more broadly at changes along a spectrum for the latter half of the period, namely the 8th to 11th centuries. Emerging from this, is the somewhat paradoxical fact that in many respects the greatest evidence for royal power and governance, is contemporary with a drastic decline in archaeological evidence for settlement and the monumental expression of same during the 9th to 11th centuries in Ireland. Indeed, the latter is so drastic that it has even been suggested as evidence of a systemic economic and demographic decline. Yet, while these arguments are well-made, there are methodological issues that must be contended with by future research for such assessments to be either accepted or moderated. We must balance any conclusions against the probability that we have good evidence for formative socio-political drivers too in the 9th to 11th centuries, namely predatory regimes of extractive rulership, and extensive supra-regional governance. The 10th century in Ireland is, therefore, in many ways a crucial and defining period, particularly for polities with centralising tendencies and associated with the major kingships. When paired with the fact that many minor royal sites also fall out of use or change drastically at this point, the case that socio-political developments are one of the key driving characteristics seems considerable. This may be because 10th century polities were being incorporated into expanding and more cohesive supra-regional kingdoms, with consequent changes in the nature of power and locus of authority altering drastically too. While the evidential basis of any argument for proto-feudal changes remains slim, it would seem that archaeological fieldwork has equally thus far been directed at the wrong places in order to understand these changes within the context of 10th and 11th century society. The role of the church in fostering and perhaps facilitating transformations in the nature of lordship remains to be fully appreciated, but the surge of evidence for patronage at this time is suggestive. The 10th century thus remains problematic, but central to many key paradigms for understanding wider transformations within early medieval society in Ireland. We are unlikely to be able to evaluate all of the competing hypotheses until the absence of evidence for rural societies is addressed, whether by targeted re-appraisal of archival materials, or fieldwork focused on the major places of power and religion during the 9th to 11th centuries.

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Assembly practices in 10th-century England: continuities and innovations in military mobilisation

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Abstract

This contribution outlines evidence for the development during the tenth century in England of an important local administrative institution known as the 'hundred'. It argues that the origin of the hundred is related directly to that of regional strongholds—burhs—that were created during the West Saxon kings' wars with the Vikings. In this development, hundreds together with burhs, can be regarded as superseding earlier systems of administration and military organization, aspects of which can be revealed by archaeological and place-name research. In turn, the emergence of hundreds, as a dense network of local administrative units, represented a significant moment in the territorialisation of royal power. Governance shifted from being an open system comprising a variety of different community forms and processes to one that was fully ordered, regulated, and part of the quotidian experience of local people.

Keywords

Anglo-Saxon; hundred; assembly places; territory formation; military landscape

The 'hundred' is first mentioned in a mid-tenth-century source, commonly known as the 'Hundred Ordinance', surviving in Old English in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, manuscript 383, and in two Latin versions, the *Quadripartitus* and in the *Consiliatio Cnuti* (Whitelock 1955: 393). The text describes the schedule and procedures of the hundred court, suggesting that there were specific locations for regular four-weekly assemblies that were used to settle disputes, conduct trade, impose fines and other punishments, and—importantly—mobilize armed posses (effectively war bands) to enforce the law (Liebermann 1903: 192-194). Hundreds were usually named after the place where courts were held, so they were both a system and a geographical entity.

Later sources emphasise the importance of this institution. Commissioners working on Domesday Book, the great survey of landholding and taxable assets completed for William the Conqueror in AD1086, collected information through the hundred court. In the completed survey all entries are listed firstly under subdivisions of the country known as 'shires', and then subdivisions of the shire, usually referred to as 'hundreds', but in parts of the north and east called 'wapentakes' (Stenton 1971: 505; Loyn 1974: 1; Williams 2014). Using evidence in Domesday Book, the physical extents of hundreds can be approximated. By plotting named vills within each, supplemented by the boundaries of estates, parishes, and hundreds mapped at later dates, the approximate extents of 812 hundreds can be determined (Thorn 1989; Brookes 2020). The resulting plot shows us that, at least south of the River Humber, these hundreds formed a dense pattern of local districts, which, since shire courts only met twice a year, were the main way by which people had contact with royal government (Loyn 1974: 1) (Figure 6.1).

The origins of the hundred are much debated. The Hundred Ordinance is generally believed to belong to the reign of Edgar in the mid-tenth century and there is only one clear reference to hundreds before that – in legislation issued by King Edmund, circa AD939–40, again referring to the organisation of armed groups to pursue thieves (III Edmund, clause 2; Chadwick 1905, 239-48; Stenton 1971: 292-301; Whitelock 1955: 393; Molyneaux 2015: 141-157; Lambert 2017: 133, 229). It should be noted that seventh-century Merovingian laws similarly refer to *centena* 'hundreds' as both geographical areas and the posses that a *centenarius* led in pursuit of thieves (Molyneaux 2015: 144). Despite this, recent authors like George Molyneaux and Tom Lambert have focussed more on the legal and mercantile dimensions of hundreds which they regard largely to be an innovation of the mid-tenth century, whilst acknowledging that some kinds of territorial entities probably existed since early in the Anglo-Saxon period (Molyneaux 2011: 84; 2015: 146-155; Lambert 2017). Supporting their view is additional landscape evidence that suggests that

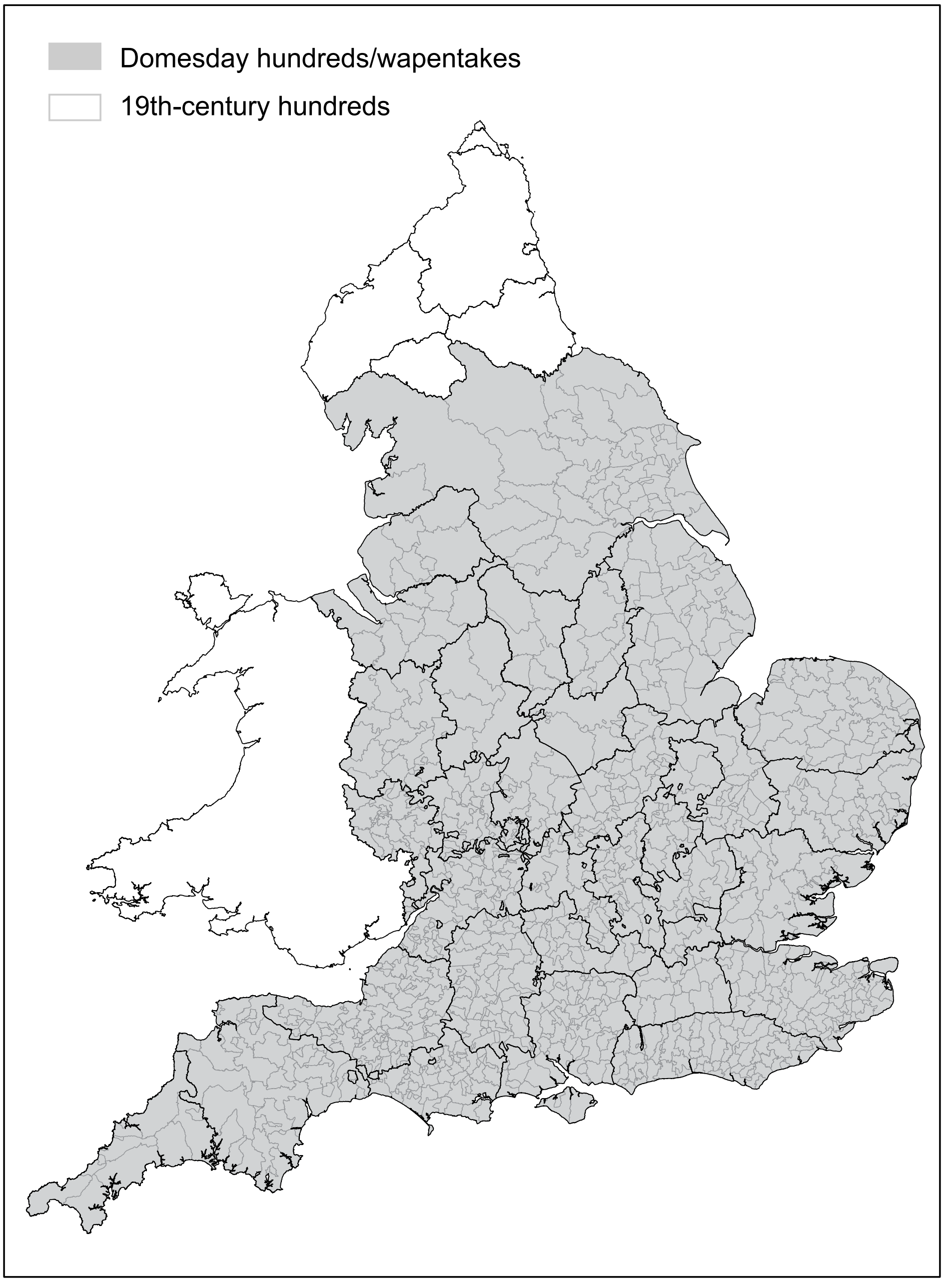

Figure 6.1. Shires and hundreds reconstructed from evidence in Domesday Book.

hundreds were a relatively late development. Some areas in Kent, for example, had yet to have hundreds at the time of the Domesday survey (Lawson 2004), while in parts of northern England, twelve-carucate 'hundreds' appear in the early twelfth century as supplementary divisions of wapentakes (Round 1895: 196-204; Stenton 1910: 89).

In trying to narrow down their origins, we can compare the pattern of hundreds with other territorial entities that we know of from early sources. Bede, for example, writing in the early eighth century, refers to types of territories using the Latin terms *regiones* and *provinciæ* (e.g. Bede *HE* II.14, III.20, IV.13, IV.19, V.19, trans. Colgrave and Mynors 1969; Campbell 1979). Such territories may on occasion have been relatively well defined. Both *regiones* and *provinciæ* are often named with reference to geographical features such as rivers or important central places, and are co-areal with geographical basins defined by watersheds, and these factors allow us to reconstruct some of them. Perhaps the most widely known is the *regio* of the *Hroþingas* in Essex. The extent of this putative 'folk' grouping—the land of 'Hroða's people'—is argued to be represented by an adjoining cluster of eight parishes all of which are named

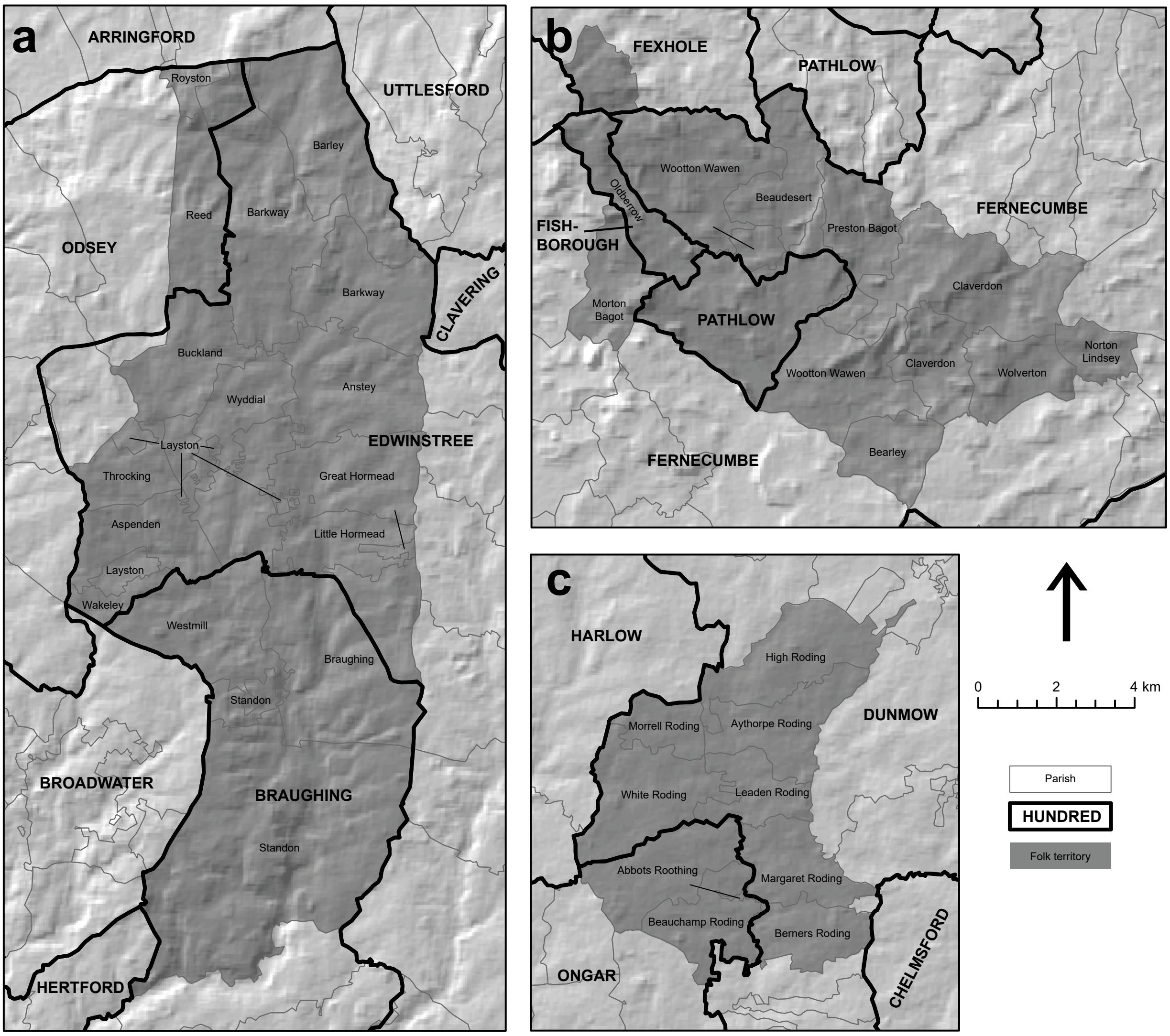

Figure 6.2. Some well-known 'folk' territories and their relationship to Domesday hundreds: a) Braughing; b) Stoppingas; c) Roding.

'Roding' lying either side of the River Roding and extending to the watershed of the river basin (Bassett 1989; 1997). By combining the evidence from landscape, administrative boundaries, and place-names, scholars have postulated the existence of a number of similar territories, such as the 'folk-territories' of the *Stoppingas* and Braughing (e.g. Bassett 1989; Blair 1991: 22-24; Brookes 2011; Rippon 2012: 186-191; Williamson 2013) (Figure 6.2).

Significantly, the existence of these territories appears to belong to a chronological horizon predating the administrative geography recorded in Domesday Book – by AD1086 the Roding parishes lay in two different hundreds (Dunmow and Ongar), neither of which preserves the name of the *Hroþingas* (Reaney 1935, map of hundreds and parishes). Likewise, many other postulated territories, such as those of the *Stoppingas* and Braughing, are not respected by later hundredal divisions. Indeed, in scale most 'folk-territories' are significantly larger than hundreds. From a survey of such known entities, Stephen Rippon has suggested that they typically cover 250–400 sq. km (2012, 151), while the average size of hundreds south of the River Humber is just 105 sq. km. In keeping with this observation, it is notable that only few (*c.* 4%) Domesday hundreds incorporate community names in Old English *-ingas*, *-sǣtan* 'a dweller, resident, inhabitant' or their semantic equivalents (Ekwall 1962; Baker 2015a), and even here the impression is that hundreds were a late attempt to formalise, or reconstruct, earlier arrangements rather than fossilise existing ones. Similarly, except when they converge along natural topographical features such as waterways and watershed boundaries, do hundred boundaries respect the extents of putative groups (*pace* Williamson 2013: 868). In form and function hundreds would seem to represent an administrative innovation largely ignoring earlier 'folk-territories'. When and how then did the hundred come about?

A key innovation in the extension of royal administration would seem to have been the 'shire' (in Old English *scīr*) – the larger unit of territorial assessment used to organise the Domesday survey. In the south of England, at least some of these shires (e.g. Essex, Kent, Surrey) comprised the extents of kingdoms in existence by the seventh century, but elsewhere in Wessex they seem to have originated as subdivisions of the kingdom administered through different royal estates (Keynes 2014). A notable example of this is the putative 'small shire' of *Hylthingas* – a territorial unit apparently created to serve the emporium of *Hamwic* (Saxon Southampton) in the late seventh or early eighth centuries (Eagles 2015: 129). This 'small shire' would seem to be a precursor to a wider system, rolled out over the eighth century, of more extensive shires apparently administered and taking their names from their principal estate centre, e.g. Dorset-shire (Dorchester), Hampshire (Southampton), Somerset-shire (Somerton), and Wiltshire (Wilton).

The key function of the shire, at least in its earliest form, appears to have been the organisation of armed forces (Molyneaux 2015: 165). Indeed, it is this function that links the shire in Wessex with those originating as early kingdoms, as forces were answerable to the leadership of regional ealdormen, the term given to subordinate regional military leaders (Lambert 2017: 116-117). In areas absorbed by Wessex, the 'identity' of these regional military units remained that of pre-existing systems of mobilisation and authority under client kings or their equivalent (e.g. the 'people of Kent'), whereas in Wessex military organisation had devolved to shires and their ealdormen. The earliest examples of shire units being used in this way appear in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (*ASC* hereafter, trans. Garmonsway 1972) during the ninth century, when the men of *Wilsǣte* (AD 802), *Sumorsǣte* and *Dornsǣte* (AD 848), Hampshire and Berkshire (AD 860) are called into battle. What the shire, therefore, enabled kings to do, was to regulate and lock in at a regional scale a military response to external threats.

Using landscape archaeology and place-names the broad military contours of this shire system can now be sketched out. The *ASC* accounts suggest that shire units were assembled *ad hoc* under their local ealdorman for a specific task (a single battle or rapid succession of battles). Recently John Baker and

I (2013a; 2016) have argued that places where these shire-level units were mobilised are visible in the distribution of places incorporating the Old English place-name element *here* 'army', mustering sites named in early sources, and a class of assembly place combining these two types of evidence, which we have called 'hanging promontories' (Figure 6.3).

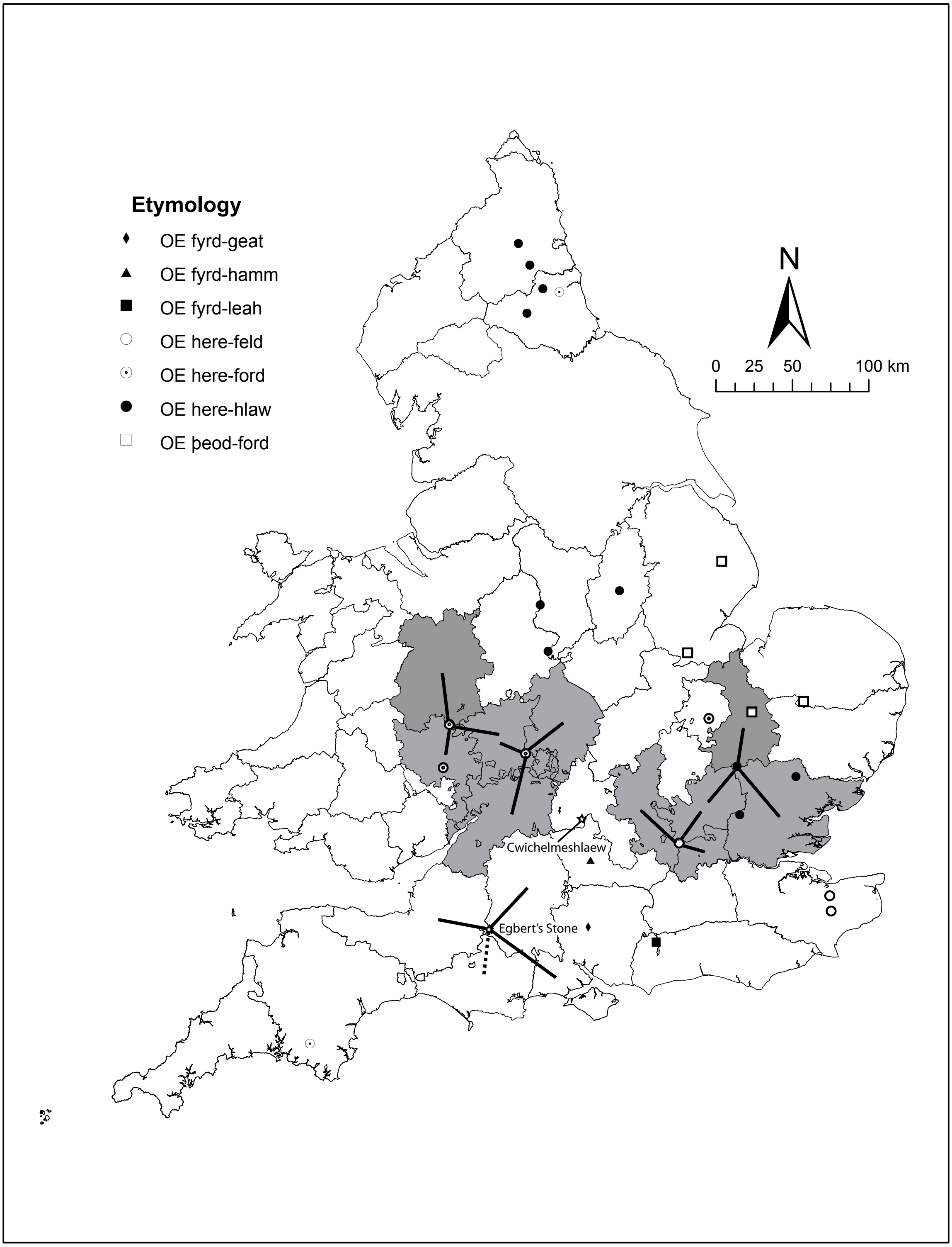

Figure 6.3. The shire system of military mobilisation.

These sites have a very distinctive landscape character, combining a number of topographical features as distinctive ensembles. However, they stand out not only for their idiosyncratic form but importantly also through their association to major territorial boundaries. Each 'hanging promontory' lies on or near to a shire border and is orientated so as to provide panoramic views across its associated shire. Each was connected by major routes to the adjacent shire estate centres, and in the case of at least one—the shire-level mustering site of Scutchamer Knob, on a former boundary of Oxfordshire and Berkshire, recorded in the *ASC* (AD 1006) and as a venue for a shire assembly in AD 990–2 (Sawyer 1968: cat. no. 1454; Gelling 1973–6, II: 481-482)—it was also at the head of an extensive relay of beacons stretching from the centre of England to the south coast (Hill and Sharp 1997). The impression gained from these locations is that they were deliberately chosen to function as part of a shire-level system of military mobilization.

While kings could be expected to draw on their own military retinues in times of war, clauses in charters and other sources suggest that there existed also a system by which fighters from the free population could be enlisted for military service (Hollister 1962; Abels 1988). In all likelihood these places—hanging promontories—served as the locations for such military mustering. This system was clearly still being used in AD878, when—as the *ASC* tells us—Alfred the Great "rode to Egbert's Stone to the east of Selwood, and there came to join him all Somerset and Wiltshire and that part of Hampshire which was on this side of the sea." Egbert's Stone can reasonably securely be identified as a hanging promontory site of Moot Hill Piece, adjacent to the county boundary between Dorset and Somerset, north-west of Bourton (Baker and Brookes 2013a).

If this was the system of mobilization in existence at the beginning of the Viking wars, by AD 893, the mustering of armies was starting to take place through a different system – that of the *burhs* 'strongholds'. The physical links made between levies and strongholds is implied by the *ASC* entry for that year: "the king had divided his army in two, so that always half its men were at home, half out on service, except for those men who were to garrison the *burhs*". From now on fighting forces were to assemble and coordinate from fixed military hard points. Two groups of burhs are commonly distinguished: the 31 strongholds listed in the so-called Burghal Hidage, distributed across Wessex, and usually associated with King Alfred; and two sets of burhs established across the English Midlands during the second decade of the tenth century by Alfred's children, Edward and Æthelflæd, whose roles in their construction are recorded in various versions of the *ASC* (Hill and Rumble 1996; Lavelle 2010; Baker and Brookes 2013b).

In a recent book, Tom Lambert (2017) has argued that the development of Anglo-Saxon legal practice should be seen as lying on a parallel trajectory to that of military service. While military matters largely fell on ealdormen—and by implication the shires—non-military affairs, such as taxation, and the organisation of justice and labour services, relied on royal officials—reeves—operating through a system of rural assemblies and estate centres. In the tenth century, Lambert argues, one can discern in the legal material, attempts made by kings to centralise the system of reeves on burhs. What he does not elaborate on is that this same system of burhs was of course also a reform of military service—away from *ad hoc* mobilisation via the shire system—to more permanent service based on key strongholds.

If Lambert is correct in his assessment, we can thus see burhs as an experiment by kings to graft together military and non-military rights and services at burhs. However, Lambert does not see the origin of the hundred as part of this development but as a secondary innovation replacing the system based on burhs. This seems to me unlikely on two counts. Firstly, many shires had more than two burhs (e.g. Wiltshire which has four strongholds—Winchester, Wilton, Malmesbury, Chisbury—listed in the Burghal Hidage), and many, particularly in the Midlands, sit awkwardly within their shires. It is therefore unlikely that the earlier system of mobilisation based on shires continued in use for very long after AD 893. It is tempting instead to posit the establishment of a relatively regularly structured system of multi-functional military musters more or less contemporaneously with, and supplementary to, a similarly regular system of strongholds. Coupled with the observation that hundreds as described in the Hundred Ordinance had clear military functions, it seems very likely that the hundred was this system and that the burh and the hundred constituted part of the same development. Indeed, this link between burh and hundred is made explicit in the earliest sources. So, the legislation Edgar issues at *Wihtbordesstan* probably between AD966 and AD975, states that witnesses assemble 'either in a *burh* or in a hundred' (IV Edgar 6, 10; Molyneaux 2015: 122).

In this regard it is an interesting feature of hanging promontories that they do not typically give their names to the hundred in which they are located, and an alternative site can often be identified from place-name evidence. Thus, the site of Egbert's Stone is within the hundred that takes its name from the great estate centre of Gillingham (Baker and Brookes 2013a).

Another hanging promontory gives us a sense of how the change from one system to the other was implemented. Kiftgate Court lies on the steep western scarp of the Cotswold Hills and has all of the typical features of a hanging promontory site as well as lying just a kilometre from the Gloucestershire and Warwickshire border. The name seems to derive from the Old English **cȳft*, 'coming', meaning 'meeting, conference', and *geat*, 'gate' – a toponym often associated with significant breaks in terrain, as would be appropriate for this location (Ekwall 1957; Smith 1964: 261-262; Baker and Brookes 2013a; 2017). But there is a second location known as Kiftsgate Stone on a ridgeway on top of the Cotswold escarpment some 5 km to the south-west. This was the meeting-place of the hundred in fourteenth and sixteenth centuries (Smith 1964: 261-262). Here it seems we have the preservation of the name Kiftsgate from an earlier shire-level hanging promontory to a later roadside hundred meeting-place, demonstrating how the transition from one system to the other could sensibly be achieved.

Secondly, and returning to my earlier point about the regularity of some hundred groups, is the spatial relationship between hundreds and burhs. Several authors from F. W. Maitland onwards have suggested that connections between rural manors and burghal properties revealed in later sources such as Domesday Book can be used to demonstrate how obligations towards maintaining and defending burhs were tied to the landholders of their hinterlands, their 'burghal territories', at the times of their foundation (Maitland 1897; Halsam 2012).

Many of these burghal territories are visible in the pattern of hundreds surrounding burhs. David Roffe (2009) has convincingly argued that there is considerable continuity in the numbers of hundreds assigned to a burh across the sources from the early tenth to late eleventh centuries. Likewise, Jeremey Haslam has reconstructed primary burghal territories by plotting the links between rural manors and burhs (Haslam 2012; 2016). John Baker and I have similarly argued that burghal territories can be identified, particularly in the English Midlands, by reconstructing groupings of hundreds and their meeting-places, and how these were arranged around burhs of the early tenth century (Baker and Brookes 2013c). A case-in-point is Huntingdonshire. As reconstructed from Domesday evidence it displays a strikingly regular form, comprising a subdivision into four equal parts with meeting-places of similar type, all arranged in pie slices around the burh of Huntingdon, with an archetypal military mustering site Hertford—'army ford' directly beside the burh. The regular laying out of the shire extended to the value of each hundred: in each of the four quarters the Domesday vills add up to around 200 hides, perhaps indicating their origins as 'double hundreds'. Indeed, an authentic Peterborough charter of AD963–84 mentions 'the two hundreds that belong to Normancross' (Sawyer 1968: cat. no. 1448). When originally constituted, perhaps in the early tenth century, the total value of Huntingdonshire is therefore likely to have been about 800 hides; an allocation similar to that made for the shire in the County Hidage of the early eleventh century.

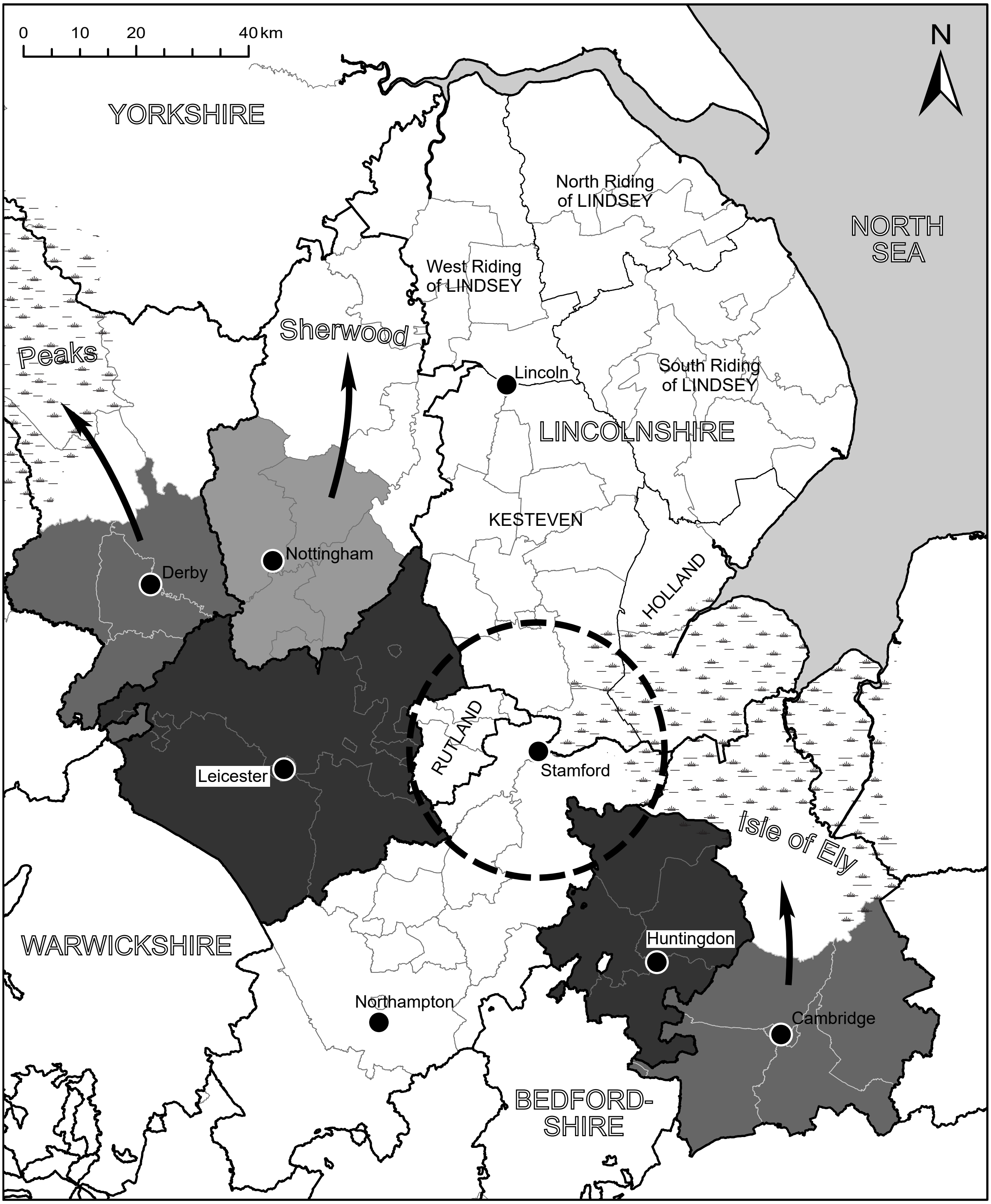

Figure 6.4. Burghal territories and shires in Midland England.

Several similar burghal territories can be found around each of the other Midland burhs. Discrete territories based on burhs can be reconstructed within what would later become the shires of Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire, and comprising the whole of Huntingdonshire and Leicestershire (Figure 6.4). In each case these burghal territories are remarkably regular in form and Domesday hidation strongly suggesting they were the result of a single moment of administrative re-planning, probably datable to the early tenth century when the burhs were founded by Alfred's children (as previously argued also by Loyn 1974). However, it is intriguing that these burghal territories did not provide for total administrative coverage. As reconstructed in the east Midlands, there were many gaps in the system that would only come to be defined administratively at a later date (Baker and Brookes 2013c; Baker 2015b). Apparently, in the first phase of establishing new military protocols, West Saxon political control could only exert itself directly over a proportion of the conquered populations. It is the subsequent rolling out of the hundred system across the whole of territorial England and its diverse communities that provides the context for the Hundred Ordinance and the apparent explosion in roles that the hundred takes on in the middle of the tenth century.

Early medieval kingship rested largely on military power, and systems enabling this clearly existed from an early date. What is so distinctive about the development of the burh–hundredal system is its break from earlier modes of raising armed forces. Initially, any military leadership over units greater than the select warband (*fyrd*) of elite warriors would be personal and impermanent, but as kings sought to maintain more permanent military forces, and perpetuate territorial hegemony, new systems of mobilization and deployment emerged. The development of the hundred thereby represents a key moment in the evolution of royal power, where administration shifted from being an open system comprising a variety of different community forms to one that was fully territorialized, with people's obligations no longer tied solely to lineages and regional identities, but now fully attached to a particular burh–hundred.

Although the creation of a burghal system represented a significant innovation in military mobilisation it is unlikely that kings had to invent entirely new structures for mustering forces; rather, they had to find a way of reconfiguring existing systems of shire-level mobilisation to a new focus on burhs. For fighting forces used to mustering at specific places this innovation did not require a significant shift in practice. What differed was the regularity and frequency of meetings and the clearer organisation of men into local companies. I have argued here that the 'hundred' was this new system of mobilisation, and that its origins must accordingly be seen as directly contemporary with that of burhs – that is to say in the decades around AD 900.

It is argued here that landscape analyses offer a fruitful avenue for research in this area, allowing us through detailed landscape and place-name research to identify systems of military mobilisation and communication. Placing this evidence alongside written sources suggests that we are seeing in documents of the mid-tenth century an expansion of royal power both in terms of territorial coverage and function to encompass law, administration and mercantile activities. By the end of the century, at least across most of central and southern England, there had emerged a dense pattern of supralocal law and administration; but military organisation was and remained an important dimension of this system. To ignore how this changed over the course of the tenth century is to ignore one of the fundamental issues about kingship and the development of states.

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The creation of a Visigothic past and the territorial expansion of the Kingdom of Asturias-León

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Abstract

The expansion of the Kingdom of Asturias over vast territories between the Cantabrian Mountains and the Duero river was a complex creation process as a consequence of a political breakdown. Different methods were used to legitimise the new Kingdom, and one of the most interesting was to attempt to connect the Kingdom with a Visigothic past. This 'neo-Gothic' idea has been analysed in the chronicles written in the royal court, but other forms were used to create memories and link territories and areas of the Visigothic past with the *regnum*. This paper seeks to analyse these very diverse memories, such as the connection with ancient urban sites, as opposed to the plurality of the activity of rural 'central places'. The renewal and promotion of monumentality using *spolia* and the reconstruction of former buildings to create new monasteries, such as the monastery of San Miguel de Escalada, shaped the stories that intended to connect ill-defined political areas with the Visigoths (the *Campi Gothorum*).

Keywords

Neo-Gothic; memories; legitimization; use of the past; monumentality

1. A new ancient kingdom

As Innes stated, 'The past was a very real presence in early medieval societies' (Innes 2000: 1). This statement clarifies the importance of the past and its use in the Early Middle Ages. Memories were influenced by the presence of people who remembered and were reminded of the past. As a result, those memories could be part of the discourses of the legitimisation of power. For example, Early Anglo-Saxon kings used prehistoric monuments as a tool to legitimise their new dominion (Semple 2013). In the case of the Asturian Kingdom, a polity that emerged during the 8th–9th centuries in Northern Iberia, the past was related to the Visigothic Kingdom.

Throughout the second half of the 9th century and the first decades of the 10th century, the Kingdom of Asturias underwent a territorial expansion. This process was carried out in areas of southern Galicia, the northern region of present-day Portugal or the Northern Duero plateau, a region that, since the middle of the 8th century, had not experienced any influence of any central authority. Although Sánchez-Albornoz's (1966) research spread the idea that these areas had been depopulated in the 8th century, research over the last four decades has demonstrated that this idea can be rejected (Escalona and Martín Viso 2020). At the end of the previous century, some studies sustained the idea of an enduring population, but they emphasised the colonisation promoted by foreign peasants as the main factor in understanding the socio-political development before Asturian control (Martínez Sopena 1985; García de Cortázar 1985; Mínguez 2000). However, other theories call into question this colonisation; these areas would have been populated by local people organised in small-scale structures and with little or no presence of external communities. Territorial expansion was then a political integration of populations who had their own small-scale organisation (Pastor Díaz de Garayo 1996; Escalona 2006; Castellanos

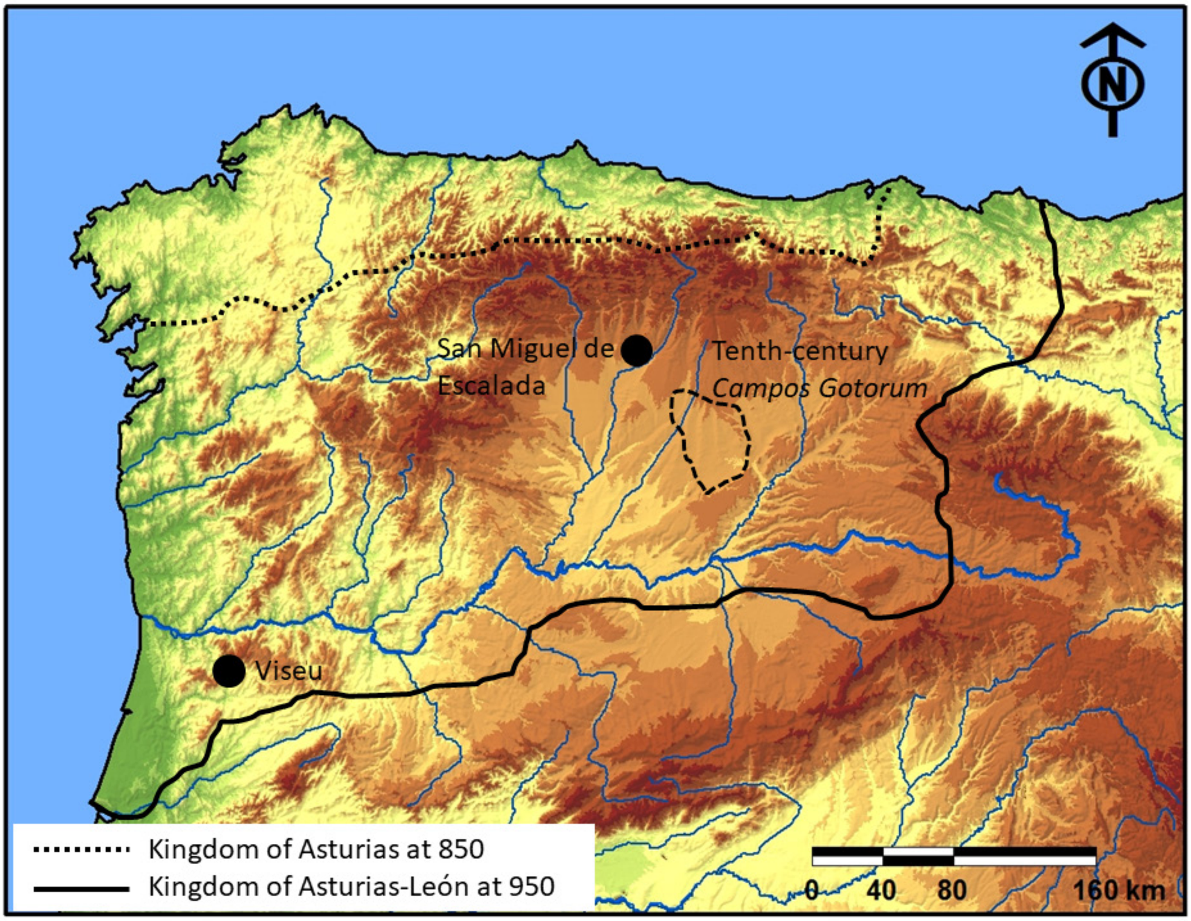

Figure 7.1. The tenth-century kingdom of Asturias-León and the location of the sites discussed in the paper.

and Martín Viso 2005; Martín Viso 2016). In both cases, the Asturian Kingdom did not occupy an empty region, but one that was inhabited and organised, and this implies the implementation of a new polity.

This new authority required legitimacy, in order to justify its existence and would provide it with a historical background. One of the keys was the link of the Kingdom of Asturias with the ancient Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo, which disappeared in 711 after the Islamic conquest. The Asturian kings represented themselves as the successors of that Kingdom and claimed the territory as their own. This Asturian 'neo-Gothicism' (Barbero and Vigil 1978; Isla Frez 1999) was central in the chronicles written at the end of the 9th century in the royal entourage, in particular, the *Albeldense* and *Crónica de Alfonso III*, although these texts may reflect an ideology that was already present since the early 9th century. However, during the reign of Alfonso III (866-910), they became the fundamental axis of the royal discourse (Deswarte 2003: 20). It is also interesting to note that the chronicles appeared at the very moment of political and territorial expansion of the Asturian Kingdom. This link persisted over time, and the identification between Castile and the Goths remained a primary element in the reflections of medieval chroniclers (Díaz 2013).

Studies in recent decades have underlined the role of 'neo-Gothicism' in the theory and practice of Asturian power. Undoubtedly, the chronicles were read and heard in the court and among a large part of the elite that were part of the political scene of the Kingdom. However, it is necessary to go beyond and wonder by which means the Visigothic past was created and used in local areas. Three different case studies will be analysed to understand how local arenas were influenced by implementing new narratives about the past controlled by the monarchy. Each of them is very different, but they are linked through the use of a past and the link to the Visigothic times. They were located in territories that were integrated by the Asturian Kingdom during the second half of the 9th century due to its political expansion. The first is the legend of a burial of a Visigothic king at Viseu; the second is the narrative of the (lost) epigraphy of a church near the city of León; and the third is a study of the creation of a name to call a whole region.

2. *Ciuitates* with a historical past: Viseu and King Rodrigo

The chronicles that were written in the Asturian court underline the role of the kings in political expansion, although other texts, of a more local scope, highlight the importance of the initiatives of a part of the elite not necessarily acting on the order of the monarchs (Isla Frez 2010: 137-148). The expansion is described as the occupation (*populare*) of cities such as León, Tuy, Astorga, Amaya, Braga, Oporto, Oca, Eminio-Coimbra, Viseu, Lamego, Tuy, Astorga, and León in the second half of the 9th century (Gil Fernandez, Moralejo and Ruiz de La Peña 1985, *Rotense* § 25, *Albeldensis* § 12). All of them had been episcopal sees in the Visigoth period, except for Amaya and León. The *nomina sedium episcopalium*, a text from the 8th century, identifies Amaya as an episcopal see, but it is the only data available stating that fact (Sánchez-Albornoz 1970). However, we should not forget Amaya's role as the main site of the *Cantabri* conquered by Leovigildo in 574. However, the archaeological data from this site do not prove an 8th–9th century occupation (Quintana López 2017). Therefore, the quote referring to the integration of Amaya in the Asturian Kingdom could be due to a claim of the royal authority over the Castilian area, west of the Duero Plateau, using the memory of a prestigious site. In the *Annales Castellani Antiquiores*, written in Castile around the mid-10th century, the initiative of the integration of Amaya rests, however, with Count Rodrigo (Martín 2008: 208, § 7). He was the most powerful of a group of regional aristocrats that enjoyed a political hegemony in that area. The presence of Oca, a former Visigoth episcopal see, would serve to strengthen the demand of increased Asturian authority in Castile that was until then, an area acting as an autonomous suburb (Estepa 2009). A reference made to León would derive from the fact that this location was taking on interest as the centre of power of the Asturian court on the plateau.

The few archaeological data available verify the scarce dynamism of these cities before their integration in the Asturian Kingdom (Gutiérrez González 2017: 58-61). However, reports of Andalusian military expeditions against some of these places, such as León, Astorga, or Coimbra (Ibn Ḥayyān 2011: 119, 289 and 322) prove that the cities were populated. The mentions could be understood as some ancient political hubs that were used by Muslim chroniclers because they were not familiar with the very fragmented political geography of the North-western Iberia. Subsequently, the mentions of Coimbra and Astorga were related to geographical areas and not necessarily well-shaped cities. The primary value of these *ciuitates* was their link to the Visigothic Kingdom, something that was shared and recognised by Arabs and Asturians. Their presence in Christian chronicles could be related to the claim of Asturian kings as the proclaimed heirs of the Visigoths.

Furthermore, the political geography was much more complex and included a diverse set of small 'central places', many of them fortified (*castros*), as well as some places that acted as the centre of the biggest districts, such as Zamora, Coyanza, Cea, Dueñas, Simancas, Toro, and Trancoso. These places quickly became important political centres, and from here, Asturian authority projected authority on its surrounding. However, the Asturian chronicles, the two versions of *Crónica de Alfonso III*, and the *Albeldense*, all written at the end of the 9th century and so contemporaries to the events, do not mention its integration. The chronicle of Sampiro written in the beginnings of the 11th century is the first to mention the occupation of some of those places by the Asturian kings (Pérez de Urbel 1952, *Silense* § 1 and 14). This information was known rather late, even though we know that some of these places, such as Zamora, were occupied by royal initiative in 893 according to Arabic sources (Ibn Ḥayyān 2017: 204-205). A plausible explanation for this gap is that the occupation took place after the Asturian chronicles were written (in the 80s of the 9th century). However, another interpretation could be the need to link just the old cities to the Asturian kings; the other places could be seen as 'secondary' because they did not have a stable relationship with the Visigothic Kingdom. The growing importance of some of those sites in the 10th century would explain the integration in a later chronicle and the absence in a late 9th-century royal view, as the analysis of Dueñas seems to prove (Justo Sánchez and Martín Viso 2020).

It is interesting to analyse the particular case of Viseu, an episcopal see at the time of Suebi and the Visigothic Kingdom – 6th and 7th century – (Jorge 2002), which also appears as a mint in the 7th century (Pliego Vázquez 2009: 126). The chronicle of Ibn Ḥayyān, written in the first half of the 11th century (using previous sources), mentions the military campaign of 825–826 of the lieutenants of Abderrahman II against Coimbra and Viseu, and in particular, the attack of al-Walid against Viseu and his region in 838 (Ibn Ḥayyān 2001: 285 and 292). According to the *Crónica Albeldense*, Alfonso III integrated Viseu in the Asturian Kingdom between 866 and 883, most likely in 872 and 873 (Gil Fernández, Moralejo and Ruiz De La Peña 1985, *Albeldense*, § 15, 12). The *Crónica de Alfonso III* adds the fact that the tomb of the last Visigothic king, Rodrigo, was found in a church in Viseu (Gil Fernández, Moralejo and Ruiz de La Peña 1985, *Rotense*, § 7).

The relationship between Viseu and the burial of the Visigoth king defeated by the Muslims cannot be separated from the legitimation discourse of the new Asturian rule (Real 2005: 277). This legend has been perpetuated in the local memory, and the burial place has been identified as the Church of São Miguel de Fetal, located outside the town walls. The 12th century *Vita Theotonii* relates the life of this monk, who was one of the founders of the monastery of Santa Cruz at Coimbra and prior of the see of Viseu. In the hagiography, Teotonio held a mass every Sunday at the church of São Miguel, located outside of the walls in the cemetery (Nascimento 2013: 103) The site has been excavated and has provided some interesting data. Around the 4th century, a small building was built, and a tomb was embedded indoors made of reused Roman materials. Subsequently, a more significant temple was built that respected the

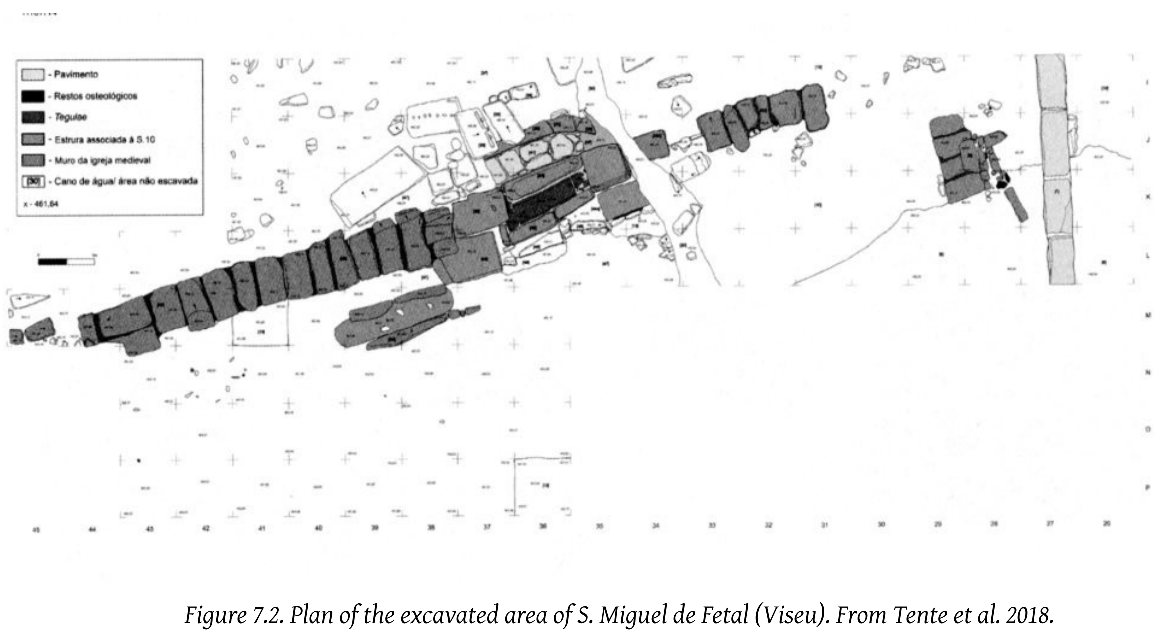

Figure 7.2. Plan of the excavated area of S. Miguel de Fetal (Viseu). From Tente et al. 2018.

main tomb. It has not been possible to define the date of the second construction, and it may have been after the Asturian occupation (Tente *et al.* 2018).

It is difficult to establish the connection with the chronicles as we cannot be sure that this church was in fact, the one mentioned in the texts as the burial site of the last Visigothic king. The identification could be created in the 12th century when the church was mentioned in the *Vita Theotonii* (Tente *et al.* 2018). However, the hypothesis of its identification in the Asturian period cannot be discarded when the burial of King Rodrigo is first cited. The legend could be linked to the existence of a Late Roman burial building, whose presence would be well-known in a suburban environment, as the archaeological data seem to prove. Some stories could have been created in relation to the person buried there, which could have led to the conclusion that he was, in fact, King Rodrigo. The creation could have been either through a local story or a reworked version by the Asturians. The latter would be more plausible. While the explanation is speculative, it allows us to better understand the process of identifying the Viseu as a place strongly related to the Visigothic past and the construction of a church.

The question, then, is why this legend could be depicted in Viseu and not in other places. The key could be in the royal initiative for political integration, versus the increased role of aristocrats such as Hermenegildo Gutiérrez and their descendants who controlled Oporto and Coimbra. Viseu provided a platform for royal power, and the future King Ramiro II lived here in the 20s of the 10th century. To this end, the legend intends to present Viseu as a prestigious location directly linked with the loss of the Gothic Kingdom. This prestigious location was related to the Asturian royal court, whose intention was to be considered the successors of the Goths. Consequently, the 'neo-Gothicism' sought to exalt royal action and take over other aristocracies that had a significant presence at the time of territorial expansion.

3. *Post Ruinis Abolitus*: Ruins and Monks

The Asturian Kingdom's claim on the new regions under their control came with a demand for the church's role. The acceptance of the 'neo-Gothicist' ideal led to accepting, in equal terms, the leadership role of the bishops as the leading representatives of the church in the creation of the Kingdom (Ruiz de La Peña 2014). The Asturian kings encouraged the creation of episcopal sees, aiming to restore the ancient Gothic order, especially in the *ciuitates*. However, both the ideological and political relevance of the bishops encouraged the designation of prelates in places without episcopal tradition, as was the case of Zamora (Luis Corral 2009).

Some of these bishops may have been court clerics, especially those whose sees were not so strongly related to the kings. Others, especially those in charge of some prestigious sees, were prestigious monks, such as Rosendus or Cixila. Genadius is the most outstanding example (Escudero Manzano 2019). He was a monk, probably in the monastery of Ayóo in Vidriales. He went to the region of Bierzo, where he re-founded the monastery of San Pedro de Montes, the former monastery of Rufiana. This monastery was previously founded by Fructuosus at the beginning of the 7th century. However, Genadius also created several monasteries in the area. Subsequently, Alfonso III named him the Bishop of Astorga in 909 until 919-920, where he performed various notable activities; thereof, he retired again to the monastic life (Gallon 2010; Martín Viso 2012).

This 'holy man' pattern was associated with a reformed monastic life, which pursued a return to a moderate hermitism based on the tradition of the great Visigothic reformist monks, such as Fructuosus. Why did the Kings support these reformist monks? Written documentation illustrates that many churches and monasteries belonged to aristocratic families, local elites, and even to local communities.

Some researchers have argued that it was a fact deeply rooted in the Visigoth past; this is the case of Galicia (Sánchez Pardo 2013). On the Duero plateau, however, the archaeological data do not reveal the presence of a strong framework of churches or monasteries (Moreno Martín 2011). Therefore, the emergence of this phenomenon must be placed at a stage immediately before the expansion of the Asturian kingdom. This trend was the expression of the interests of elites or local groups, which invested in churches and monasteries, which were almost indistinguishable at the time. The reason for this social investment was the social prestige, need to have a family grave or control of a unified heritage. The consequence was plural monasticism with few guidelines made up by small constructions with solid local roots.

In this context, the kings sought to enhance certain foundations with several goals. They promoted monastic institutions in the region, such as Sahagún (Agúndez San Miguel 2019). This was a way to create prestigious local hubs linked to royal patronage, which allowed them to enter local sites and create social and political networks. This policy was implemented with the support and initiative of these 'holy men', who seem to have enjoyed a remarkable social prestige. Monks from al-Andalus also supported this cause and brought along the tradition of the Visigoth church. Additionally, they promoted 'neo-Gothicism' and were part of these reformist actions (Aillet 2010). A good example could be Cixila, the founder of the monastery of Santos Cosme y Damián de Abellar, near León, who was also bishop of León at the beginning of the 10th century; he seems to be a monk from al-Andalus (Carbajo Serrano 1987)

The royal patronage allowed for a more monumental pattern of monasteries, including epigraphy. The consecratory inscription of San Pedro de Montes relates the new church to the reconstruction of a previous church and with the tradition of Fructuosus, who had found it after the foundation of the monastery of Compludo, and Valerius del Bierzo, who would have expanded the building. Three bishops, among them the prominent Genadius, were witnesses (Gómez-Moreno 1919: 214-215; González Rodríguez 2017). Another example of the use of epigraphy is the abbey of San Miguel de Escalada, whose consecratory inscription could still be read in the 18th century, but whose whereabouts are unknown. The inscription mentions the existence of a former place of worship, dedicated to Saint Michael, which remained abandoned (*Hic locus antiquitus Michaelis Archangeli honore dicatus, brevis opere instructus, post uinis obolitus diu mansit dirutus)*. An abbot from Cordoba, Alfonso, came to this place with his *sociis* (monks or laypeople) and built a new building, with King Alfonso's support (Alfonso III). The momentum created by this monastery attracted many monks, and it was necessary to expand the building, which was completed during the reign of García I in 913. The church was consecrated by Bishop Genadius, despite being of Astorga and not of the near see of León (García Lobo 1982: 41-46 and 64-65; Cavero 2014). Although some reasonable doubts have been raised over the evidence of the lost inscription known only through an 18th century copy (Anedda 2004), its similarity with the consecrations of San Pedro de Montes and San Martín de Castañeda advocates for their authenticity (Cavero 2014).

The studies have proved that the primitive construction (before the abbot Alfonso's arrival) could be dated in Visigothic times, due to the existence of two inscriptions presumably of the 7th century. The presence of two Roman inscriptions would be evidence of *spolia*, possibly from the former Roman *ciuitas* of *Lancia* (García Lobo 1982: 59-61). Still, we have a range of archaeological interventions that shed light on the past of this place. A building composed of three rooms has been discovered (although one of them is very disturbed), which, due to the presence of soils of *opus signinum*, can be dated between the 4th and 6th century. Sometime after that, this building underwent a renovation, splitting one of the rooms into two. Simultaneously, several graves have been dated as after the Late Roman period and before the early medieval place of worship was found. The archaeologists doubt that this building was a church before the 10th century and they have proposed an interpretation of this as part of a rural settlement (Larrén Izquierdo and Campomanes Alvaredo 2014).

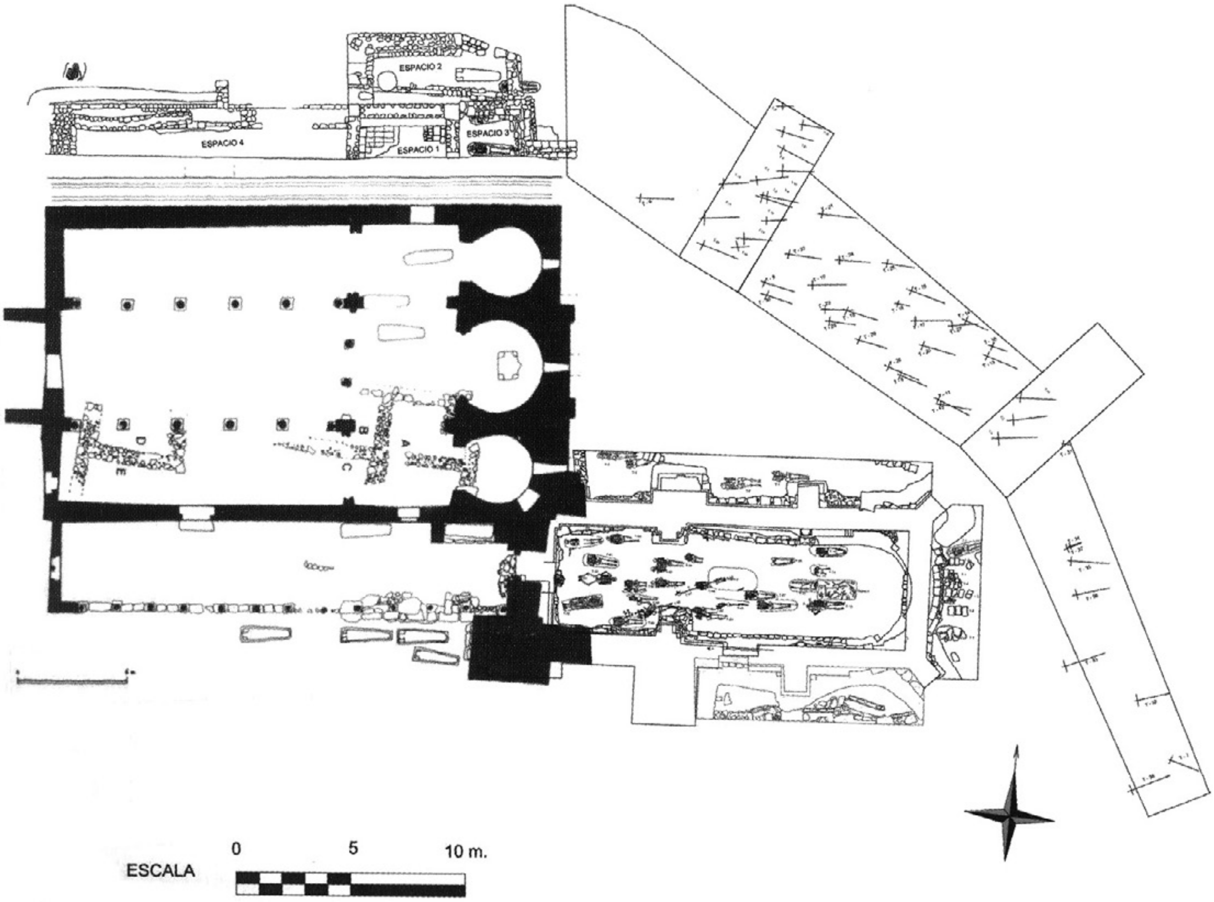

Figure 7.3. Plan of the excavated area of S. Miguel de Escalada (Gradefes, Léon). From Larrén Izquierdo and Campomanes Alvaredo 2014: 87.

In the light of this data, the existence of a church and far less a monumental type building cannot be confirmed. If the Roman inscriptions can be considered *spolia*, the same argument can be used for the allegedly Visigothic inscriptions. The occupation sequence seems to be a Late Roman building, after a burial place, and finally a 10th century phase. The presence of burials does not necessarily imply that there was a church because there are many medieval cemeteries that were not connected to any Christian place of worship (Martín Viso 2014). A possible interpretation is that rural buildings of the late Roman period were left and used later as a burial ground for a local community in the 7th century or in the centuries that followed; this is most likely, as evident in the nearby Marialba de la Ribera (Candelas González *et al.* 2016). When monks arrived at the initiative of Alfonso III, they could have built their abbey in a previous and prestigious burial area and rewrote the history of the place, by creating a primitive church, in truth non-existent. This explanation is hypothetical, but it solves the problem of the relation between epigraphical and archaeological data. The narrative links to the Visigothic past, and we must consider the possibility that at that moment, the *spolia* was brought to the place. If interpreted correctly, this would entail creating a discourse that links facts that occurred at the time of growth of the Asturian power with the Visigothic Kingdom. Consequently, a possible burial area used by local people was changed into a monastery and was then promoted and monumentalised by the kings.

4. A New Ancient Region: The *Campi Gothorum*

The case of San Miguel de Escalada could display the materiality of the re-creation of a Visigothic past related to a church and the ideology of the Kingdom. However, there were other ways of inventing the past. One method was the creation of new names in some regions. The *Campi Gothorum* (Gothic fields) is a very interesting and intriguing case because it was identified as the region of the ancient settlement of Goths, whose memory was preserved. That new ancient geography would be a part of a discourse to understand the past and legitimise the present.

The *Crónica Albeldense*, a chronicle written towards the year 883 in the court of Oviedo, refers twice to a region called the 'Gothic fields'. In a description of Hispania, it mentions, as one of the most outstanding elements, the wheat from *Campis Gotis* (Gil Fernandez, Moralejo and Ruiz de La Peña 1985, *Albeldensis* § VII, 2). Another chapter refers to the campaigns in the mid-8th century of Alfonso I against the territories south of the Cantabrian Mountains that would have devastated that region. León, Astorga, and the 'Gothic fields' (*campos quos dicunt Gothicos*) are mentioned (Gil Fernandez, Moralejo and Ruiz de La Peña 1985, *Albeldensis* § XV, 3). Those are the first times that the 'Gothic fields' are known; there is not any mention in the Visigothic texts about them, despite the scarcity of the preserved information. Due to subsequent records that indicate the existence of sites in the *Campi Gothorum*, the territory is identified as Tierra de Campos, a vast region in the heart of the Duero plateau, a sedimentary plain traditionally known for cereal cultivation.

Figure 7.4. The region of Tierra de Campos from Urueña (Valladolid). © author

According to the most common explanation, the name originated from an early occupation of the Goths, before the reference of the *Chronica Caeesaraugustana*, which dates their arrival in Hispania at the end of the 5th century (Abadal 1960, 46). Sánchez-Albornoz (1966: 146) thought that the region was devastated by the Visigothic King, Theodoric, in the mid-5th century, during his campaign against the Suebi. The area was emptied and only partially occupied by 'a youth bloodstream'. However, this concept does not correlate with the existing evidence. If we accept the idea that graves with Visigothic burial goods are tangible proof of the presence of a Visigothic settlement (a hypothesis not currently accepted; Tejerizo 2011), we must state that no such burial sites have been found in Tierra de Campos. Another approach is that the 'Gothic Fields' were the current Segovia site and the entire plateau, where this type of burial has been found in several sites. Therefore, the original place-name of the 5th century could have shifted to the Tierra de Campos (Díaz 1994: 460). The former assumption must face the fact that there are no sources after the Roman period that link this area or any other Hispania area with the *Campi Gothorum*.

An alternative explanation is that the label was imposed by northern communities whose tribalism kept them separated from the Duero Plateau communities, heirs of gothic identities and institutions. The aim would be to point out the differences between social patterns, as it would be a way to label the people who remained on the Duero's basin during the 8th and 9th centuries (Barbero and Vigil 1978: 220). This interpretation is rooted in the theories of both authors who thought that feudalism in Northern Iberia was a result of the evolution of Cantabrian communities with very few Roman influences and out of the Visigothic control. The current data deny the endurance of supposed tribal organisations and remark the romanisation of communities in this area. This region was part of the Visigothic Kingdom, but as a political periphery (Díaz and Menéndez Bueyes 2016). However, the identification using a new label created in a post-Visigoth period is useful for unravelling the problem, because there is no evidence of the term before the Arab conquest.

The identification arose in the royal court and can be seen as a neologism that served to identify all the areas up to the Duero river. It is quite significant that the *Albeldense* separates two places taken by

Table 1. 10th century charters with mentions to Campi Gothorum

Date	Reference	Localities	Royal charter
920/05/25*	MÍNGUEZ 1976, doc. 19	Boadilla de Rioseco	X
970/06/23	SÁEZ and SÁEZ 1987, doc. 413	Villanueva de la Condesa	
977/03/12	MÍNGUEZ 1976, doc. 287	Villa de Pedro	X
982/01/18	MÍNGUEZ 1976, doc. 313	Villa de Domno Iohannes	X
985/11/16	SÁEZ and SÁEZ 1988, doc. 508	Berrueces, Raitores, Romeses Santa María and Santa María on Valderaduey near Castro de Azebal. In the river Cea: Zancos, Castroverde, Villa Garlón and Uilla de Abduz. In the Valley of Madrigal: Castrovega and Castrotierra. In Valle Maior: Fictiliones. In Oteros de Rey: Villasinda, Gusendos, Rebollar and Villanueva In Paiolo: Santas Martas, Uilla Exone, Reliegos, Cornelios, Uillamarco and Uilla Edan. Valle de Asnarios Valle de Rateiro with its *uillas*: Uilla Uelasco, Santa María, Uilla de Egas, Uilla Reuelle, Perales, Uilla Mahmudi, Galleguillos and Kaydos.	X
987/05/29	RUIZ ASENCIO 1987, doc. 521	San Pedro de Arenales	
994/01/11	RUIZ ASENCIO 1987, doc. 560	Fuentes de Carbajal	

* The editor of this charter has serious doubts about its authenticity.

Alfonso I: Astorga and León (the main axes of the Asturian Kingdom at that time in the Duero plateau) of the ill-defined area of the devastated 'Gothic fields'. The distinction can be understood as the existence of Asturian control when the chronicles were written: places where the Asturian Kingdom existed and a large area that was claimed as its own, although this control was not created until around 883. To justify the claim to conquer this area, they called it the 'Gothic fields' to link it with the Visigothic past. As the Kingdom of Asturias was the rightful heir of the Visigothic past, this would provide the right to claim all the territories to be under its control.

The concept does not appear in the *Rotensis* version of the contemporary Chronicle of Alfonso III. It included a list of cities, in what can be understood as a description of how the political geography of the Duero plateau and the area between the Miño and the Duero Rivers was seen from the Asturian point of view (Fernández, Moralejo and Ruiz De La Peña 1985, *Rotensis* § 13; Escalona 2004). Thus, it appears that 'Gothic fields' was a new name and had not been accepted by the whole royal *entourage*. This neologism oddly enough only appears in the last quarter of the 10th century charters (Table 1), as the earliest reference appears in a text dated in 920, but there are doubts about its authenticity. As soon as the place names were identified, the label was applied to a large region: the current Tierra de Campos. However, not all sites of Tierra de Campos could be identified with it. For instance, no mention is made to a large area of the Cea river valley, well documented in the 10th century. The reverse process is also the case: some places mentioned as part of the *Campos Gotorum* were not mentioned before. This is the case of Valley of Ratario (Val de Ratario) and its villages or *villas*, which were part of the *comisso* handed over by Ordoño III to the Cathedral of León in 952 (Sáez and Sáez 1987: doc. 301). Another striking fact is that all the references were related to royal charters or documents linked to members of a high aristocracy, such as Count Almundus (Ruiz Asencio 1987: doc. 521) or Fraila, who donated Fuentes de Carbajal, a place he inherited from his uncle Zuleimán, servant of Queen Teresa, who was the mother of Ramiro III (Ruiz Asencio 1987: doc. 560).

In the second half of the 10th century, the *Campos Gotorum* are identified with a specific large area, defined by the lack of important centres of power, like cities (*ciuitates*). However, there were some fortified sites, named *castros*, that did not organise wide territories. Another absence is a royal interest, in terms of charter evidence until that period and it was not the focus of royal politics. In the first third of the 11th century, the identification was a fact. The chronicler Sampiro stated the integration in the Asturian Kingdom of the *Campi Gotorum*, along with several places that were not identified as cities, such as Zamora and Dueñas, although they played a vital role in the creation of a political network in the 10th century (Pérez de Urbel 1952: § 14; Martín Viso 2016; Justo Sánchez and Martín Viso 2020). Why was this label used to refer to a larger area than in the 9th century, when the term was invented? We only can make a hypothesis using all the data available. The key could be the claim of the Visigothic past: territories with no evidence of cities, marked by a strong fragmentation, and where the monarchs have a less prominent role than in other areas, as was the case of León. These could be seen as Gothic regions, the fields of those people, and thus, part of the territory that the Asturians, heirs of the Visigoths, could claim. The term sought to legitimise the presence of the Asturian and later Asturian-Leonese monarchy. This situation took place at a later stage due to the absence of powerful centres (cities or episcopal sees). If there was any clear and strong 'central place', like the valley of the river Cea, which geographically was Tierra de Campos, the term was not applied (Pérez Rodríguez 2015).

5. Conclusion: legitimation through the past

The three case studies are very diverse: a legend about a church, the epigraphy and archaeological remains of another church near León, and the possible reconstruction of the name of a region. In all cases, there is only a new hypothesis based on the analysis of the written and archaeological data. However, all of them seem to be narratives that attempted to link the Visigothic past to legitimising the Asturian

Kingdom's expansion. The Asturian Kingdom's ideology is strongly based on its supposed continuity from the former Kingdom of Toledo. Consequently, the Visigothic past must be appropriated, but also created, in a form that implied that all Post-Roman or Early Medieval remains must be 'Visigothized'. The new authority used the narratives of the chronicles and adapted specific local conditions to the Visigothic past. The narratives did not have a passive approach to elements of the Visigothic past, as has been mentioned in the cases studied (a tomb of a Visigothic king, an ancient Visigothic church, and a region). Rather, an innovation task existed, where new narratives were written, creating new stories with a direct link between the Asturian kings and the Visigothic past. The Asturians did not discover the remains of a wrecked Kingdom; they created these remains for their own aims. The past was 'Visigothized' in the 9th and 10th centuries, legitimising the new political control of the heirs of the Visigoths, including the transformation of the removal of other memories about the past.

A noteworthy aspect of the discursive creation of a past was the role of the landscape, a significant component in the memory of preindustrial societies (Fentress and Wickham 2003). We can see how the remains of old buildings could be endowed with a new meaning, which happened in Viseu and San Miguel de Escalada. In both cases, the past was deleted, and a new story was invented. A tool to achieve this was the monumentality, which should be understood as a strategy to legitimise authority in a framework where monuments were considered exceptional. The current view is distorted because these monuments were preserved and not the other reality that is less striking from a material point of view. However, as a cultural construction, the landscape had relevance in the creation of the name of the 'Gothic fields', a new term that connected a region to a political meaning.

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Monastic foundations as aristocratic strategies during the 10th century in the North-West Iberian Peninsula. The case of the Eriz family.

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Abstract

During approximately the first five decades of the tenth century, three generations of an important aristocratic group -the descendants of the count Ero Fernández- promoted and restored at least 20 monasteries in different areas of what are today the Spanish region of Galicia and northern Portugal. The impact of these monastic foundations was unequal but, as a whole, can be considered as a successful family strategy which shaped the political and economical dynamics of the region in the context of its integration into the Kingdom of Asturias-León. All this makes the case of the Eriz family an exceptional opportunity to deepen –in coherence with the scope of this volume- in the complexity of the dynamics that took place during the tenth century in the north-west Iberian Peninsula.

Keywords

Monasteries; Galicia; Aristocracies; Early Middle Ages; Kingdom of Asturias-Lion

1. Introduction

During the first half of the tenth century, an unparalleled process of monastic foundations took place in Northwest Spain (Sánchez-Pardo *et al.* 2018). Although, of course, monasteries –as well as proprietary churches– had been created with different degrees of intensity during the previous centuries (Sá Bravo 1972; Freire 1998), it was at this moment when monastic foundations became real agents of political organisation in this area in the context of its integration into the kingdom of Asturias-León (Martín Viso 2007; Pérez 2012; Carvajal 2017).

In a previous work we explored the main archaeological and textual evidence for this expansion of monasteries in the territory of current Galicia, showing the importance of the first half of the 10th century in this process (Sánchez-Pardo *et al.* 2018). In this paper we aim to more closely explore the characteristics and purposes of the agents behind this wave of monastic foundation. Specifically, we will trace three generations of the Eriz family, an important aristocratic group which between approximately the years 895 and 945 promoted and restored at least 20 monasteries in different parts of what are today the Spanish region of Galicia and northern Portugal. The impact of these monastic foundations was unequal but, as a whole, can be considered as a successful family strategy which helped to shape the political and economical dynamics of the region in the context of its integration into the kingdom of Asturias-León.

The Eriz family –the descendants of the count Ero Fernández- was one of the richest and most important aristocratic groups in the region during the 10th century. Many of its members were closely linked to the monarchy of the kingdom of Asturias-León and played crucial political roles in its social-political structures, acting as counts, bishops, tenants, or simply as major landowners. All these aspects of the

Eriz family have already been studied in extensive detail by other medieval historians (i. e. Sáez 1948; Pallares 2004; Portass 2017). However, much less attention has been paid to the role of this family as founders of monasteries in the north-west Iberian Peninsula during the 10th century.

Of course, the Eriz family were not the only aristocratic group that promoted monastic institutions in this region in the 10th century; for example, the Menéndez family followed a similar pattern, as we will also explain later, but it was by far the one which has left us most information about this kind of family strategy. Moreover, as we will see later, certain clues have led us to suggest that several of these monasteries founded by the Eriz family strongly helped to shape the social dynamics of the following centuries. All this makes the case of the Eriz family an exceptional opportunity to further explore –in line with the subject of this volume- the complexity of the dynamics that took place in north-western Spain during the 10th century.

In the first part of this work we will try to compile and analyze for the first time all the textual evidence of monasteries promoted by the Eriz family in Northwest Iberia in the first half of the tenth century. In a second part we will explore the impact and importance of these monasteries in their surrounding societies and landscapes. All this will help us to better understand the political strategies of the aristocracies in the context of the articulation of the kingdom of Asturias-León.

2. Tracing the monasteries founded by the Eriz family (895-945)

Finding and reconstructing the traces of the monasteries promoted by the Eriz family across the north-west Iberian Peninsula during this period of approximately 50 years is not an easy task. In order to achieve our objective, we must pursue a number of references hidden in different diplomatic collections from early medieval Galicia, at the same time as tracing the genealogy of the Eriz family for three generations.

Towards the end of the 9th century, Count Ero Fernández founded together with his wife Elvira the monastery of Santa María de Ferreira de Pallares (Guntín de Pallares, Lugo), in which they would spend their last days together (Sáez 1948: 50-57; Portela Silva and Pallares Méndez 1987: 20; Torres 1999: 282-283). The exact year of the foundation remains unclear, but we know that Elvira already declared herself as *ancilla Dei* in the year 898 (Ferreira; Freire 1998: 721-722). The foundation of this monastery marked the beginning of a period of new and important family buildings by the Eriz family, carried out by the descendants of Count Ero himself.

If we look at the second generation, Count Ero would have fathered at least six children, namely: Gundesindo, Ilduara, Teresa, Godo, Diego and Gudesteo Ériz. The first two were born to his first wife Adosinda, the last two to the aforementioned Elvira and, in the case of Teresa and Godo, it is not entirely certain which of the two was their mother (Sáez 1948: 57; Portela Silva and Pallares Méndez 1987: 20; Torres 1999: 283-291; Pallares 2004: 67).

We will begin with Teresa Ériz. She married the Count of Deza, Gonzalo Betote (who died in 929) and together they founded the monasteries of San Salvador de Camanzo (Vila de Cruces, Pontevedra) (Coruña 59; Freire 1998: 661-662; Lucas 1978) and San Lorenzo de Carboeiro (Silleda, Pontevedra) (Carboeiro 4-21; Freire 1998: 669-671). In the case of Camanzo, we know that it had already been built before Carboeiro was founded around the year 922 (Coruña23 and Carboeiro-*ap*.II.1-2), meaning that Camanzo was founded at least in the second decade of the 10th century. It is likely that both monasteries were built over previously-existing churches, as a document found in a manuscript from Samos mentions an *ecclesia* de *Sancte Marie in villa Camanzio* in the year 872 (Samos 5), while in the case of Carboeiro, we know that Count Gonzalo had bought a church in this location from a hermit named Éciga, over which he built this second monastery, and which had to be rebuilt once again by his wife Teresa Ériz in 939, by when she was a widow (Coruña 114). The family history of Camanzo was cut short in the year 1115, when Queen Urraca decided to donate it to the Episcopal church of Santiago de Compostela (Santiago 81). In turn, Carboeiro fell into ruin at an early stage, and was rebuilt by King Vermudo II in the year 999 (Coruña 113).

Staying with the spouses Teresa and Gonzalo, it is also necessary to refer to their children, the grandchildren of Ero and Adosino. As far as we know, Teresa also had five children (Portela Silva and Pallares Méndez 1987: 21; Torres 1999: 287), two of whom - Count Pelayo González and Doña Aragonta, who would become the queen consort of Ordoño II for a brief period (922-923) - also founded a significant number of monasteries. Around the year 956, they both sued a group of inhabitants of the region of Salnés for having built a series of salt flats, apparently encroaching on the rights that corresponded to them in this area (Coruña 59). The ruling from a court presided over, among others, by Ilduara Ériz, Aragonta and Pelayo's aunt, favoured the aristocratic siblings, as was to be expected. It was agreed that the inhabitants of Salnés would hand over one fifth of the salt flats to the plaintiffs, and that they would have to pay them in perpetuity in the form of feudal rents another fifth of everything they produced there, not only of the salt, but also from their estates and the wheat they had planted on them. Having arrived at this solution, Pelayo and Aragonta decided that the fifth of the salt flats that the inhabitants of Salnés were losing should be divided equally among all the monasteries founded by themselves or by their relatives, citing a dozen monasteries, including those of Camanzo and Carboeiro. Thanks to this list, we have documentary evidence that Pelayo González built the monastery of San Lorenzo de Nogueira (Meis, Pontevedra), while his sister built the monastery of Santa María de Salceda (Salceda de Caselas, Pontevedra), where she spent the last years of her life, after having been spurned by the king of León (Rodríguez Fernández 1997: 100-101) and where another of their brothers, Count Hermenegildo González may have been buried, according to a funerary inscription found in the monastery. Count Hermenegildo was the husband of the Countess Mumadonna Dias, who after being widowed, founded the important Portuguese monastery of San Salvador de Guimarães (PMH-LM 2016, Fernandes 1970-1972).

If we turn in the genealogical table to another of Teresa's sisters, Doña Ilduara Ériz (who died around 958), once again we find a family that founded several important monasteries. Ilduara and her husband, Gutier Menéndez (who died around 934), founded the monastery of Santa Marina de Portomarín (Portomarín, Lugo) and played a decisive role in the life of the pre-existing monastery of Santa María de Loio (Paradela, Lugo). Later, as a widow, Ilduara also founded the monastery of Santa María de Vilanova (Celanova, Ourense) (Pallares 2004: 13, 119-120).

In 922, Gutier and Ilduara received the church of Santa Marina, in Portomarín, from the bishop of Lugo, Recaredo, so that they could improve and have control of the monastery that they themselves had built in the place where they lived, and which they owned as a result of the process of territorial appropriation known as *presura* (Celanova 17). Five years later, in 927, an assembly of barons, bishops and abbots took place, presided over by the kings Sancho Ordóñez of Galicia and Alfonso IV of León (Celanova 29; García Álvarez 1977: 125-126, 137). The meeting dealt with the urgent need to restore the monastery of Loio, whose community, founded by Abbot Quintila, *presor* of this *locum antiqvm*, had been dissolved after the religious life there had deteriorated considerably during the abbacy of his successor, Saul. All those assembled delegated the guardianship of the monastery to Count Gutier Menéndez, since his mother, Countess Ermesinda (Ilduara's mother-in-law), had already received the property as a donation in a letter written by Quintila himself. Gutier therefore decided to appoint Busiano, until then a monk in Santo Estevo de Ribas de Sil under the authority of Abbot Franquila, as abbot of the renovated monastery, and, together with his wife, Doña Ilduara, would grant a variety of property to this newly-reestablished monastery, as well as to the nuns who lived in the nearby convent of Santa Mariña de

Portomarín (Pallares 2004: 124-125). The fact that the donated items were indistinctly referred to both monasteries seems to suggest that the community of nuns of Portomarín became subordinated to the neighbouring community of monks in Loio (Pallares 2004: 125).

It should also be noted that the same Count Gutier Menéndez also participated -again by royal design or mandate- in the restoration and re-founding of two other important monasteries during his lifetime (Ribas 1: 247-249; García Álvarez 1977: 125). These were Santo Estevo de Ribas de Sil itself, restored around 921, the year in which Gutier accompanied Franquila and his monks to meet Ordoño II in Baronceli (in the lands of Verín-Monterrei) to ask the monarch for permission to re-found the monastery. In addition there was the famous monastery of San Julián de Samos, re-founded in the following year of 922, when the same monarch entrusted Gutier and his brother Arias to seek out the monks with whom to carry out the project. They found them in the community of Penamayor, led at that time by San Virila (Samos 35; García Álvarez 1977: 125).

Apart from these other efforts to intermediate by Count Gutier, directly linked to the political influence of his family in the destiny of the kingdom, Doña Ilduara would found another monastery, as we have already mentioned above. But this time, it was after her husband had already passed away (*ca.* 933) (García Álvarez 1977: 130-131). This was the convent of Santa María de Vilanova, in the municipality of Celanova, Ourense, where he spent the last days of his life (Pallares 2004: 128). Hardly any trace of its construction has remained, except for a pair of modillions (Sánchez-Pardo *et al.* 2018). This is another of the monasteries that would receive a part of the revenue from the salt mines of Pelayo and Aragonta (Coruña 59).

The founding activity also continued into the third generation, if we turn to the children of Ilduara and her husband. A particularly well-known case is that of San Salvador de Celanova, one of the great historic Galician monasteries, which was founded very close to that of Vilanova, but with a strictly male community. The monastery of Celanova was founded by the bishop San Rosendo, son of Ilduara and Gutier, who also retired to it towards the end of his days to act as abbot. This monastery was also one of the recipients of part of the revenue from the salt mines (Coruña 59).

Rosendo built the monastery on a family property, the *villa* of Villare, which he received from his brother Froila (and his wife Sarracina) in 936 and which he, in turn, had inherited from his parents Gutier and Ilduara (Celanova 26). However, we know from another deed that Ilduara and her husband had acquired the town as a royal endowment from the Galician monarch Sancho Ordóñez (Celanova 44; García Álvarez 1977: 125). Froila himself renamed the *villa* when he asked his brother to build the new community, as the *locus dehinc uocatur Cellanoua* (Celanova 44; García Álvarez 1977: 125). Only two years later, in 938, it was Ilduara herself who also intervened directly in the creation of the monastery of Celanova through a substantial donation (Celanova 57). Finally, it was Rosendo who, four years later, would add another donation of goods, even more abundant than that of his mother, considered as the true endowment of the monastery at the time of its consecration, which would confirm that the building work that had begun at the latest in 937, would have been completed around 942 (Celanova 57). Saint Rosendo died in 977, when he made the aforementioned will in which he made another large donation to the monastery he had built, and in which he lived at that time (Celanova 185). His mother, who undoubtedly played an active role in the monastic reform carried out by Rosendo, had died some two decades before, and was buried at the decision of her offspring in the monastery of Celanova that she herself had helped to build (García Álvarez 1977:143-145) Both mother and son built a neighbouring monastery and nunnery there, *Villa Noba* and *Cellanoua*, with communities that were strictly separated by sex, the mirror image of what Gutier and Ilduara had done in Portomarín. As deduced by María Carmen Pallares, this may well have been one of the monastic innovations or reforms carried out by this family, supported by the bishop's son: “there are no duplicate communities in the direct sphere of influence of the aristocratic circle of Gutier and Ilduara” (Pallares 2004: 127)

It should be noted that the monastery of Celanova also seems to have been founded on, or around, an earlier hermitage or small church dedicated to San Martín. Whatever the case, of those first constructions, only the famous oratory of San Miguel remains today. Furthermore, there is one more important piece of information about the early history of this monastery, as it reveals the shaping of socio-political relations and the influence of the Ériz family and, more specifically, Gutier, Ilduara and their children, on the main monastic institutions in Galicia in the first half of the 10th century. Indeed, the first abbot of Celanova, before Rosendo took over, was the same Franquila who had previously been the abbot of Santo Estevo de Ribas de Sil. In fact, in Rosendo’s own donation to the monastery, in 942, Franquila appears as abbot of the community and recipient of the donation (Celanova 72). If we recall, Franquila was the leading figure of the community in Ourense that he had been responsible for restoring, with the intervention of Count Gutier before the king; the same monastic community from which the monk Busiano had emerged, from among his acolytes, as the new abbot that Gutier placed at the head of the recently restored community of Loio. Finally, it was Abbot Franquila himself who ended up abandoning his position at Ribas de Sil, having already fulfilled his mission, to lead the community of the monastery of Celanova, recently founded by Bishop Rosendo Gutiérrez.

If we continue to examine the actions of Ero’s sons, the third to be mentioned is the case of Gundesindo or Gondesendo Ériz, whose life seems to have been spent in the lands of *Portucale* to the south of the Minho. A document published in the *Diplomata et Chartae* of the PMH, dated 897 but whose date Emilio Sáez and Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz brought forward to *ca.* 947 (Sáez 1948: 54, n. 107, 57) reveals that Gundesindo married Enderquina “Palla” Menéndez, and that together they also founded several monasteries in Portuguese territory (PMH-DC, doc. 12). The deed records a donation made by Gundesindo and his wife, the aforementioned Enderquina, who had already died, in favour of several monasteries, some of which they expressly claimed to have built themselves. They did so to pray to God for the health of one of their daughters, named Froilo, who had been born with an illness. According to the document, the monasteries in question were: San Miguel *in uilla Acibeto* and San Cristóbal *in uilla Sanganeto* both of which were located between the River Duero and the River Vouga, San Pedro *in uilla uocitata Dides*, which they situated *inter Dorio arcis ripa Tamar*; and another dedicated to Santa Marina in *uilla Abientes* on the banks of the River Duero (PMH-DC, doc. 12). Gundesindo also declared that he was in possession of the monastery of *Labra*, which had been founded *ab antiquo*, and therefore not by himself, which was located on the coast (*in ripa maris*).

Regarding the third generation, that of the sons of Gundesindo Ériz, it also reproduced the same pattern, as we saw with Pelayo and Aragonta González and with San Rosendo. In fact, Suero Gundesíndez, one of his children (together with the aforementioned Froilo and two other daughters called Ermesinda and Adosinda), was the founder of the Portuguese monastery of Sever, which shows that the lineage of Gundesindo would continue its links with the Portuguese territory (PMH-DC, docs. 87 and 242, an. 964 and 1019).

In addition to those mentioned so far, we know that the Ériz family also founded other monasteries, although we do not know the member of the family who was responsible. The source of information that allows us to identify these other monastic buildings built by this family continues to be the lawsuit concerning the salt flats of 956. As we mentioned above, it lists up to ten family monasteries, but not all of them indicate who had built them. This is the case with up to four other foundations, namely:

1. A monastery *in Lentuanio*. Everything points to Lantaño, a parish in the municipality of Portas (in the province of Pontevedra), today dedicated to San Pedro. A monastery which, from the 12th century

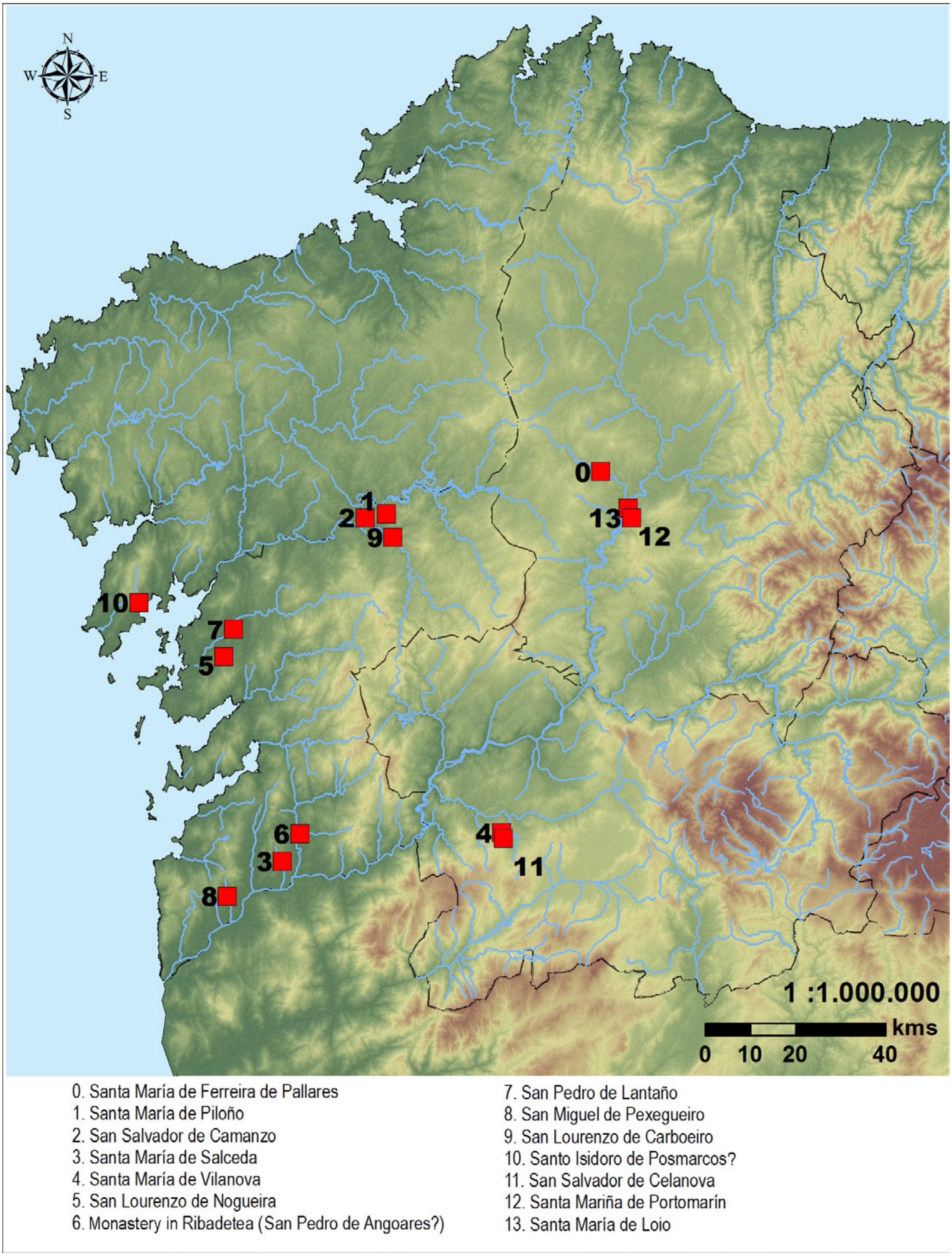

Figure 8.1. Distribution of the monasteries founded by the Eriz family between 895 and 945 in the territory of present-day Galicia

onwards, became dependent on the Cistercian monastery of Armenteira. The chapel of San Bieito, located in the place that bears the hagiotoponymic name of the monk-saint himself, may be the heir to this early medieval monastery, although the neighbouring village of Rial (approximately 0.5 km away) has also been suggested as another possible location (Freire 1998: 740-741).

2. A monastery *in Pilonio*. This is undoubtedly the monastery of Piloño, which was located in the parish of the same name dedicated to Santa María, in the municipality of Vila de Cruces (province of Pontevedra). It would be mentioned again in documentation prior to the 11th century as a locational reference for the position of another nearby building, in a deed from 991 (Santiago 56). Today, only the church remains as the parish chancel, although it has been rebuilt in Baroque style.
3. A monastery *in Persecario*. Namely, Pexegueiro, a southern Galician parish, belonging to the municipality of Tui (in the province of Pontevedra) and currently dedicated to San Pedro. The current parish church is still located in a place called "Mosteiro" (monastery).
4. A monastery *in ripa de Tena*. As we can see, in this case we were not given a clear name for the monastery in question, but rather for the river course along which it was located. This is the River Tea, a tributary of the Miño on the right, which rises between the Serra do Suído and the Faro de Avión and whose waters irrigate the lands of the municipalities of Covelo, Mondariz, Mondariz-Balneario, Ponteareas and Salvaterra de Miño in Pontevedra (following the direction of the river, from its source to its mouth). For this reason, it is difficult to locate it precisely, although a good hypothesis seems to us to be the parish church of San Pedro de Angoares (Ponteareas), as it is indeed located next to the aforementioned river course and, furthermore, we know that at least at the time of the 12th to 13th centuries it was a monastery. Moreover, the works that refer to it indicate that the present parish church, in Romanesque style, may well have been built on top of a previous structure (De La Torre Llorca 2020). Thirdly, these studies suggest that this monastery was historically known as the monastery of "Ribadetea" (Sá Bravo 1972, vol. 2; 376-381; Freire 1998: 598; Pérez 2008: 34-35). Whatever the case may be, there is no doubt that Queen Aragonta, her brother Count Pelayo González or a close relative of both was the founder of a monastery on the banks of the River Tea.

In addition to the text concerning the salt flats, there is another reference to a possible monastery linked to the Ériz family. This was a monastery dedicated to "San Isidro", according to the notes of a lost document quoted among the manuscripts of San Martiño Pinario in Santiago (Coruña 60). The extract states: "Division and demarcation of the boundaries of *Sancto Isidro*, which was formerly a monastery, as demarcated and ruled by Queen Doña Aragonta and King Don Alonso and Count Don Gonzalo and Count Don Pelayo. Era of 912." As we can see, the date it mentions is impossible (ca. 874) as the characters in question coincide around the middle of the 10th century. The editors of the collection *Coruña. Fondo Antiguo*, Carlos Sáez and María del Val González, therefore give it a tentative date somewhere between 926-956 on the basis of the document of the lawsuit over the salt flats, and the only one of the people mentioned there who is not mentioned in the lawsuit. We are referring to the king named Alfonso, who, if he were Alfonso IV, as he would have been based on the historical context, would situate the *post quem* date of the deed to 926, the year when his reign began.

As far as its identification is concerned, we have no further information other than that provided here. Only the dedication can guide us, especially as it is a very rare dedication, with only four parishes currently dedicated to San Isidro in Galicia. We believe that the most likely candidate is San Isidro de Posmarcos, in Pobra do Caramiñal, since most of the monasteries founded by this same family were located in Pontevedra, although this is a purely hypothetical identification. Furthermore, the fact that it refers to the delimitation of the boundaries of the monastery would also suggest that it could be another of the monastic foundations under the patronage of this aristocratic family.

3. Founding monasteries as a family trademark

As we have already mentioned, the Eriz family was not the only aristocratic group that opted to found and endow monasteries at the time. Among other more or less isolated initiatives, we can mention the foundations related to the Menéndez family. However, the number of monasteries founded by this family (or at least the information preserved about them) seems fewer than the Eriz's, and more important, several of them were also linked to the Eriz family through marriage agreements. This is the case of the monasteries of Cis (Cis 1,2,3; Coruña 11,12,21,88,93,109; López Sangil 2001, pp. 139-156) and Sobrado (Sobrado (pássim) and Pallares 1979), by means of the marriages between Doña Ilduara Ériz and Count Gutier Menéndez, and between Gundesindo Ériz and Enderquina "Palla" Menéndez. Indeed, Hermenegildo Alóitez, founder of the monastery of Sobrado, was a cousin of Gutier and Enderquina, and the founders of San Nicolás de Cis were the parents of an aunt of his by kinship, namely the parents of Argilo, mother of the founder of Sobrado, wife of don Aloito, who in turn was the brother of Hermenegildo Gutiérrez, the father of Gutier and Enderquina (the father-in-law of Ilduara and Gundesindo) (Portela Silva and Pallares Méndez 1987: 19-22; Torres 1999: 298-312). M. C. Pallares considers that the marriage between Gutier and Ilduara served, precisely, to unite two of the most powerful families of the Galician aristocracy of the time (Pallares 2004, quote on 61, vid. also 78). After all that has been said, we could make the same deduction with respect to the bond between Gundesindo and Enderquina, as a speculative equivalent to that between Ilduara and Gutier.

So it seems clear that the Eriz family, as an aristocratic group, decisively supported the foundation of monasteries as a political strategy for near five decades, with several members of three generation promoting monasteries across Galicia and North Portugal. The reasons behind the creation of monasteries in this period are well known (Pérez 2012). In first place, there were spiritual reasons, something that is especially clear if we bear in mind that most of the founders became monks in those monasteries at the end of their lives (Pallares 2004, p. 119). Second, there were also economic benefits, since the monastery avoided the dispersion of the family properties and allowed to get control over rents and donations (Davies 2007). Thirdly, the creation of monasteries allowed the founder family to get into the social and political networks of the local communities (Martín Viso 2011; Portass 2017). This is especially important in the case of many members of the Eriz family, which were closely connected to the monarchy (Sáez 1948), so the foundation of monasteries implied also the creation of nodes of political articulation between the local and supra-local spheres (Castellanos and Martín Viso 2005).

In order to correctly calibrate how this family strategy was set up and the real impact it had in the local landscapes, we will now explore three lines of research: the number and quality of the properties donated or associated to these monasteries, the material record preserved from some of this early medieval buildings, and the distribution and spatial location of these monasteries.

Regarding the first line of research, of the 14 monasteries linked to the Eriz family, we only know the property that was donated by the founding family in 5 cases. It is not a big statistic sample, but it can offer us some interesting ideas for reflection:

In the case of Ferreira de Pallares, in 898 the Countess Elvira donated a long list of goods to the monastery: a manor with cows, sheep, goats, mares, and pigs, as well as a number of household items (2 parts of which were to be distributed among the poor, and 1 part for the monastery); two other hamlets, entirely for the monastery, together with a list of people that Elvira manumitted (as they were *mancipes*) and who became perpetual clients of the monastery, although they were legally freemen and women. In 917, Elvira made another donation, in this case half a village, ecclesiastical items, animals, and another portion of the Villa Mirelli which was added towards the end, after the confirmation of the grantor. In 939, Gugina Ériz (the daughter of Count Ero from his first marriage to Adosinda), together with her children and a grandson, donated a dozen properties to the monastery, including the village in which the monastery was located, another portion of Mirelli, and a vineyard with a wine press, granary, and vats on the banks of the River Avia. She also added a large number of household items and a considerable amount of livestock.

The monasteries of Loio and Portomarín received the same endowment from Gutier and Ilduara in 927, as they functioned as a single double house. The endowment consisted of a villa with 50 cows, another villa with four yokes of oxen and 250 sheep, 400 *modios* of barley and 13 full vats, another villa in O Morrazo, with 2 oxen and 30 sheep; another villa with another 2 oxen and 50 *modios* of barley; and a fifth villa with vineyards and other trees, 2 full vats, 10 horses and 16 mares. They also added household goods and explicitly included the men, both free and bonded, who lived in these villages. Finally, they gave them the power over a total of 60 inhabitants in other jurisdictions (in Paradela, Monterroso and Páramo), to serve the monastery of Santa María if they so wished.

In the case of Celanova, the lavish donation of Doña Ilduara in 938 included a long list of items, both liturgical and domestic objects related to the kitchen and table service, as well as linen and textiles. It was also a generous donation in real estate properties scattered all over Galicia: more than a dozen *villae*, although not all of them were intact; three hamlets, one island, and fisheries in three different areas. There were also large numbers of cattle, oxen, horses, and sheep, which were connected to the donated properties themselves. She even donated several apiaries. In 942, her son Rosendo also donated a large amount of property, including *villae* and churches, as well as liturgical objects, numerous books, household textiles and tableware, and a large number of livestock, including cows, mules, horses, mares, sheep, goats, and pigs, all of which were scattered across the donated properties. In 956 Celanova received 1/5 of the Salnés salt flats together with other monasteries of the Eriz family.

In the case of Carboeiro, we know of two donations from the year 922. The first, made by the founding counts, granted the town of Fradamonde to the monastery. The second, made by their daughter Gunteroda, donated some salt flats to the monastery (Carboeiro appendix II, docs. 1 and 2). In addition, a lost document seems to have referred to an earlier donation, in the year 921, of the church of San Martín de Negreiros (Coruña 23). Subsequently, the monastery received more donations, both in its immediate surroundings and in more distant areas such as the territory of Castela in the south of Galicia (e.g. Carboeiro docs. 5 and 11 and ap.II, reg. 3 and 10; Coruña 36, 37 and 58). Some of these donations show that it remained in the sphere and under the patronage of the founding family, as was the case in 929, when Queen Aragonta donated a villa; a donation later extended by her nephew Bishop Arias Peláez (Coruña 29). Carboeiro also received 1/5 of the Salnés salt flats in 956. Even so, Carboeiro fell into ruin after the death of Doña Goto, until, in 999, Vermudo II approved and sponsored its new restoration with the priests Ascarigo and Cristóforo and the confessor Trasuario (Carboeiro 20, Coruña 113).

As we can see, there seem to be important differences in terms of the properties of these monasteries, with Celanova undoubtedly being the wealthiest institution among them. In any case, the five monasteries seem to have been richly endowed for the standards of this period, not only in terms of their lands, but also their cattle, precious objects and serfs. Unfortunately, we have no documentation on the other monasteries of the Ériz family that informs us of the assets granted to them by their founders, but we do have the news of the distribution of one-fifth of the Salnés salt flats among several of them: Camanzo, Salceda, Vilanova, Nogueira, Ribadetea, Piloño, Lentuario and Perxegueiro, as well as Celanova and Carboeiro as mentioned above. Given the attention paid to these salt flats by the major aristocracies of the kingdom, it seems that this kind of production was of very high economic value and, together with the above-mentioned information, it suggests that monasteries of the Eriz family enjoyed an important control over rents in 10th-century Galicia.

As regards the archaeological record, we have recently studied the material vestiges of these and other monasteries of 10th-century Galicia (Sánchez-Pardo *et al.* 2018), so we will not go into details here. In any case, it is interesting to note the high quality of the architecture preserved from these buildings. In Ferreira de Pallares, Vilanova and Loio several prerromanesque elements are known, which indicate that the founders sponsored good quality constructions with the involvement of specialized craftspeople who were capable of performing technological innovations such as the re-introduction of newly-carved orthogonal ashlars and roll-decorated modillions. Moreover, in Celanova an entire 10th-century oratory has been preserved: the famous chapel of San Miguel, of excellent architectural quality, which was promoted by Rosendo in honour of his brother Froila (Sánchez-Pardo *et al.* 2018). All of these vestiges demonstrate the clear connection that the Eriz family had with the architectural styles (what is traditionally known as "Mozarabe" art) that were in fashion among the elites of the Kingdom of Leon during the first half of the 10th century. Apart from these four cases, there are other possible vestiges from other monasteries promoted by the Eriz family. In Carboeiro, archaeological excavations revealed pre-Romanesque structures, although there is very little information about them (Bonilla 2000). In the present-day churches of Lantaño and Angoares there are several possible vestiges from early medieval

Figure 8.2. Different views of the current location in the landscape of the monasteries founded by the Eriz family. The number corresponds to the name of each monastery in the map (figure 1). Images by the authors except n. 3 (Google maps), n. 1 (mapas. xunta.gal/visores/basico), n. 4 and 11 (VV.AA.: A gran Historia de Galicia, vol. I, Tomo 4, La Voz de Galicia, 2007, p. 141), n. 5 (http:// www.xoanarcodavella.com/2017/06/iglesia-de-san-de-san-lourenzo-nogueira.html), n. 6 (VV. AA.: Enciclopedia del Románico en Galicia, Pontevedra, Fundación Santa María la Real, Aguilar de Campoo, 2005, p. 174), n. 7. (http://mapio.net/pic/p-45281840/), n. 8 (https://www.camaratui.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id==43&Itemid=44&lang=es), n. 10 (http:// es.wikipedia.org), n. 12 (A.H.P de Lugo), n. 13 (https://1000-lugares-en-galicia.blogspot.com/2017/03/ruta-del-rio-loio-3-paradela-provincia-de-lugo.html?spref=pi)

buildings -including anthropomorphic tombs- which still need to be studied in greater detail (De La Torre Llorca 2020). It is likely that further research will shed new light on the archaeological dimension of the buildings promoted by these aristocracies in 10th-century Northwest Iberia (Utrero Agudo 2017).

Finally, we can study the geographical distribution of these monastic foundations. As we can see in the map (Figure 8.1), the new foundations (excluding the restoration of important previously-existing monasteries such as Ribas de Sil and Samos) seem to be clustered around five main areas: the area near the central section of the River Miño in Lugo (Ferreira, Loio and Portomarín), the Deza area (Carboeiro, Piloño and Camanzo), the Salnés area (Lantaño, Nogueira and perhaps Posmarcos), the final part of the Miño river in southern Pontevedra (Ribadetea, Salceda and possibly Pexegueiro) and Celanova (Vilanova and Celanova). This distribution seems to confirm that monasteries were created in areas of economic and political interest of the different members of the Eriz family, such as the concentration of farming land, connections with local elites, and economic specialization (vineyards, salt production, and cattle farming). Moreover, if we look at the specific situation of the monasteries in their local landscapes (Figure 8.2) we can see how they were normally located in isolated but central positions within a pattern of scattered settlements. This strategic location gave these monasteries a central role in the political and economic structuring of the local communities, as can be seen with other early medieval churches in Galicia (Sánchez-Pardo *et al.* 2020).

Therefore, the properties granted, the architecture, and the specific locations chosen for these foundations indicate that each one of these monasteries was the result of a crucial and highly-planned strategy within the aristocratic family, also implying a major economic effort. Of course, as we have seen, not all of these strategies were successful, but to different degrees, they made a major contribution towards the political structure at local level against the backdrop of the expansion of the Kingdom of León.

4. Conclusions

In the previous pages we have explored the extraordinary effort made by three generations of the Eriz family to promote at least 17 new monasteries and 3 restorations across Galicia and northern Portugal during the first five decades of the 10th century. In this sense, we have revised for the first time all the references to monasteries that were founded by members of the Eriz family, revealing the major economic effort and spatial planning that was involved.

These foundations can be considered as a genuine family strategy that functioned within a specific social and political context (Escudero 2021). It is interesting to highlight that this wave of monastic foundations in the first half of the 10th century coincided with a period in which aristocratic strategies seem to be based on the creation of a monastery for each generation or relevant individual of the great aristocratic families (Pérez 2012; Portass 2017; Sánchez-Pardo *et al.* 2018). Among other functions, these monasteries helped to reinforce the political structure of the kingdom of Asturias-León at local level (Portass 2017). However, in the second half of the 10th century, there seems to have been a change in the decisions of certain aristocracies, with them concentrating their assets into a single, large family monastery to which most of the family members donated. This led to the rise and consolidation of a few particularly powerful monastic centres such as Sobrado dos Monxes, Celanova or Samos, which began to monopolise a large part of the donations from both the monarchy and other aristocracies, local elites and peasantry, and progressively absorbed other small family monasteries (Pallares 1979; Portass 2017).

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The Social Reproduction of the Roman aristocracy in the 9th and 10th Centuries. Liutprand of Cremona and the women of the pope

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Abstract

This paper is based on the assumption that the Liutprand of Cremona's portraits of the Roman female aristocrats are valuable historically, if read in the correct light. In particular, Liutprand denounces the Roman senatrices' closeness, lawful or illicit, to the popes. In doing so, he identified one of the key factors that guaranteed the social reproduction of the Roman elite: the woman 'close to the pontiff' - both for biological kinship ties and for alleged sexual relations with the popes. In the 9th century, in fact, it was precisely the unions with the female relatives of the popes in office that were crucial to access the leadership group - formed by officials of the papal administration - and above all to maintain their status, despite papal successions. In the 10th century, the closeness to the popes through the female figures is still fundamental for the parental group of Theodora and Theophylact, in its search for a clearer definition than the remaining Roman parental groups, which legitimize the scope of hegemony and political power.

Keywords

Liutprand of Cremona; Roman aristocracy; kinship; marriage practices; *senatrices.*

In recent decades, research dedicated to early Medieval aristocracy has repeatedly emphasized the role of women in the strategies carried out by the elites to assert their prerogatives and characteristics. In the specific case of Medieval Rome, the question has never been approached organically. However, investigation on Roman aristocratic kinship structures has revealed the importance of descendants from the maternal line, pointing to the exceptional nature of the role of women in the construction of group and family identities between the 9th and 11th century.[1] In this paper I will present a small part of a wider research which I am currently conducting. This aims to identify and analyze the role played by women in the mechanisms of social reproduction and in the self-representation of the Roman aristocracy, from the Carolingian period up to 1046, year in which the Emperor Henry III deposed three rival popes at the synod of Sutri, thereby upsetting the social and political dynamics of the city and encouraging the rise of a new aristocracy. I shall begin by considering more closely the implications of the alleged intimacy between the female descendents of Theophylact and Theodora and the popes of the time, discussed with an abundance of salacious details by – above all – Liutprand of Cremona in the part of his work on Roman history. This prurient subject - main source of the die-hard myth of 10th century Roman pornocracy - does, I believe, merit further attention precisely as a way of investigating the ubiquitous and multi-faceted phenomenon of nepotism. I am not interested here in evaluating the degree to which Liutprand's stories are imaginative literary constructions, nor in discussing his alleged misogyny, nor again in returning to the theme of the rhetorical strategies deployed in order to discredit

[1] On the importance of the matrilineal bonds in the tenth century Roman kinship system see Toubert (1973, vol. II: 694-787) and Wickham (2015: 186-219). The prominent position occupied by Roman women in the 10th and first half of the 11th century is optimized in Di Carpegna Falconieri (1998). Finally, on matrilineal lineage, fundamental in the dynastization experiment carried out by the kinship of Theophylact, see Betti (forthcoming).

the popes and their entourages.[2] Rather I want to explore this subject – the closeness of aristocratic women to the popes – in order to examine more closely the in fact crucial role played by women in the reproduction of the Roman elite, at this time charged with the principal offices, civic and ecclesiastical, required by Rome's complex papal administration. The central role of Rome's female aristocrats is indeed reflected by their 'over-representation', something recognised too by Chris Wickham in his book on Rome, which acknowledges that the role played by women in constructing aristocratic family groups 'was unusually great by contemporary standards – and by the standards of Roman history both before and after.'(Wickham 2015: 204). Wickham notes particularly the extensive 10th century practice of using matronymics to indicate membership of the leading Roman families.[3]

Returning to Liutprand, we are told in *Antapodosis*, Book II, Chapter 48, that Theodora – labelled, without euphemism, a *scortum impudens* (shameless harlot) – successfully supported the candidature of Pope John X (914-928), formerly bishop of Bologna and then archbishop of Ravenna, solely to satisfy her insatiable lust (a story we will return to). In the same chapter we also hear of the scandalous relations (*nefarius adulterium*) between Theodora's daughter, Marozia, and the aged Pope Sergius III (904-911), climaxing with the birth of John, the future Pope John XI (931-935).[4] To this we can add the portrait of Pope John XII (955-964), son of the *princeps Romanorum* Alberic, circulated in the so-called *Historia Ottonis*, an especially over-the-top, caricaturing, and nakedly misleading pamphlet (Chiesa 1999, 2018).[5] In order to justify Emperor Otto's anti-canonical deposition of the pope, Liutprand enumerates and endorses a number of rumours circulating about the pope, so as to eliminate any doubt about the legitimacy of the deposition. These include the accusation that he fell for the widow of a certain *miles*, Rainerius, to her he then entrusted the government of numerous cities and gave away the gold crosses and chalices belonging to St. Peter (possessions of the Lateran treasury).[6] Liutprand also alleges that he had an affair with his aunt Stefania, who died while giving birth to their son (although note that this aunt Stefania is in another passage described as his father's concubine, rather than sister, and this is the view generally accepted today).[7] He claims other affairs took places with a widow named Anna and her niece.[8] Finally in another passage, Liutprand records that a number of aristocratic women of the city, all lovers of Pope John, incited the Romans to oppose the pontiff imposed by Otto, Leo VII.[9] In my opinion all these episodes are valuable historically – if read in the correct light. As it appears, Lituprand collected gossip and exaggerated them to excess in the service of clear propagandistic aims.[10] Nevertheless, behind these narratives it is possible to catch a glimpse of social practices which depended strictly on the political and power structures of the city of Rome and its territory. They have as their aim the condemnation of close relations between the popes and Roman families, relations that are claimed to be founded on illegitimate and scandalous unions with dissolute, aristocratic women. Naturally, these images have contributed to the making of the historiographical notion of the era of the *Adelspappstum*, from the beginning of the 10th century until the mid-11th century, during which it is alleged that a radical closening of relations between popes and aristocrats delivered the papacy into the hands of the aristocracy. That would be

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[2] On the representation of female figures in Liutprand of Cremona (Colonna 1982; Le Buc 1995; La Rocca 2007; Leyser 2010; Maclean 2017: 127-49; Vignodelli, forthcoming). Regarding the representations of the Roman context proposed by Liutprand (Arnaldi 2005; Wickham 2000).

[3] On the Roman use of matronymics (Di Carpegna Falconieri 1994).

[4] Liutprand, *Antapodosis*, II 48: 54-5; III 43: 90. See comments about the passage in Bougard 2015: 166-168; Chiesa 2015:166-169.

[5] Liutprand, *Historia Ottonis*.

[6] Liutprand, *Historia Ottonis*: 170.

[7] Liutprand, *Historia Ottonis*: 170-171.

[8] Liutprand, *Historia Ottonis*: 175.

[9] Liutprand, *Historia Ottonis*: 181.

[10] It is plausible the hypothesis that the slanders about the members of Theophylact 's family (especially women) collected by Liutprand are signs of the smear campaign carried out by the partisans of Pope Formosus against the supporters of Pope Sergius II (904-911), responsible for unleashing the second offensive against the Formosan ordinations. This hypothesis can be found in Fedele 1910 and 1911; rediscussed in Arnaldi 1991.

a breach with respect to a past, characterized by an alleged and generally harmonious collaboration between the papal power and the rich Roman aristocracy, set in the articulated government structures of the city and of the papal territory. During that time, instead, the pontifical authority was eroded by a series of related Roman families who managed to impose themselves by conditioning the political choices of the popes and subtracting assets from the church of Rome to build their own personal domains in the *territorium Sancti Petri.* But was the 10th century really a turning point in the relations between pontiffs and their elites, or does this vision rather depend on the sources that we have available to us? A number of hints lead me to propose a second possibility; I would rather suggest the hypothesis that little changed in the dynamics which characterized papal-aristocratic relations, while at the same time much changed in how they were represented.

During the Byzantine period, Roman sources are characterized by the scarcity of references to the family links of the popes. The situation is the same as regards the prominent personalities who come out of anonymity (Brown 1984). This absence was highlighted by Tom Brown and seems typical of all the aristocracies of the Byzantine territories in the Peninsula. In the Roman context, the crisis of the ruling class that occurs between the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century seems to have affected the extinction of the last senatorial lineages and the complex genesis of a new aristocracy, initially constituted by men in arms from other parts of the empire flanked by men recruited on the spot, probably remunerated with the concession of fiscal lands (Marazzi 2001: 44; Di Carpegna Falconieri 2012). The lack of interest in the representation of kinship in Roman sources is also associated with the influence of the Byzantine mentality, more likely to recognize a possible aristocratic lineage to skills and ingenuity rather than blood, at least until the 9th century, when the principle of 'birth in the purple' appears and an aristocratic model is established, defined by the courtly dignities, the career at the top of the army and, above all, by the reference to illustrious ancestors (Cheynet 2000).

Biological kinship is a thorny theme in the lives of the popes of the 8th and 9th centuries contained in the *Liber pontificalis*. First of all, there is a general reluctance to clarify the family relationships that exist between the most prominent Roman officials and between the latter and the popes, which instead we know through the Frankish sources (Toubert 2001: 67-68). Many of the lives contain only rare references to the popes' parents (the father but also the mother). A new focus on the size of the pontiff's biological family is recorded starting from the mid-8th century when biographers began to emphasize the Roman provenance of the popes.[11] It is difficult therefore to reconstruct the evidence that the popes may have promoted their own relatives to the highest levels of the hierarchy. This silence is not by chance. On the contrary it was a deliberate desire to keep silent about family links between popes and the chief functionaries of the Lateran, which must have been the norm but which also may have invited censure. In this regard I want to note two passages in the *Liber pontificalis*. The first episode which makes clear plain condemnation of the practice of favouring the careers of family members appears in the so-called *Farnesiana* recension of the life of Pope Sergius II (844-847).[12] The author narrates how the brother of Sergius II, the powerful Benedict, takes advantage of the infirmity of the pope, and manages to grab power over the church and the state while bringing both to ruin; it is explained that God chose to punish Rome's chiefly moral decadence by allowing the Saracens to subjugate the city (an allusion to the 846 attack on the city). Nepotism thus risked overturning the protection of Rome's political, economic, and moral integrity (on the 'Farnesiana version', Capo 2020: 254-255; Betti 2022). This message, which is to be located more precisely in the complex textual tradition of the life of Sergius II, appears furthermore

[11] In the life of Pope Paul I (757-767), the author mentions that Paul was the younger brother of Pope Stephen II. In the Hadrian I's life (772-795), the author mentions and celebrates the tutor of Hadrian, orphan still a *puerulus*: namely, his uncle Teodoto, a very powerful *consul et dux* and *primicerius* of the church of Rome who raised and got him educated for a papal administration career.

[12] The "Farnesina version" is a part of the life of Sergius II betrayed exclusively in Codex Farnesianus, lost in the 18th century. It is published in *Liber pontificalis*: 97-101.

to be confirmed in the biography of one of the most important popes of the 9th century, Nicholas I (858-67). In the prologue to this biography, the work of John Hymmonides (Bougard 2008), the author records that Nicholas I, son of the *regionarius* Theodore, succeeded in gaining access to the Curia, thanks to his predecessor, Benedict III, who loved and favoured him above his own blood-relations (*Liber pontificalis*: 151). Here then we have a brief indication of practices that once had been held as virtuous but that also must have been regularly rejected: here we see the reason why in general the sources preferred silence.

Only during the pontificate of John VIII (872-882) was usual discretion consciously put aside, with remarkable consequences. John VIII was an innovator in political communication, bold in his language and in his rhetorical strategies, as is known by anyone with a certain familiarity with his exceptional letter collection. This was a man capable of identifying the most burning issues which mattered to his audience, and of exploiting them to his advantage at the right moment. Among these issues, after of course the controversy around the divorce of Lothar and Teutberga, those that emerged as most relevant concerned the problem of family relations among the aristocracy (above all the criteria for evaluating the legitimacy of marital unions), and the articulation of rules regulating Christian marriage. It is not therefore by chance that John VIII deployed the vocabulary of kinship in several contexts, revealing what before was hidden. First, he several times emphasised, to different recipients of his letters, that Leo of Gabii, *apocrisarius* of the Roman See, was not only bishop but also and above all his *karissimus nepos* (anticipating the figure of the cardinal nephew, the emblematic figure for all those concerned with papal nepotism). Second, in his well-known 876 sentence of excommunication of those leading papal functionaries close to Bishop Formosus of Porto, he condemned the marriage practices of the Roman aristocracy.[13] On the one hand he revealed the importance of marriage to the female relations of the popes in office: both the *vestararius* George and the *magister militum* Sergius are described as scrupleless parvenus, who thanks to marrying up with the nieces (respectively) of Benedict III and Nicholas I were able to enrich themselves and take on important roles in the Lateran. This practice must have been common, but Roman sources up to now remained silent. As an example, the *Annales Bertiniani* alone reveals that the powerful Anastasius Bibliothecarius was excommunicated a second time in 868, on the grounds that he had led his cousin Eleutherius to murder the daughter of Pope Hadrian II, who previously had been abducted by him with the aim to marry, despite the will of her father (*Annales Bertiniani* y. 868: 92). Furthermore, John VIII condemned the many marital unions contracted by the Roman aristocracy which were in plain contradiction of the disciplinary programme concerning marriage elaborated by the church from the end of the 8th century. This held that a *legale connubium* was indissoluble and to be substantially exogamous in order to avoid the risk of incest (Toubert 1977). The flexibility of the institution of marriage in the Roman context appears therefore to have guaranteed the constant renewal of alliances at the heart of a group that was closed, exclusive, and stable; a group from whose number the popes came and which saw the distribution of the chief offices, lay and ecclesiastical, linked to the government of the city and its territory. Women were thus fundamental mechanisms for its reproduction; cyclical union with the *nepotes* of the popes confirmed the group, gave it an injection of status, and guaranteed continuity for the whole community, bound together by strong ties of in-marriage. The equilibrium of this group was thus redefined at every papal election, but in fact remained substantially stable thanks precisely to its particular marriage practices.

Roman sources label this group the *senatus* as early as the end of the 8th century, when it is usually described as a monolithic bloc (Arnaldi 1982). It is only in the first half of the 10th century, when surviving sources, not least charters, become more consistent, that more close-up distinctions within the *senatus* begin to be made. This coincides with the rise of the lineage of Theophylact and Theodora, which appropriated the title *senator/senatrix*, using too the even more important variant, *senator/senatrix omnium Romanorum*. The *senatrices* at the centre of my research are thus bearers of a double identity:

[13] Iohannes VIII, *Epistolae*: 326-9. On the letter see Betti 2020a.

on the one hand these are the descendents of the most powerful lineage of the early 10th century; on the other hand, they represent Rome's aristocratic community as a whole, that group which has been intimately connected, for centuries, to a line of popes whom they had succeeded and do succeed (Betti 2020b). In this regard, I want to pay particular attention to the fate of the title of *senator* and particular of *senatrix* at precisely the time the Theophylact -Theodora lineage attempted a series of exogamous matches with the strategic aim of strengthening their position in Rome. The title was displayed by the male and female descendents of Theodora III – niece of Theophylact and Theodora, given away in marriage around 928 to Duke John III of Naples – as late as the sixth generation. Not only this, but the title, possibly still through the maternal line, was transmitted by the dukes of Naples to those of Gaeta, where several women used it until the end of the 11th century.[14] The possibility of acquiring the title of *senator/senatrix*, and of including it among the epithets of the dukes of Naples and of Gaeta, must have been an attractive one, not least in the political context of the South, by now involved by John VIII in a common, anti-Saracen political programme.[15] If in the first decades of the 10th century the title *senator* in the two duchies could indicate relations with Theophylact, protagonist in the battle of Garigliano against Saracens (915),[16] by the end of the 11th century I suspect instead that it signalled a special link between the two families and the prestige of the Roman aristocracy as a whole, including its popes. That this aristocratic identity was so tightly interwoven with papal identity made it doubly attractive, as is shown by a letter from the Byzantine Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos to Pope John XI concerning the marriage of one of his sons to a daughter of Marozia. The project is particularly interesting because the mother of the girl to be sent to Constantinople was none other than the mother of the pope himself. The emperor thus considered his status as father-in-law desirable, reinforcing through marriage relations a spiritual link with the pope which already existed through his office.[17]

I would now like to reconsider in particular two of the scandals which Liutprand in his works condemns so elegantly, hazarding a number of interpretations emerging from what I have said so far. Let us look first at the rise of the scrupleless Pope John (Savigni 1992), who according to Lituprand was formerly bishop of Bologna, then archbishop of Ravenna, and finally pope – a career path enabled solely by the power exercised by his lover, Theodora, who wanted him in Rome for her own pleasure.[18] It is difficult to interpret this story in the absence of other sources, but it remains significant in my opinion. The career of John X appears astounding but is also problematic: first, we are confronted by a series of transfers to increasingly prestigious episcopal sees – from Bologna to Ravenna and from Ravenna to Rome – which in this period were considered unacceptable; and there is a further problem: John is said to have been an archbishop of Ravenna who became pope despite the secular conflict between the two sees (Savigni 1992). John was also a strong and successful pope, who according to the sources was the architect of the anti-Saracen political alliance; although Liutprand ignores the fact, Theophylact stood by him and collaborated with the pope in his successes. Finally, Theodora, the wife of Theophylact, was also an important figure in this period: the sources make clear her visibility, her capacity for self-promotion, and her political influence. It is no coincidence that John, when he was still archbishop of Ravenna, had sent a letter not only to Theophylact but also to Theodora, in order that the couple did anything they could with Pope Sergius III (904-911) so that the elected bishop of Fiesole obtained papal consecration. In this case, Theodora is involved because firstly she is known outside Rome, and then because she is

[14] The transfer of the senatorial title in the duchy of Naples, in that of Gaeta and in the principality of Capua in Stasser 2008: 239-54.

[15] John VIII oriented his interests towards South Italy, trying to play a leading role in regional political dynamics (Gantner 2012).

[16] Theophylact would have been recognized leader of the league against the Saracens, who settled near the Garigliano river, which was promoted by Pope John X and which involved the Byzantines, the Margrave of Spoleto and Camerino, Alberic, the princes of Capua and Benevento, Guaimar of Salerno and the dukes of Gaeta (Arnaldi 1954).

[17] The letter is edited in Greek (with a Latin translation) in Pitra 1885: 469-475.

[18] An overall study is lacking on Theodora (as well as on Theophylact). Richer information in Fedele 1911: 393-423.

supposed to have a certain political ability, capable of influencing the choices of her husband and the pontiff.[19] The story of John and Theodora's scandalous relations, which Liutprand develops literarily, appear to me to be full of significance – beyond the issue of their veracity, which is unimportant here – because it betrays the local need to integrate a foreign, non-Roman, pope into the particular structures of the Roman aristocracy. It was precisely through his relations with Theodora that John X regularised his position as pope and made himself acceptable to the Romans who likely opposed him forcefully.

The other story of Liutprand's concerns the lovers of Pope John XII, which I referred to earlier. The story has been much commented on for its role in a precise rhetorical strategy designed to construct a monster, as Paolo Chiesa well put it in his noted article on the *Historia Ottonis* (Chiesa 1999). But in reality, despite passing through Liutprand's distorting lens, the anecdote refers to entirely legitimate practices which, through the involvement of women, regulated relations between the Roman aristocracy and the popes. I am discussing in particular the claim that John, blinded by love, entrusted to the widow of the *miles* Rainerius (whose identity has not been established)[20] the government of several cities and lavished her with treasures from the Lateran church.[21] The story, followed by the rumour that John XII was his aunt's lover, may seem an absurd concoction with no relation to reality,[22] but in fact takes on a certain plausibility in the light of a document which according to its editors dates to 17 December 970, and was later copied in Cencio Camerarius's *Liber censuum* and the *Digesta* of Cardinal Albino. This document is a *unicum* in the 10th century and has as its protagonist Stefania, another second generation *senatrix omnium Romanorum*, the sister of Marozia II and therefore cousin of Alberic, son of Marozia. In the charter Pope John XIII (in office 965-972) makes Stefania – identified as Stefania II, his relative of some kind – the beneficiary, together with her sons and nephews, of a three-generation, emphyteutic concession of the city of Palestrina and its territory, *cum omni publica datione et functione*. Here we see clearly an attestation of an aristocratic Roman woman, a *senatrix* and nephew of Theophylact, who owes officially to the pope, her relative, government of an urban centre and its associated territories (Zimmermann 1988 n. 205: 404-406; Betti 2020b: 647-649). Therefore Liutprand's reference to John XII's concession of the government of several cities to an unidentified widow and to his close links with female relatives (in Liutprand's language, incestuous lovers), in fact simply gives an account of perfectly common nepotistic practices which also involved the women of papal families.

In conclusion, it is important to reiterate that Liutprand's stories about Roman female aristocrats reveal the exceptional role that they played personally by participating in the political and patrimonial strategies played out by the parental group to which they belong. Liutprand therefore censures and charges with illicit behaviour the typical conduct of powerful Roman women that are completely foreign to him (for instance the exercise of public functions in the territories and settlements owned by the Apostolic See). In particular, in his negative representation of the Roman aristocrats, he insists on their closeness, lawful or illicit, to the popes: in short, he draws portraits of powerful female figures acting independently of fathers and spouses and boasting a privileged relationship of closeness with the pontiffs. In doing so, he identified one of the key factors that guaranteed the social reproduction of the Roman elite: the woman 'close to the pontiff' - both for biological kinship ties and for alleged sexual relations with the popes. In the 9th century, in fact, it was precisely the unions with the female relatives of the popes in office that were crucial to access the leadership group - formed by officials of the papal administration - and above all to maintain their status, despite papal successions. This procedure, which in the 9th century is passed over in silence in the Roman sources, is publicly denounced by Pope John VIII

[19] The letter is published in Löwenfeld 1884: 517-8.

[20] On the identity of this *miles* Bougard 2015: 521, n. 26,

[21] Liutprand, *Historia Ottonis*: 170: *Testis est Rainerii sui ipsius militis vidua, quam caeco captus igne multis praefectam urbibus sacrosanctis beati Petri donavit aureis crucibus atque calicibus.*

[22] For instance, Chiesa 2018: 43, n. 37: Chiesa here believes that the attribution of some *urbes* to a woman constituted a violation of social rules.

in a context of strong conflict between parental groups competing to obtain the institutional positions that guaranteed an opportunity for enrichment. In the 10th century, the closeness to the popes through the female figures is still fundamental for the parental group of Theodora and Theophylact, in its search for a clearer definition than the remaining Roman parental groups, which legitimize the scope of hegemony and political power. The licit or illicit ties of the *senatrices* with the popes endow it with an exceptional and prestigious identity, which strengthens its hegemonic position locally, but also in a broader international context. The marriage union with the descendants of Theophylact and Theodora becomes attractive and desirable also because of the 'papal' connotation of the group's identity. Such a marriage alliance, in fact, thus guaranteed the acquisition of a symbolic heritage of high prestige to be exhibited, a tangible sign of a close and privileged relationship with the Apostolic See.

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The 10th century in central-northern Portugal: changing scales of power

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Abstract

In the last 15 years it has been possible to accumulate relevant information about the 10th century in the central region of Portugal, especially in the territory known as Beira Alta. This information comes mainly from archaeological contexts that have been excavated and from the re-analysis of the scarce written documentation concerning this region. The combination of information from both sources is not always concordant and even seems to be contradictory. However, its integrated reading has made it possible to trace a picture of great socio-political dynamism during the 10th century, the main actors of which were the supralocal elites and the local rural communities.

This paper presents and discusses information on the rural communities and their way of life and social relations, by means of a bottom-up point of view of society in this period. At the same time, and using written sources available, the intervention and role of the higher elites is addressed, to construct a top-down view. The combination of these two perspectives, which apparently do not interrelate, makes it possible to better understand 10th century society in this frontier territory and opens a perspective on the changes in settlement and power scales that occurred during this century.

Keywords

Rural Communities; social relations; local communities; local elites; encompassing powers.

Introduction

The 10th century was a time of change in Europe and also within the local communities and powers that lived or had interests in the highlands of the central-northern part of Portugal, called the Beira Alta region, which is defined by the Douro and the Mondego river basins and bordered by a series of mountain ranges: the Estrela to the east, which is the highest culminating at 1,993 metres a.s.l., and the Montemuro and Caramulo mountain chains to the west, separating the region from the Atlantic seaboard (Figure 1).

From the 8th to the 11th centuries, this whole area became a frontier land between Christian and Muslim powers. Yet we do not know much about the Islamic conquest in the area, nor about the communities that were living there. Indeed, the few written references reflect the marginality of these territories to Islamic powers and even to the Asturian kingdom (Martín Viso 2016; Maillo Salgado 2016: 59-77). It was only in the second half of the 9th century that King Alfonso III of Asturias achieved some control over the frontier territories south of his kingdom and, theoretically, integrated this area between the Rivers Douro and Mondego in it. However, by the end of the following century, the Muslims recaptured a large area in the north-west sector of the Peninsula, where the most important cities were attacked between 981 and 997. As result, the region was integrated (theoretically) in the political control of the Caliphate. However, after the death of caliph Hisham II in 1012/1013, the Caliphate collapsed and several small, independent Islamic kingdoms (*taifas)* emerged. The new scenario in Muslim Iberia created the conditions for new Christian military campaigns, and between 1055 and 1064 the Leonese King Ferdinand I conquered the area, which remained Leonese until the middle of the twelfth century when it became part of the new kingdom of Portugal. As can be imagined, this territory was therefore for long a land of contacts and a theoretical frontier between the dominant powers in the South (Muslim) and the North (Christian Asturians), and during that period was subjected to political instability, creating the scenario that eventually allowed local populations to define their own territories, thus configuring a fragmented and unstructured landscape, which is in line with the idea of a territory "characterized by the absence of large-scale power structures" (Carvajal *et al.* 2020). In this context, the equilibrium of the local communities in the region could only have been reached through a complex system of negotiations, not only among themselves, but also with those external powers.

For the purpose of this article I will use primarily the data from archaeological research, and some of the scarce written documents related to the Beira Alta region and dated before 1100. Both types of sources allow a differentiated approach to the Beira society of the 10th century. The archaeological record has mainly characterized peasant communities, and the contexts that we can attribute to higher-ranking elites are rare. This is due to the orientation of the research itself, but, above all, because it has not been easy to archaeologically identify the spaces of these social groups, or when we do identify them, the records are not enlightening or are profoundly altered, as occurred for example with the sites studied in the city of Viseu (Meira 2021). On the other hand, it seems obvious that despite being an elite group, whose wealth is incomparable to that of a peasant, its archaeological materiality is not so easy to identify since, as highlighted by C. Wickham (2005), many of the objects that reveal this socioeconomic differentiation are goods that have not been archaeologically preserved such as textiles, tapestries, furniture, etc. At an intermediate level, there would still be local elites operating but these are even more difficult to identify in the archaeological record and are only detectable by systematic comparison of archaeological records between sites, as occurred with the record at one of the sites we excavated, Senhora do Barrocal (Tente *et al.* 2018b; Tente 2020b). On the contrary, the available written record enables an approach to the elites, especially those of higher rank, who acted on a northwestern peninsular scale. The peasants are absent, and even the local elites are practically invisible. The use of these two types of sources is therefore able to build a vision of the socio-political context in Beira Alta in the 10th century and to perceive a significant alteration in the scale of the exercise of power, at both local and regional levels, with changes in the status quo in the region at the end of the 10th century or at the beginning of the 11th century.

In the last fifteen years, several 10th-century archaeological sites have been recorded and studied, which has allowed a deeper understanding of the material reality of peasant communities in terms of their living spaces, economic activities and relationship with natural resources, settlement patterns, and the role of funerary spaces in defining social structures and appropriation systems or the demarcation of productive and living spaces (Tente 2012, 2017). At the first analysis, these communities appeared to be characterized by mainly subsistence economies and their members/families did not display great socio-economic differences within the community and between different communities. However, the comparison of the archaeological records at each site revealed a much more complex panorama, with some internal structuring visible as well as differences between communities which show that they were not all operating on the same socio-political level. The archaeological record will be the main source to approach a bottom-up point of view that is presented in the second section of this article.

The most significant written resources came from the *Livro Preto* Coimbra See cartulary (Rodrigues, 1999), in which 232 documents were recorded until 1100, and of those only fifteen documents refer to the area of study. Twelve of these fifteen are related specifically to the Lafões territory (Figure 10.1) and are dated from 1002 to 1100; therefore they are relatively recent. There is also another document

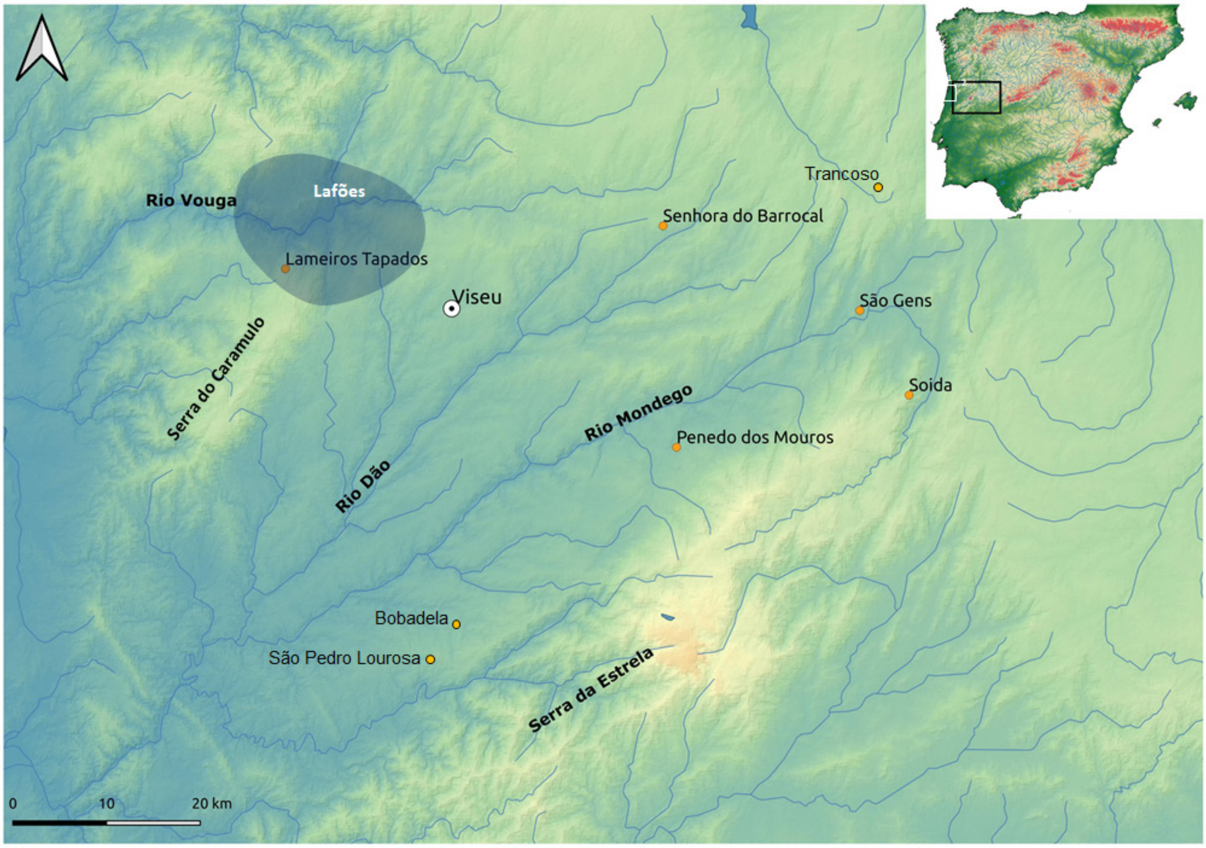

Figure 10.1. Map indicating the case-study region and the main sites referred in the text (© C. Tente).

dating back to 928 in the *Liber Testamentorum* of Lorvão Monastery, which is related to a donation of the Countess Onega to the monastery, but it has the particularity of having been signed in the villa of Moçamedes, in this territory of Lafões. The characteristics and specificities of Lafões territory in relation to other parts of Beira Alta will be discussed below. Our analysis will also consider the donation that the Countess *Flamula Rodrigues*, Onega's granddaughter, made to the monastery of Guimarães (North Portugal), founded by her aunt *Mumadona Dias*, first countess of *Portucale* (PMH.DC, Doc. 81) The importance of this document for the region is related to the fact that it mentions several castles (in the possession of counts) and their territories in the region of Riba Côa, a river in the extreme east of the North-Central region of Portugal (Barroca 1990/91: 94-95). These documentary resources will be considered in the third section of this chapter in the discussion of the top-down view of this territory during the 10th century.

Local communities: a bottom-up point of view to 10th century society

At the beginning of the 10th century or, occasionally, still in the 9th century, the archaeological record documents the foundation of new archaeological sites of rural character that aggregate several families. It is difficult to claim that those were villages, but they were certainly communities with ties and relationships among their members that made it possible to establish new places to live, which entailed, among other things, decisions that affected the entire community. It is also evident that these communities shared spaces (inside and outside the settlements) and daily and seasonal activities (such as hunting, building, repairing settlement fences, herding, managing communal goods and land). We do not know why they chose those places; some are located on gentle slopes next to rivers or streams and others in rocky and easily defended places. Some chose previously inhabited spaces, even near to abandoned Roman sites (Tente 2012).

Something extraordinary must have occurred that was responsible for this change in the settlement pattern. We suppose that earlier, the settlement pattern could have been characterized by scattered small farmsteads worked by families and that, sporadically, there would have been places correlated more closely with powers, such as the castra/castrum (Tente, Prata s.d.). Some of the small capitals of *civitas* were still occupied, as would be the case of Bobadela, and Torre de Almofala (Figure 10.1), along with the only urban centre in this area, the town of Viseu (Figure 10.1). With the Muslim invasion in 711, the local *potentates* of the 7th and 8th centuries may have lost their sociopolitical prestige, because this was based on a relationship with the then extinct monarchy. In the face of the collapse or disappearance of these lords, the population would reorganize, joining together in small communities of a few families, who developed bonds of loyalty and communitarianism among themselves. But how did they achieve that? How did they choose the places and which bond connected the families who joined together in the same settlement? Were these new settlements really a peasant initiative or did they reflect decisions in spheres of power in which these peasants were integrated? Without other kinds of information (mainly in written sources) some of these questions will remain without a clear answer.

Nevertheless, the archaeological record in central-northern Portugal reflects a new political and territorial order, forged at the end of the 9th century or the beginning of the 10th. But, at the same time, as we shall see further on, the region also saw the emergence of new powers, some from the county families who carried out the military conquests (*presurias*) at the time of King Alfonso III from Asturias, but certainly others, perhaps of local origin, who emerged in this new social reality.

The archaeological record shows that these new settlements were formed by three to six families (households, of an unknown size), therefore occupying small areas, and they were basically following a subsistence system. At São Gens (Figures 10.1 and 10.2), the excavated areas revealed evidence of three domestic units from which we estimate the simultaneous presence of four to six families within the enclosure, an estimation which is supported by the analysis of the scattered necropolis of rock-cut graves located nearby the enclosure (Brookes *et al.* 2017). Most of the sites consist of a single occupation level, which was destroyed by a fire that allowed the preservation of burnt organic matter. All sites are located in discreet spots in the landscape. Clearly, the aim was in most cases to obtain visual control over the territory whilst remaining invisible in this landscape characterized by granitic outcrops. This strategy can be observed in valley bottom sites, such as São Gens, or in mountain sites, such as at Soida (Figure 10.1). All sites were also surrounded by palisades and/or stone walls. The prevalence of perishable materials to build structures (domestic or collective) was also a common feature. All sites also revealed very homogeneous pottery assemblages, essentially consisting of jars, pans, and large bowls (Tente *et al.* 2014, 2022; Souza 2016). Some variability is naturally seen between settlements but basic shapes, sizes and decorations are the same. The recurrent finds of iron slag also indicates that metalworking was taking place in the settlements. At Senhora do Barrocal (Figure 10.1) it was possible to identify two forge bases associated with a grinding stone that was reused as a working "table", probably in connection with metalworking activities (Tente *et al.* 2016b). All this evidence suggests that production of iron tools was not centralized. The large number of botanic remains preserved at São Gens and Senhora do Barrocal is representative of a very diversified agriculture, which may reflect the liberty of choice to cultivate the species best adapted to harsh climate and soil conditions, which can be interpreted also as a strategy to survive failures in the annual production of certain species, as might often happen with the cultivation of several cereals (Tente *et al.* 2022; Seabra *et al.* 2022)

These communities seem to be segmented,[1] in which the family is the basis of organization, as can be seen by the internal organization of the villages and especially by the necropolises. The clearest case is São Gens (Brookes *et al.* 2017).

Despite sharing a large spectrum of similar features, some sites display evidence suggesting that these were single-purpose sites, or that some very specialized activities were taking place along with other, daily activities (Tente, 2020a). This is visible in the diversified composition of botanic (cereals and pulses) and faunal assemblages, as recorded at Senhora do Barrocal and São Gens, respectively. At the latter site, the age profiles of the domestic animals are compatible with a self-sufficient subsistence economy exploiting their secondary products (wool, milk, traction and manure). These communities also reveal a parsimonious management of wild resources, as evidenced in the preferable hunting of male deer (Tente *et al.* 2016a). A complementary or specialized activity related to transhumance activities has been identified in both Estrela and Caramulo mountain ranges, respectively at Soida (Fernández Mier, Tente 2018) and at Lameiros Tapados (Tente, Fernández Mier 2021). It is thus possible, albeit faintly, to identify complementarities between communities and somewhat complex systems of horizontal level relationships and interaction within these communities. And it is in this context that we can understand the development of specialised activities such as hunting and tannery work, as observed at São Gens, and transhumance practices, such as those putatively identified at Soida and Lameiros Tapados.

In a different sphere, Senhora do Barrocal reveals other forms of social inequality between communities (Tente 2016a). Indeed, despite some similarities, this site is not in full accordance with features observed at other sites known in the region. One of the contrasting differences is the presence of roof tiles in at least two of its houses. Moreover, these building materials were associated with exogenous pottery vessels, of Islamic production (Souza *et al.* 2022) which previously had only been found in the count's castle of Trancoso (Ferreira *et al.* 2012). An iron spur must be also highlighted, a unique find in the region despite the presence of a horse among the São Gens fauna. Another exceptionality at Senhora do Barrocal is the presence of a nearby church, as attested by an inscription presumably dating back to 971 (Tente *et al.* 2016b: 291-292).

While at first glance they appear to be equal communities without internal social imbalances, a more holistic approach to all the data shows a more complex reality. It seems clear that the people who lived at Senhora do Barrocal were different from their coeval neighbours. Although the archaeological record is sometimes opaque, there is evidence at this site that the community/family moved in a supralocal social circle.

There were clearly individuals or families who stood out in these communities. But what were the mechanisms for this to have occurred? We can suppose that the relations within peasant societies were more complex than initially thought and did not rely on a simple capacity to accumulate wealth in a differential way. The mechanisms should be more social than economic, taking into account what can be perceived from the archaeological record, where the material differentiation between communities and within communities is almost invisible. As previously demonstrated for this region (Tente 2020), the indicators of social differentiation are very tenuous and not very significant in terms of material wealth. Quirós Castillo (2022: 266-267) has recently pointed out that the establishment of horizontal relations within peasant communities should preferably be based on principles such as the moral economy, which would determine the establishment of networks of reciprocity/obligation and mutual support, providing a support network for each family. However, these principles of moral economy, as

[1] "Segmentary societies" were defined in the framework of neo-evolutionist anthropology precisely as a type of social organization in which communities are self-organized in segments, with political and economic independence, which is what the archaeological record of these small communities seems to reveal according to several markers.

established by Thompson (1971), Scott (1977) and Faith (2019: 2-5), would simultaneously come to set the limits to the development of social inequalities within communities. In this way, social differentiation may be established through networks of vertical relations, namely through patronage and clientelism mechanisms (Quirós Castillo 2022:268-270). It remains to be seen on whose initiative those networks were established; if it would come from members outside the communities, or, on the contrary, if the initiative came from segments of the communities themselves (individuals or groups) in the search of greater control over socioeconomic risk and greater social security. The ceramic artefacts imported from the Islamic world found at Senhora do Barrocal may effectively be the material expression of these vertical networks, which may have led to greater social inequality within the local communities, which would become more evident from the 11th century onwards.

3. Encompassing powers: a top-down point of view for the territory

As far as we know from written sources, it is clear that the territories north of the River Tagus were on the fringes of the effective control of Islamic power, but that Coimbra and Viseu were regionally important references, where Islamic power found political and military resistance (Martín Viso 2018). Moreover, before the conquests in the times of King Alfonso III, documentary references to possible Asturian attacks in this region are quite limited. Viseu appears on the list of cities that would have been razed by Asturian kings Alfonso I and Fruela, but the veracity of this list has been questioned (Escalona 2004). According to the *Chronicon Laurbanense*, in the second half of the 10th century, Vímara Peres took Oporto (868) and Hermenegildo Gutiérrez conquered Coimbra (878). It is not clear whether those conquests were the result of these magnates' own initiatives, and later, through complex systems of relations, the king ended up integrating them into the kingdom, creating the image that they were nobles in action in the service of the crown (Martín Viso 2018). Other Asturian conquests that must have been promoted directly by the Asturian king are the capture of Chaves by Odoário (872) and of Viseu, around 872/873, directly by King Alfonso IIII, as described in the Asturian Chronicles. In less than 20 years, Alfonso III integrated in his kingdom (conquering directly or by political relations), the territories of Braga and Oporto, to the north of the Douro, and the ancient Visigoth dioceses of Lamego, *Caliabria*, Viseu and *Aeminium*/Conimbriga, between the Douro and Mondego. From that time onwards, new players appeared in the region who were directly or indirectly related to the Asturian court. The positioning of these new elites in these conquered territories has been evidenced through some later documentation studied by M. L. Real (2005, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018) and by the presence of some architectural elements evidenced in the studies of P. A. Fernandes (2008, 2016, 2017).

Although the central-northern area of Portugal has been studied by several researchers in the last decade, there are few references (written, archaeological or architectural) to churches dating back to the 9th or 10th centuries. It seems clear that churches were few in number and were, in most cases, away from the settlements. Religious practices in most rural communities would have taken place in buildings that are undetected today or even outside, next to boulders, such the one at São Gens (Figure 2).

It should be mentioned that, according to what can be inferred from written sources, the location of churches and monasteries does not overlap with the distribution of rock-cut graves (Martín Viso 2012, 2017; Tente 2017). The largest concentration of religious buildings before the twelfth century was in the city of Viseu and its immediate surroundings, where they were probably founded by the diocese. A similar trend can also be observed to the north-west of Viseu. In this part of the region (the Lafões territory), a considerer number of written documents cited above attest to the presence of magnates and their courts from the 9th century onwards, and they would have been responsible directly or indirectly for the foundation of several churches and monasteries. One of the documents dated in 1083 (LP 331) is the first mention of several churches in this territory. Although it is a later document, some of

Figure 10.2. Rock-cut graves and granitic boulder of São Gens (Celorico da Beira, Guarda). © Danilo Pavone Câmara Municipal de Celorico da Beira.

the churches were probably founded in the 10th century. Even if it were in the eleven century, the social dynamics that made their construction possible were defined during the political and social context of this region in the 10th century, when several noble families settled in the territory.

In general, the area of North-Central Portugal must have been a marginal area for royal powers (Caliphs and Asturian kings), as argued by Martín Viso (2018). However the particular territory of Lafões in the 10th century was of special interest to some county families and their courts. It is not possible to establish the reasons for the interest in this particular region, but we can suppose that the fact that it is a mountainous region, easily defensible and yet with fertile well-irrigated soils (especially if compared with other regions in the Beira Alta region), where there is easy access to the coast through navigation on the River Vouga, together with the fact that a medicinal Roman Bath was still operating there, would have been among the main motives for this. Effectively, it was here that the defeated brother of King Alfonso III (Bermudo Ordoñez) established a court (Real 2013: 203-220). The fact that he chose this territory for his retreat after his brother had blinded him for rebelling, shows how marginal this region was at the time for the Asturians, but, at the same time, the region had specificities that attracted these new inhabitants. Although the importance or the centrality of the area around Viseu for the Asturian aristocratic powers from the 9th and 10th centuries has been discussed (Martín Viso 2018; Real 2005, 2013), it can be noted that the presence of this princeps would have created the conditions for the establishment an aristocratic court, where some relevant aristocrats lived, such as the couple Onega[2] and Diogo Fernandes, who raised their children there together with Prince Ramiro, the third son of King Ordoño II, the future Ramiro II of León. Diogo Fernandes probably arrived in Lafões as part of the entourage that accompanied Prince Bermudo. It is not clear what relations they maintained with local elites already established there, but it seems evident that somehow the presence of these aristocrats with close ties to the royal court, catapulted the region into the centre of action of supra-regional powers. Although scarce, there are some documents that reveal the relevance of these families in the panorama of the southwest region of the Asturian kingdom. In 928 Onega and her son and daughters (*Munna, Ledegundia, Exemenus et Mummadomna*) donated, in *nostri domini Ueremudi, diue memorie,* the estate of villa Cova to the Monastery of Lorvão (PMH, DC, Doc. 33, Fl. 22V-23r). The document was signed in their villa at Abozamates (Moçamedes), located precisely in Lafões territory, and three bishops (Lamego, Viseu and Coimbra) as well as Prince Ramiro confirmed it.[3] Although Viseu and its surrounding area may have been a peripheral area for the interests of the Asturian kings until then (Martín Viso 2018), the context created around the Lafonian aristocratic court raised the level of socio-political relations of the elites located in the region. The document from 928 is proof of this new level that the Lafonian elite were operating on. Other evidence, even more eloquent, was the fact that King Ordoño II and his wife Elvira Menéndez (daughter of count Hermenegildo Gutiérrez of Coimbra) sent their third son, Ramiro, to be raised by Diogo Fernandes and Onega. It has been argued that was not relevant because Ramiro was the third son and expectations of him assuming the throne were relatively low. However he was a son of a king and it would not be the first time in the Asturian court that several sons could became kings. It should be remembered that after the death of Alfonso III, the kingdom was divided among his three sons (Garcia, Ordoño and Froila). Therefore, in my opinion, the fact that Ramiro was given to be raised by this family that lived in Lafões, even if we do not know of any benefits granted to these nobles by the Asturian kings, shows the importance of the ties that had been established between this group and the Asturian-Leonese court. Otherwise we cannot understand Ramiro's connections to the Viseu region and the relations he established with the children of Onega and Diogo Fernandes, namely with *Mummadomna* (Saéz 1947a), to whom he attributes in 926, together with her husband Count Hermenegildo Gonçalves, the villa of *Creixomil* in Guimarães (North Portugal), where the countess would found an important monastery and castle (Cardoso 1967). Furthermore, Ordoño II's first marriage to Aragunte Gonçalves, daughter of Gonçalo Betotes, a Galaico-Portuguese magnate, and his second to Elvira Menéndez, daughter of Hermenegildo Gutiérrez, count of Coimbra, also shows the complex system of marriages and sociopolitical relations of the Asturian Court with the noble families established in the south-west area of the kingdom (Mattoso 1970, 1982). These close relationships dating back to his father's time may explain why Ramiro was raised in the Lafões region.

It was in this context that Ramiro was closely linked to the Lafões area, obviously, but also to the nearest urban centre which was Viseu, only 30 km away from Lafões. After the death of his father Ordoño II (924), the kingdom was inherited by Ramiro's uncle Froila, who died in 925 and was succeeded by his son Alfonso Froilaz. The sons of Ordoño II revolted, destroying their cousin and dividing the kingdom into three: Alfonso IV kept León, Sancho held on to Galicia and Ramiro took the western area, corresponding to the northern and central region of Portugal as far as the River Mondego, which would be the south-western border of the kingdom (Mattoso 1992:536). Ramiro then chose to settle in Viseu which was probably part of the same territory as Lafões[4], and was, undoubtedly, the most central town in his new

[2] According to E. Saéz, Onega would be the niece of Alfonso III and Bermudo Ordoñez (Saéz 1947b:286)

[3] *Ranemirus, progie (sic) regis* (PMH, DC, Doc 33, Fl 22V-23r).

[4] One proof that Lafões was considered to belong to the Viseu territory is in the document dated 964 in which Sandino and Godosendo Soares donate, among other properties, a part of the villa of Pinitello, which was probably located by the River Vouga, probably in the current county of Oliveira de Frades, one of the counties that resulted from the fragmentation of the territory of Lafões (LP doc. 139).

kingdom and one he would know well (Saéz 1947b). Perhaps he was responsible, during his time at Viseu (926-931), for the project to build a new city.

Next to the Roman and early medieval town of Viseu, which is positioned on a hill that allows for easy defence while visually dominating the surrounding territory, a giant octagon-shaped enclosure was built on a flatter area next to water courses, today known by the name of Cava. The octagon is defined by a wide moat more than 4 m deep and 7 m wide, from which the earth was removed to form the truncated cone-shaped earth wall that marks the limits of the Cava (Figure 10.4). Each side of the octagon is 250 m in length, which defines a perimetral wall of 2000 m. The moat and wall surrounds an area of more than 31 ha. The builders of Cava designed their moat so that it would be full of water throughout the year. To do so, they not only chose the most appropriate place, where there were water courses that could feed the ditch, but they also ensured that its excavation reached the groundwater levels. This is a monument whose origin and function has been discussed since the 17th century. The mystery lies in the fact that the various archaeological excavations carried out there have not obtained conclusive results. The most recent research on Cava has excluded the possibility of it being Roman or even Islamic military camps (Real, Tente 2016), pointing to the possibility that it is in fact a foundation of an aulic city which was never finished, as can be documented by the analysis of the Digital Terrain Model made by C. Tente and T. Cordero (soon to be published). Nevertheless, it is quite possible, as already stated by V. Mantas (2003) and H. Catarino (2008), that there was Islamic influence on the building of the Cava. However, in early medieval Hispania there are many examples of cooperation and exchange of influences between the two sides of the border. As this work surpasses the proportions and layout of a mere military camp, the monument has characteristics that can define it as an aulic city. Such an innovation would be explained, first and foremost, by the awareness of the capital status of Viseu, which was perhaps first conceived in the times of Ordoño II, as king of Galicia (911-914), and which his son, princeps Ramiro, in somewhat similar circumstances, made a reality between 926 and 930. Under no circumstances were the Islamic authorities in a position to make the city of Viseu a capital, in order to justify a project like this.

In the second haft of the 10th century it is possible to document another area where the descendants of these families, who were linked to the Lafões region by the end of the 9th century and the first quarter of the 10th century, possessed estates and castles. In 960 Chamôa, Mummadomna's niece, donated a series of properties to the monastery founded by her aunt in Guimarães, among which are several castles located south of the Douro, in the Ribacôa region (PMH - DC, doc.81). After the Muslim campaign of Almanzor by the end of the 10th century, these castles (and maybe their territories) had passed into caliphal hands and would be conquered again by the military campaigns of King Ferdinand I de León in the middle of the 11th century. It has been argued by M. L. Real (2005: 278-279) that these castles were built to protect the area of Beira Alta from attacks coming from the interior of the Peninsula, suggesting that they might have a Leonese origin due to some rivalry with the elites of the Viseu territory. Although there may have been some tension here and there, the intricate network of matrimonial and political relations between the people who settled in Lafões and Viseu during the first half of the 10th century leads us to propose that this may not have been the justification for the construction of these castles. Although this is not the subject that concerns us in this paper, we should remember that castles are above all a symbol of power, of representing and exhibiting that power in the territory. A way of leaving no doubt, for those who inhabit these territories and for their neighbours, about who the lords were. On the other hand, the possibility of the region being attacked by Muslims precisely through this corridor situated between the Via Colimbriana and Ribacôa should not be overlooked.

As we saw, from the second half of the 9th century onwards, and especially during the 10th century, several magnates appeared in the region, more or less related to the expansionist pretensions of the Asturian crown. Some may have arisen from local elites, while others would be Galician magnates in search of new opportunities and lands. Although the documentation is rare, it shows that the interests of these elites were focused on certain territories such as the region of Ribacôa, the territory of Lafões, and in the area where the church of São Pedro da Lourosa (Oliveira do Hospital) is located, i.e. near the important Via Colimbriana, the road that linked the inner Peninsula to Coimbra and the coast. This would not be a random choice. In other words, in one way or another, the interests and capacity for action of these magnates were directed at key points in the Beira territory, namely the border of Ribacôa, the border between Viseu and Coimbra, the control of the Colimbriana road and finally, the area of Lafões, situated near the city of Viseu, but positioned in a protected and fertile area with access to the Roman baths. They would control some key points (chosen more in terms of their own personal interests and where they were able to acquire properties) but the capacity to control wider areas appears to have been limited, leaving room for local communities and their elites to thrive and have their own socio-political agendas.

After Almanzor's campaign, references to the noble families that were related to the Asturian-Leonese power decrease if not disappear. We know that many of their members moved to other regions, as in the

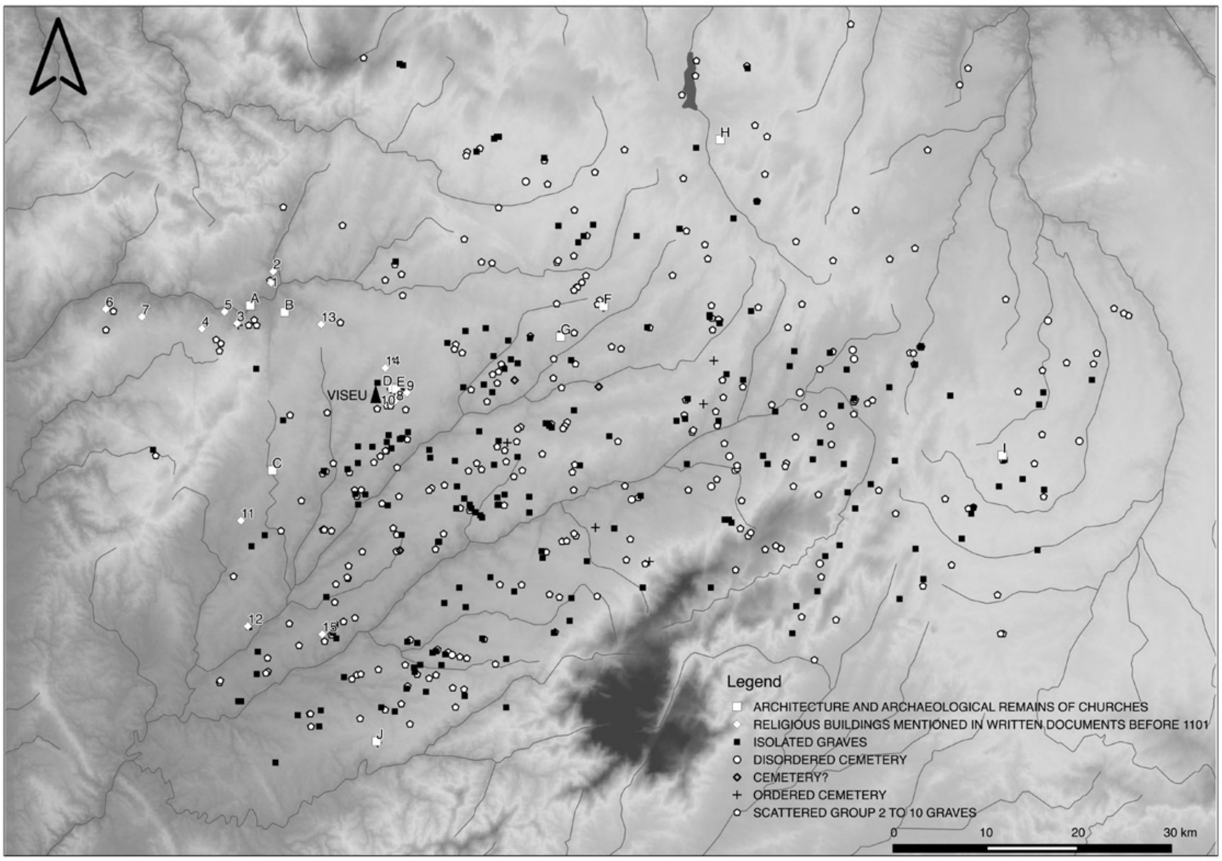

Figure 10.3. Distribution map (C. Tente and T. Cordero) of sites with rock-cut graves, and location of churches that are mentioned for the first time before 1101, and architectonic and archaeological remains of churches before the twelfth century (Rodrigues 1999). Churches: São Pedro [do Sul] (1085), Santa Maria de Vouzela (1070), São Vicente de Lafões (1092), Santa Maria do Arcozelo (1083), São Tiago do Mato (1083), Monastery of Vouzela (1083), Santa Maria da Várzea (1070), São Gens de Nespereira (1078), São Miguel Fetal (880?), Santa Eugénia (1099), São Martinho (1066); Monastery of Seperandei (957), Monastery of Fráguas (1129), Monastery of Currelos (981), Molelos (1101), and Treixedo (981). Architecture and archaeological remains of churches: São Martinho (tenth-century), Figueiredo das Donas (c. 10/11th), Monastery of Fráguas (c.10/11th), Sé de Viseu (c.6/7th), Nossa Senhora do Barrocal (971), Casal de Cima (c. 10/11th), Sernancelhe (ninth/tenth centuries), Jarmelo (tenth-century), São Pedro da Lourosa (912).

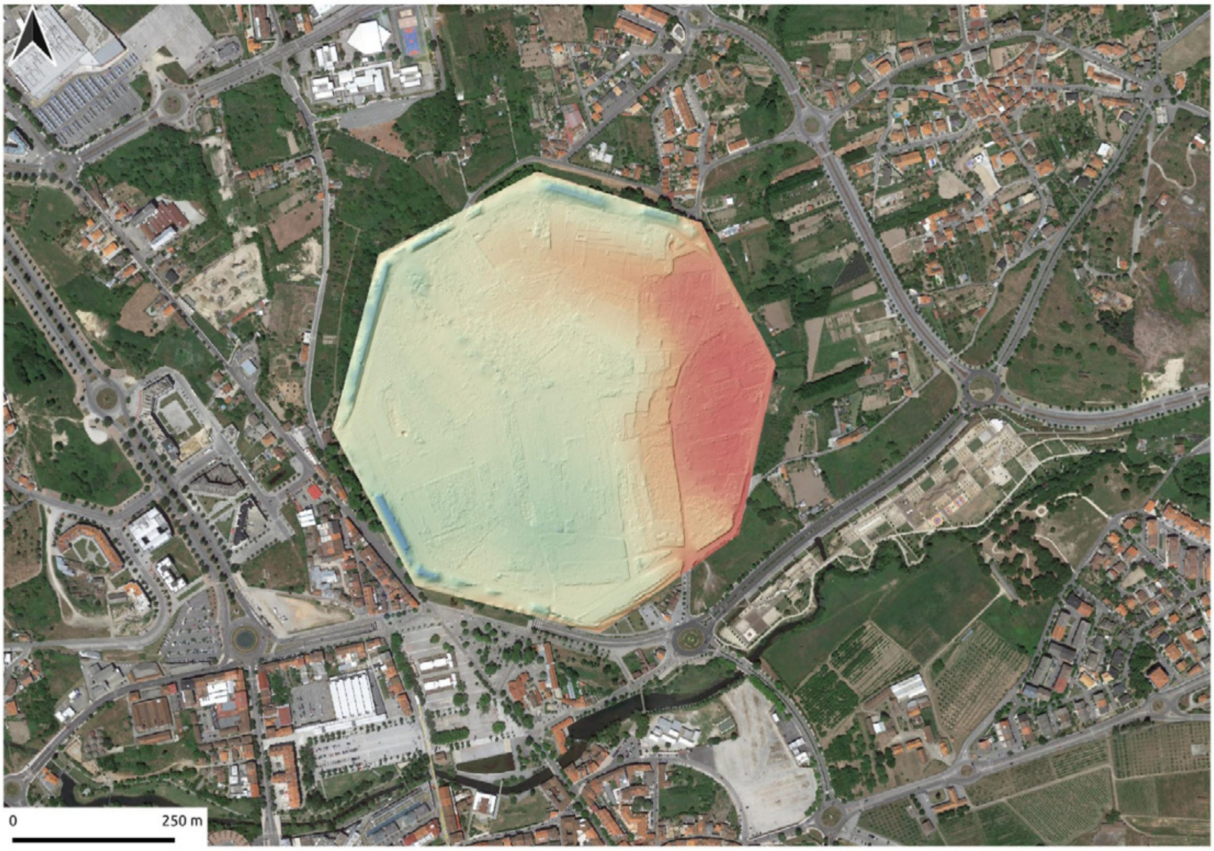

Figure 10.4. Digital Model of Cava de Viriato by Geodrone and T. Cordero.

case of *Mummadomna* and Hermenegildo Gonçalves, who took over the management of the county of *Portucale*, certainly from the region of Guimarães. With the departure of these families from the regional panorama, which, as we have tried to show, would cover a relatively limited part of the territory, who would replace them?

Describing the attack on Santiago de Compostela in 997 by Almanzor, Ibn Idhārī explains that he previously gathered in Viseu a large number of counts who recognized his authority and joined his army (Senác 2011:94). Who were these counts mentioned in Ibn Idhārī's chronicle? Could they be local elites raised in the region after the departure of Ramiro II to León and were not aligned with the Leonese policies?

After Almanzor's military campaign the region would have been under the control of the Caliphate. However, even before the military campaigns by Ferdinand I, Islamic attacks may have taken place in the region, indicating that effective control by Islamic authorities was weak. Therefore, the most likely scenario is that during this period of political instability, the region would be generally occupied and controlled by local communities and local elites. The advance of the frontier northwards, as far as the Douro, by the Muslims was another occasion for a recomposition of power in the region.

Seeking a conclusion…

Although Viseu and Lafões were areas where elites linked to Asturian-Leonese power established themselves during the 10th century, the available data show that their action was rather limited in territorial terms and that there was no dense political dominance in this period (Martín Viso 2018). This absence of control over large territories in Beira Alta probably left space for communities of free peasants to establish a complex network of sociopolitical relations, which enabled them to survive in a fragmented and unstable political landscape. However, something was changing in the second half of the century. Given the opacity of the sources, we can only imagine what course the process of change took. It appears to be obscure at first, but came to light more dramatically after the Almanzor campaign. The fires that destroyed peasant sites such as Penedo dos Mouros, Soida, São Gens, and Senhora do Barrocal (Tente 2019), which dictated the definitive abandonment of these sites, are the best proof that the socio-political structures of the region and the balance between the various actors in the territory had changed.

In Lafões the situation seems to be rather different. Unfortunately we do not have clear information about what happened after the death or departure from the region of the most prominent nobles who settled there at the end of the 9th century and in the first half of the 10th century. But the presence of these elites was somehow responsible for this territory having a different history when compared to the other territories in Beira. In fact, so far we have not identified burnt and later abandoned sites, such as the ones we have been identifying in other areas of the Beira Alta region already mentioned; neither are there any rock-cut grave necropolises, of the kind with a dispersed pattern not associated with churches, like those that have been correlated with initiatives of peasant families/communities and without control of the Church or any other more encompassing power (Martín Viso 2012; Tente 2017). Contrary to what occurs in most of Beira Alta, where churches are relatively rare, in Lafões we have documentary reference to several churches up to 1110 (Figure 3). Their foundation probably resulted from the power dynamics created by the establishment of the court of Bermudo Orodonês. During this period it may be expected, although there is no written evidence, that benefits and properties were distributed, which would have profited certain families (local or non-local). These would have remained in the territory and we will see them acting during the following century, through donations and property transactions in the region, thus reinforcing their local power. It is also interesting to see that these families benefited mostly the monastery of Lorvão and the Coimbra church. Why did they not privilege churches and monasteries in Viseu? The answer may perhaps be found in the circumstances in which the diocese of Viseu found itself at that moment. After the conquest by the Leonese King Ferdinand I, in 1058, there was an attempt to restore the diocese of Viseu (which since at least 982 had no resident bishop). However, the conquest of Coimbra, in 1064, followed by the restoration of its diocese in 1080, implied the integration of the dioceses of Lamego and Viseu into Coimbra's jurisdiction. This was probably related to the need to provide it with the necessary means to support itself, since a very significant part of its territory was still under Muslim jurisdiction. This integration is recognized by Pope Paschal II[5] in a bull dated 1101 and addressed to Maurice of Coimbra, and again confirmed in a bull of Honorius II addressed to Gonçalo of Coimbra in 1125[6]. The diocese of Viseu would only be restored in 1147 by the initiative of Afonso Henriques, the first Portuguese king (Tente 2016b: 435-426).

It is also significant that, in Lafões, the churches mentioned in the documentation are integrated in medieval villages, suggesting that in this territory the villages (most of which have survived until today) were already formed or in the process of formation during the 10th century. This also contrasts with the rest of the Beira area, where many of the villages may possibly have formed after the 10th century.

The explanation for the change in the settlement pattern that occurred in most of Beira at the end of the millennium must also consider the changes that would have occurred within the peasant communities themselves. The archaeological record has shown, like the written sources analysed by I. Martin Viso

[5] LP, docs. 592 and 621.
[6] LP, docs. 451 and 617.

(2016, 2020) and A. Carvajal Castro (2020), that the local peasant communities in north-western Iberia were not places of equality. The identification in the archaeological record that these communities were not egalitarian can be observed in the differences between clusters of groups/families at the São Gens cemetery (Brookes *et al.* 2017) or between Senhora do Barrocal and the other sites. Senhora do Barrocal seems to represent the archaeological record of these groups/families ascending to differentiated levels of action. As already discussed, the daily life of the inhabitants of Senhora do Barrocal would not be very different from that of their neighbours, but some archaeological markers indicate that they would be operating on another scale of social relations. Peasants like those who inhabited Senhora do Barrocal must have acquired sufficient relevance and ability to act outside their local spaces and be related - through strategies still unknown to us in their real amplitude - with dominant powers on both sides. We do not know what the driving forces behind the social differentiation within these groups of peasants were, but the lack of integration of the region as a whole into more encompassing powers such as the Emiral/Caliphal and Asturian-Leonese regimes seems to have created the ideal conditions for this more marked differentiation to be established. The situation in the late 10th century was certainly very complex, as even sites that we correlate with local elites, such as Senhora do Barrocal, were attacked and burned down. Socio-political destabilization must have been the ideal stage for the redefinition of power, in a clear densification of competition between various dominant groups on a local scale. Political ambitions of some of these emerging (or reinforced) groups must have originated situations of stress among themselves and local communities opposing their expansion. It must have been in a context like this, or so it seems, that we can integrate the fires and abandonment of the settlements in the 10th century. More than a change in the scale of power, we seem to be witnessing a clarification in the exercise of power on a local scale.

The 10th century, in a frontier territory and to some extent peripheral to Asturian and Muslim powers, was a century of great socio-political dynamics. In the current state of knowledge, it is possible to see at least three social levels in action: higher-ranking elites, but who may have been focused on certain territories; local elites who seem to be gaining scale, taking advantage in a certain way of the context of instability; and peasant communities and families, whose archaeological record seems to show some degree of autonomy but where there are already indicators of internal inequalities. The end of the 10th century dictated significant changes in the settlement patterns that seem to express the rise or reinforcement of power of the local elites. Maybe these local elites are the origin of some of the *infanciones* or even the *boni homines*, that Ferdinand I (and his successors) would establish sociopolitical ties with, in order to find local support for the integration of the region into the kingdom of León and the consequent administrative restructuring of the territory.

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The formation of a native elite: The case of 10th century Iceland

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Abstract

Iceland was colonised in the late 9th century and within a hundred years there are clear signs that a native elite had emerged. This elite portrayed itself as an offshoot of the Norwegian aristocracy and actively cultivated the patronage of Norwegian kings. Positioning themselves within the Norwegian political community helped maintain a balance of power within Iceland, but it does not explain how the native elite came to be. Two scenarios can be contrasted. The traditional view, entertained by the elite itself as well as modern scholars, is that the colonists were by and large high-born Norwegians who transplanted Norwegian social and political structures to the new country. A contrary view sees the colonists as people of generally lower status who had to develop their own authority structures and arrangements for resolving disputes and maintaining security. Both characterisations have obvious shortcomings, and the paper will develop an alternative hypothesis that takes account both of social dynamics within Iceland in the period of colonisation, as well as the wider political and cultural context.

Keywords

Iceland: Viking Age: elite; colonisation; social structure

Introduction

Looking at medieval Europe – and indeed practically all farming societies – it seems that elites are a part of the natural order of things. Elites are everywhere we look and not just because they are overrepresented in the sources (both historical and archaeological); in medieval Europe there really were no communities without elites and all supra-local structures were essentially elite networks. How elites form and why they persist are among the fundamental questions about the human condition. Are we essentially sheep in need of a shepherd or is humanity just cursed with having to suffer a parasitic minority, that not only insist on being fed and serviced by others, but also feels it has to boss them around? Are we too stupid or too nice – or both?

The case of 10th century Iceland provides an opportunity to consider the problem of the generation and regeneration of elites. How are elites formed in the first place and how are they re-formed in a new place? The previously uninhabited mid-Atlantic island of Iceland was colonised by north European farmers in the late 9th century. By the middle of the 10th century there are signs of the emergence of a local elite and from the 12th and 13th centuries there are copious historical narratives which reflect how the Icelandic elite viewed itself and its own genesis. This gives us an opportunity to examine how elites take root so to speak. Most historical cases involve infiltration or subjugation of one elite by another but in this case the local elite was formed *ex novo*. Two narratives immediately suggest themselves and can be contrasted: one sees the Icelandic elite as transplanted from the countries of origin, an offshoot of the elites of those areas. In this scenario the colonists were burdened by an unproductive upper class from day one. The other stresses the indigenous generation of leaders and sees the elite emerging from the colonisation process, the most ambitious, or pushiest, individuals rising to power and consolidating it for themselves and their descendants. In this scenario there was initial parity and elites only developed through a process of internal competition. I will argue that there is some truth in both caricatures but that while a contextualised consideration of developments necessarily exposes their complexity it also reveals a simple truth, a central issue in the natural history of elites: that of image. In the following I will first present a brief sketch of how the Icelandic elite in the 12th and 13th centuries envisaged its own origins and then review the primarily archaeological evidence from the colonisation period that can be used to throw light on this issue.

Packaging the past in high-medieval Iceland

Already in the late 12th century Icelanders had gained an international reputation as specialists in the history of Scandinavia. The Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus explains in the foreword to his *Gesta Danorum* written around 1200,

> that since the barrenness of their native soil offers no means of self-indulgence, [the Icelanders] pursue a steady routine of temperance and devote all their time to improving our knowledge of others' deeds, compensating for poverty by their intelligence. They regard it as a real pleasure to discover and commemorate the achievements of every nation; in their judgement it is as elevating to discourse on the prowess of others as to display their own. Thus I have scrutinised their store of historical treasures and composed a considerable part of the present work by copying their narratives, not scorning, where I recognised such skill in ancient lore, to take these men as witnesses (Davidson ed. 1979: 5).

Saxo's Icelandic informants are not known by name but they will not have been ordinary peasants. Rather they belonged to a select group of aristocrats who had the means to make the voyage across the Atlantic and the contacts to present themselves at the courts of Scandinavian kings and noblemen. The strategy is well documented: young men of aristocratic birth could enhance or cement their status within Icelandic society by going abroad for a few years, usually to Norway, gain acceptance at the court and acquire some token of royal favour which could be taken back to Iceland and used as political capital (Vésteinsson 2019). To get ahead at foreign courts the Icelandic aristocrats had to compete with much larger numbers of locals and other foreigners. Many pursued conventional military careers in the service of kings and noblemen but it seems that already by the beginning of the 11th century Icelanders had cornered a niche market which could fast-track them to the attentions of noble patrons. This was the business of composing and reciting praise poetry, the medieval equivalent of spin-doctoring and image management. In the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries Icelandic poets dominate this scene in Scandinavia and from the 12th century onwards many also composed prose biographies and histories of Scandinavian kings. The particular form of poetry in vogue at this time, called skaldic verse, had a complicated language based in a symbolic universe of pre-Christian lore and heroic legends (Whaley 2005). One of the most important sources for pre-Christian Scandinavian religion, Snorri Sturluson's famous *Prose-Edda*, was written as a handbook for poets (Faulkes ed. 1998, 2005, 2007). The Icelandic aristocracy clearly took it upon itself to become the guardians of knowledge about the Scandinavian past and was able to translate this cultural capital into political for the best part of half a millennium. This artistic and scholarly industry was not exclusively directed towards the old Scandinavian homelands but also reflected a deep-seated preoccupation with the Icelanders' own past.

The earliest surviving historical text written in Norse is Ari fróði's *Íslendingabók* – the *Libellus Islandorum* – written in the 1120s (*Íslenzk fornrit* 1, 3-28; Grønlie ed. 2006). It is a short chronicle about the history of Iceland and begins with establishing the date of the settlement of the country. Ari places this in the days of King Haraldr Fairhair and names the first settler, Ingólfr, who first went to Iceland when King Haraldr was 16 years old and then again a few year later to settle permanently. The year 870 which Ari gives, with reference to the killing of St Eadmund by Ívarr, is normally considered to apply to Ingólfr's second voyage. Ari does not provide any explanation for the colonisation of Iceland but claims that there was such a rush following Ingólfr's initiative that King Haraldr tried to stop the emigration, resulting in a compromise whereby the emigrants paid a tax to the king before leaving Norway. This, Ari claims, was the origin of the *landaurar*, a tax paid by Icelanders coming to Norway, regulated by an 11th century agreement and recorded in both Icelandic and Norwegian law texts from the 12th and 13th centuries (Vésteinsson 2019: 214-16). Ari then names four preeminent colonists, one in each quarter of the country, all of whom were the ancestors of major aristocratic lineages and all of whom he explicitly identifies as being Norse – *nórænn*. One of these elite colonists was the son of a Norwegian earl and principal ally of King Haraldr, another was the daughter of a *hersir* – a local military leader in Norway – and a third was the son of a man with the epithet *austmaðr*, pointing to Norwegian origins. Ari then goes on to recount how Icelandic law was originally based on the west-Norwegian law of Gulaþing and how the Icelanders accepted Christianity at the behest of King Ólafr Tryggvason of Norway.

Ari's terse account provided the framework for all subsequent writing on Icelandic history. Later scholars were to add tremendous amounts of detail but also a motive for the colonisation. At the start of *Harðar saga og hólmverja* it is explained that:

> Iceland was settled most rapidly in the days of Haraldr Fair-hair because people could not tolerate his oppression and tyranny, especially those who were of high birth and noble spirit and who had the opportunity and would rather abandon their property than submit to aggression and inequality, no more from the king than any other (*Íslenzk fornrit* XIII, 3; Hreinsson 1997, 193).

This represents the standard motive for the colonisation of Iceland in Icelandic medieval texts. Out of 17 Sagas of Icelanders that start with events in Norway leading to emigration to Iceland, 10 put it down to the tyranny of King Haraldr, many of them without any further detail. This is echoed in *Landnámabók*, the Book of Settlements, the great compilation of settlement stories which survives in versions from around 1300 although it probably originates in the 12th century (Friðriksson and Vésteinsson 2003). It names 428 settlers and provides motives for the emigration of 65 of them. Out of those, 29 are identified as adversaries of King Haraldr or victims of his tyranny, and a further five are said to have left after clashing with Earl Hákon Grjótgarðsson, King Haraldr's father-in-law and principal ally. Only four settlers are said to have left for Iceland on the advice or at the behest of King Haraldr. Most of these stories give no detail above the standard trope of Haraldr's tyranny but where they do they tend to place the emigrants *within* Haraldr's camp, being forced to leave Norway after falling foul of some political intrigues, most often engineered by the king's henchmen rather than Haraldr himself. The impression is that the Icelandic elite liked to see itself originating on the royalist side of Norwegian politics, at the very time of the birth of the kingdom, and this is supported by the genealogies in the Book of Settlements which often name as parents or forefathers of settlers, people of high birth known from other sources to have been connected through familial or political ties to the Norwegian royal house. This comes out clearly when these genealogies are compared with narratives about King Haraldr's times. Out of 20 adversaries of King Haraldr named in his fullest biography (in *Heimskringla – Íslenzk fornrit* XXVI, 94-149) only one is explicitly identified as an ancestor of settlers in Iceland (*Íslenzk fornrit* I, 200-201, 282), whereas out of ten allies of King Haraldr, six are said to have descendants among the settlers, including some of the most illustrious ancestors of powerful families. This reflects the complicated relationship the Icelandic elite had with the Norwegian king in the 12th and 13th centuries. On the one hand the Icelandic elite considered itself fully on a par with the Norwegian aristocracy and liked to entertain notions of its relative freedom, viewing it as an inherited quality rather than just an effect of its geographical isolation. On the other hand, the Icelandic elite was firmly within the orbit of Norwegian royal authority. It depended on this authority as its principal source of political capital and had a leading role in promoting the very idea of a unified Norwegian kingship (Vésteinsson 2019). This conflicted attitude is crystalized in one of the stories of conflicts leading to emigration to Iceland preserved in the Book of Settlements. It tells of the father of a settler who refused to pay tax to King Haraldr "because he had earlier sent to the king a Geatish horse and great amounts of silver and said it should be called a gift but not a payment as he had never paid tax before. The king returned the assets and would not accept them." (*Íslenzk fornrit* I, 361; author's transl.). These kinds of distinctions mattered greatly and wore particularly heavily on the minds of the Icelandic elite in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, following the Union with Norway in 1262-64 which introduced taxation in Iceland (Karlsson 2000, 83-95). It is probably no fluke that the story about King Haraldr insisting on tax rather than gifts is an addition preserved only in the later of the two main surviving versions of the Book of Settlements, *Hauksbók*, composed at the start of the 14th century. Like much in these sources it is more revealing about contemporary concerns than actual developments in the deep past. The most telling aspect of emigration motives recorded in the Book of Settlements is that they are so rarely mentioned. For six out of seven initial settlers no traditions were recorded about their motives and from comparisons of different versions of this complicated work it appears that 'emigration motive' was not a part of the original formula for recording traditions about settlers. Rather it seems that stories about motives were being added in the course of the 12th and 13th centuries, reflecting increasingly close political ties between Iceland and Norway and the accumulation of knowledge about Norwegian history which provided a framework for fitting Icelandic ancestors into the storyline and increasingly elaborate genealogies.

Haraldr Fairhair cannot be considered a historical figure in any meaningful sense, but rather a construct of 12th and 13th century scholarship which developed his persona to provide a firm foundation for the idea of the Norwegian monarchy (Jakobsson 2016). As the principal agents of this construction work Icelandic aristocrats were able to insert their fantasies about themselves and their ancestors into the more and more intricate edifice. The whole bundle of traditions and learned inventions represented by the sagas and the Book of Settlements can be dismissed as a high-medieval construct with no securely identifiable elements going back to the 9th century. Yet this corpus is important. For one thing it has influenced modern scholarship about the events of the Viking Age and so it is necessary to deal with it, even if only to conclude that it has no direct bearing on that period. But more importantly these medieval scholars were serious seekers of knowledge as well as astute historical analysts who were concerned to present plausible scenarios and identify the political, social and psychological reasons behind various goings-on in the past. Their ideas therefore have value, if only because they were much closer in time to events and lived in a society not as radically different from the Viking Age as ours is.

The core ideas of medieval Icelandic scholarship about the origins of the Icelandic elite – the saga-worthy people – can be summed up thus:

- The elite came from Norway, sometimes via Norse settlements in Britain or Ireland.
- They were mostly the sons of *hersir* – local war-leaders, the lowest rung in the aristocratic ladder – but some were related to earls and kings.
- They commanded their own ships and had the means to transport large numbers of people and the necessary livestock and equipment.
- The more prominent settlers had large numbers of followers, retainers, slaves and/or relatives who received lands, often extensive, from their patrons.
- The size of the land claims ranges from single farms (in most cases grants to freedmen) to whole regions which later had several hundred farms but the typical free settler claimed lands that later supported 5-15 farms.

In general, there is a relationship between the size of the land claims and the amount of detail provided about the settlers, about their ancestry, exploits before and after migrating to Iceland and the political importance of their descendants. It is these richer descriptions that are shared between the Sagas and the Book of Settlements and it is they which are taken to represent the medieval view of the typical settler. But the majority of entries in the Book of Settlements are much simpler and give no background information about the settlers in question, from which their social status could be inferred. Although there is no explicit support for this view in the medieval literature these no-frills settlers could be seen as an upwardly mobile group, people of modest social background who gained landowner status (and honourable mention in family traditions and later historical records) by emigrating to Iceland. Another incongruity is that while high birth is claimed for a large number of settlers the peasants which would have been necessary for them to lord it over are largely absent in the narratives. The stories can be read as if the settlers each established a lonely farm in the middle of a large land-claim, which only began to fill up when their children and grandchildren moved out to establish their own farms. 19th and 20th century scholarship liked to see this as evidence for an egalitarian society, where people of relatively high status, with considerable means and agency, emigrated to Iceland essentially to become yeomen farmers, free and independent but not initially in a position to oppress and exploit any peasantry.

Archaeological evidence for elite formation in early Iceland

Although there is no reason to deny that some traditions recorded in the 12th and 13th centuries might be traceable back to the settlement period it would be impossible to identify the bits of information faith can be placed in. Rather, the ideas of medieval scholars can be used as a spring-board to ask the questions that could lead us in the right direction.

The first and most obvious question is: Is there any archaeological evidence, such as richly furnished graves, which would support the idea that among the settlers were people of high social status?

The short answer to this question is no. There are more than 300 pre-Christian burials known in Iceland, most of them furnished (Eldjárn 2016), but they cannot be used to support the idea of initial settlers being of elite status. Overall, the character of these burials is modest. Some are richer than others but the richest ones come nowhere close to Norwegian graves which might be associated with that country's aristocracy. Rather, the richest Icelandic graves are on a par with those Norwegian ones which might be associated with householder and land-owner status (Vésteinsson 2005: 10-11). More important for this problem is the fact that these furnished burials do not date to the initial period of settlement, but rather to the mid- and late 10th century, representing the second and third generation of Icelanders rather than the first generation (Vésteinsson 2014: 84-85; Vésteinsson and Gestsdóttir 2016: 141-42). If there were people of elite status among the pioneering settlers they either did not practice this kind of burial or they are buried elsewhere. Either way there is no burial evidence for their presence in Iceland.

The settlement evidence is consistent with this result. There are nearly 30 settlement sites from the Viking Age where at least one dwelling has been excavated. These dwellings have a size range suggesting significant status differences but only one stands out, Hofstaðir in Mývatnssveit with a hall twice as large as the next-largest building. The Hofstaðir hall was built after 940 (Lucas 2009), at the same time as furnished burials begin to appear in considerable numbers. Sites which later became major centres of power (e.g. Ljósavatn – Bruun 1928: 47-48 and Vatnsfjörður – Edvardsson and McGovern 2005) have only modest dwellings in the Viking Age, or none at all, as in Reykholt which only seems to have emerged as a power-centre around or shortly after 1000 (Sveinbjarnardóttir 2012). Compared to Scandinavia the material culture at all these sites, large and small, is modest. Only at Hofstaðir is there evidence for feasting and possible elite consumption of expensive foods, but its material culture does not stand out and neither there nor anywhere else is there consistent evidence for aristocratic signalling.

It is noteworthy also in this context that whereas the mid- to late 10th century material culture, both from graves and settlements, has strong ethnic signals showing that the Icelanders considered themselves firmly as a part of the Norse cultural milieu, artefacts from the late 9th and early 10th centuries are entirely bland in terms of ethnic connections. These early assemblages are too small in volume to draw firm conclusions from them about the ethnic origins of the settlers but they certainly do not support the case for the presence of aristocratic Norwegians among the pioneers (Vésteinsson 2010; 2014).

Based on the relatively large and well-researched data-set from Iceland it could be argued that there were no elites involved in the initial settlement and that the elite which starts to become archaeologically visible in the late 10th century was home-grown, people who rose to social and political prominence not because of their high-birth but despite the lack of it. One of the redactors of the Book of Settlements sought to quell nagging doubts on this score claiming that "we can that much better counter foreigners who accuse us of being descended from slaves and scoundrels, if we know for certain about our ancestry." (*Íslenzk fornrit* I, 336; author's transl.). It is quite possible that the whole project of becoming specialists in Scandinavian history was essentially compensatory in nature, an effort by the Icelandic elite to convince itself and others that it was a genuine off-shoot of the Scandinavian aristocracy and not just a collection of low-class wannabes. The 10th century burial record contains evidence that could support the idea of the Icelandic elite's self-doubt. Some of the richest late 10th century burials are of individuals revealed by strontium isotope analyses to be born outside Iceland. Their high status and late arrival suggest that these immigrants were not coming to Iceland to carve out new settlements, at a time when the country was fully settled and some people were leaving for much harsher conditions in Greenland (Vésteinsson *et al.* 2014), but it might indicate that an emerging native elite was seeking to legitimize itself through marriage alliances with established elites back in Scandinavia (Vésteinsson and Gestsdóttir 2016).

There are good grounds to think that an Icelandic elite, a group of people whose authority was based on controlling lands in Iceland and dominating other Icelanders, only started to take form in the middle of the 10th century. The emergence of a system of assemblies, dated by Ari fróði to the 930s through the 960s, can be seen as a conscious effort by local leaders and chieftains to create mechanisms which defined who belonged to the top-tier and who did not, and providing forums for elite behaviour, both competitive and co-operative (Vésteinsson 2006, 2009). That however does not mean that there was no elite involvement in the settlement of Iceland and the assembly system can just as well be seen as an effort by pre-existing elites to work out a system of power-sharing, a modus vivendi to preserve existing power structures and forestall any major imbalance. There are two principal reasons to think that there must have been some kind of elite involvement in the settlement.

One is the evident planning of the settlements. The majority of early settlements are regularly spaced, as a rule controlling land that was sufficient for a single household but rarely more than that. Strings or clusters of such planned settlements can be found in every district but they are never large, typically with 5-15 farms, rarely more than 20. From the patterning it could be argued that the settlement involved several hundred groups (700 would be a reasonable estimate) each composed of a patron who occupied the best parts of the area in question and clients who received less ideal plots in the vicinity (Vésteinsson 1998; Vésteinsson *et al.* 2002). 13th century scholars described how some settlers claimed much larger units, involving more complex hierarchies of settlement (Friðriksson and Vésteinsson 2003: 147-49). The patterning as such could not be used to refute the possibility that in some cases the original units were larger, with a patron organizing scores or even hundreds of settlements, but it would be precisely such grand operators who would be expected to leave the burial and settlement evidence that is wanting. It seems safer to leave them out of the story.

The other reason is that only elite interest in colonising Iceland could have funded and organised the transportation of the thousands of people which were evidently transported. The available evidence suggests that the colonisation in the last 2-3 decades of the 9th century had the character of a rush, with a minimum of 20.000 people ferried across the North Atlantic in a matter of a few years (Vésteinsson and McGovern 2012). Traditional scholarship used to imagine that each of the 400 odd settlers named in the Book of Settlements came in their own ships and this might be logical if they had in fact all been aristocrats. But not even this is claimed in the Sagas or the Book of Settlements. The texts do mention a few settlers coming on their own ships but for the greatest part they are silent on this subject. Even if the Viking Age was a time of great seafaring and there were undoubtedly very large numbers of ships in business, ocean-going vessels like those which would have been needed to make the crossing to Iceland were not owned by every other local magnate in Norway. Viking war fleets typically consisted of fewer than 35 ships (Sawyer 1987: 93; Ravn 2016: 100-101) but some 300 would have been needed if each primary settler according to the Book of Settlements came on their own ship. It is more plausible that the settlers were transported on ships controlled by others, most easily imagined as specialist operators who could ferry war-bands and armies when needed but who could also outfit their ships for transporting farmers, livestock and equipment. If the rush was as great as has been calculated, it could even have justified the construction of ships especially for this purpose. Very little is known about the Viking Age shipping industry. Contemporary sources are of little help as they are not concerned with the management and logistics of the Viking raids and while the later saga narratives are replete with tales involving ships, they throw little light on how their construction was organised or how their operation was managed. Saga heroes acquire ships either as booty in war or as gifts from kings or earls (who also often own them as spoils of war) but very little light is thrown on who instigated and funded their construction. Only kings and earls are mentioned as having ships built, as a rule in the context of war preparations. Ships could also be communally owned and operated, through the leidang system of coastal-defence although it is unclear how far back into the Viking Age these systems reach and it is similarly unclear how decentralised the authority was which controlled such ships (Jesch 2001: 180-215; Williams 2008: 199). Considering the resources needed to construct an ocean-going ship – in terms of materials, man-hours and specialist knowledge – and to man and operate and defend them once constructed, it is a fair assumption that this could only be accomplished by people wielding more than just local power (Ravn 2016: 62-84). Space does not allow a full consideration of this important but under-researched issue but a good case can be made that Viking ships are practically synonymous with the Viking aristocracy, so much so that each can be said to have generated the other. If that is so it stands to reason that the settlement of Iceland could not have been launched or carried through without the involvement of the Viking Age ship-owning aristocracy. Of the possible reasons such people could have had in facilitating a colonisation project the one involving themselves occupying farms to exploit a handful of tenants in Iceland seems least likely. More plausible explanations would see them as developers of the settlements, perhaps in the form of patrons of clients who claimed lands in their name providing farmland for followers, possibly ex-soldiers or others uprooted in the turmoil of the age. That there would have been room in such projects for aristocratic younger sons and others of high birth whose status was being eroded back home is entirely likely. All aristocratic systems generate overspills who find roles for themselves in wars and other risky ventures. Such characters would have known how to use their parentage for advantage in their new home but the archaeological evidence suggests that when they arrived they were just as down at heel as the rest of the colonists.

Conclusion

Neither extreme scenario, of a fully transplanted or a fully homegrown elite, is supported by the available evidence. It is difficult to account for the logistics of the colonisation without aristocratic backing – and I have only touched on the issue of shipping while recruitment would be another equally likely to demand elite involvement – but it is plain to see that the settlers who ended up living out their lives in Iceland had none of the trappings which would allow us to recognise them as real aristocrats.

It is quite likely that some of those who had leadership positions among the actual colonists were of elite parentage as much later traditions claimed, but they would have had to put up with being *de facto* on the same rung as people of lower birth. The settlement patterns suggest that there could have been some 700 groups of colonists, most of them very small, and it is from the leaders of these groups that a native elite emerged in the 10th century. The competition for prominence among this group was fierce. Whatever view one has about the historicity of the Sagas it is clear that there was a collective memory of very violent times in the 10th century, and it seems that they relied from the outset on claiming legitimization through contacts – familial, cultural, political – in Norway, presumably because that is where most of the initial backers of the colonisation had been based. In this process they carved out a niche role for themselves as specialists in courtly propaganda and the preservation of historical lore. This allowed them to manipulate their image, in their own eyes, in the eyes of their own followers in Iceland and in the eyes of their Norwegian patrons, helping to shape an ideal of what was required of leaders of men – high birth – and to generate the proof that in this they were indeed not lacking. This development is consistent with the view that power is exercised not so much on the basis of strength or other qualities, but rather on the basis of the belief, of those who wield the power and those which it is wielded over, that it is preordained.

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Is there room enough for a change? 10th century historical narratives'concepts of change

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Abstract

One of the most tenacious common place about the 10th century is that the period lacks of narratives. More than eighty *Vitae* were nevertheless written in *Francia occidentalis* at this time of turmoils: they certainly do not document political events, but they show clearly what intellectuals thought about changes. Under the influence of ninth century, a time which hesitated to combine the idea of change and the concept of progress, hagiographers of the 10th century conceive and even support a renewed social organization, firmly set on collective responsibility.

Keywords

Hagiography; reform; decadency; providence ; collective responsibility ; feudality

The reputation of the bishopric of Laon during the 10th century chiefly depends on the excellence of its school; yet when some canons put down the actual events that their Church should remember, they can only refer to three disasters:

> 911. A pagan killed Albuin, brother of the priest Adelelm.
>
> 937. On the 21st of February, third day (of the week), first hour (of the day), the Hungarians came to Frankish lands.
>
> 954. The Hungarians again came out of their territories to our regions and, because of our sins, caused us much harm (*Annales Laudunenses*).

Within a context of conspicuous scholarship, the *Annals* of Laon depict the 10th century depending on a basic historical theology that directly connects events to moral and religious failures. The breakdowns are not ruptures, let alone promising beginnings, but reminders exhorting to conversion. The point of view looks common during High Middle Ages: many narratives calling for a reform describe the only desirable change as an effort to revive the past and to renew the links with an initial purpose (Misonne 1990; Vanderputten and Meijns 2010). Any analysis of the historical narratives of the 10th century would therefore manage with that state of mind and generic constraint: most medieval narratives do not acknowledge changes for themselves, but denounce them as evidences of decadency. Decades of studies on *correctio* have concluded that to speak about a change, Carolingian Latin can only wish this positive *reformatio* (terminological overview in Barrow 2008) that alludes to a return to proper order – the only good change is a comeback to continuity. A *mutatio* is by essence a problem. One has only to remember how about 840 one of the Emperor Louis' biographers censures the part played by lower aristocrats in the crisis of the reign; they are harmful because they by nature long for a change:

> First, the magnates entered a sort of conspiracy and then associated the lower aristocrats: there is always a bunch of these to wish a change (*mutatio*). Like dogs and predator birds,

> they look for the ruin of the others, for it means an improvement of their own situation (Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, cap. 44).

Frequent in historical narratives, this *mutatio* – when not specified by *rerum* of *temporum* to speak about a general alteration of the course of history – means precisely the fall or death of the king: these greedy aristocrats are potential murderers wishing for a *mutatio regni, ie* that another king rules. They are also despicable because of a deeper prejudice: the eternal God never changes, *with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning* (James 1, 17). The very faithful must imitate him, when heathens cannot remain constant nor trustworthy (Flierman, 2015). To put it in Einhard's words:

> <The pagan Saxons> have been as often prone to submit than they have shown their haste to rise up, inconstant to such an extent that no one could tell which inclination was truly theirs: from the beginning of the war, scarcely a year passed without they changing completely (*permutatio*). Yet the magnanimity of the king <Charlemagne> and the steadiness of his mind, both in adverse and in favorable circumstances, were never overcome by their instability (*mutabilitas*) nor could it dishearten him from what he has started (Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, cap. 7).

The Christian *ethos* of the 9th century therefore implies a personal and collective effort to prevent changes in political order. Theology and exegesis can give *transformatio* a strongly positive meaning of radical innovation, with divinization in sight, in accordance with Mtt. 17, 2, Jesus transfigured, *transformatus*, and II Cor. 3, 18: "We all are changed into the same image", *in imaginem transformamur*; the word stays under suspicion in historical discourse. Writing about the same political crisis as the Astronomus, Adrevald of Fleury is the only author to use *transformare* at the end of the 9th century, and it is with the obvious meaning of a change that alters political and social equilibrium:

> The discord between Franks damaged the kingdom's common weal in many ways during the divine emperor Louis' reign, since according to the Scriptures, *because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold* (Matthew 24, 12). By the counsels of malevolent men, the consideration of common weal was changed (*se transformavit*) into pride and tyranny (*Miracula sancti Benedicti*, cap. 27; Sot, 2008; Isaïa 2019).

Such a binding intellectual trend underwent an ordeal with the collapse of the Carolingian empire in 888. If the assumption that real change was unthinkable is right, how could the intellectuals react to such a political and social turmoil? There are few relevant sources for an enquiry in *Francia occidentalis*, if one concentrates on *Annals* and *Historiae*. The range of narratives broadens with hagiographical material, even if with gaps: the writing first flourishes until the 930s within a reformative context, both South (Cluny) and North (Gorze), before a second bloom around 990-1000 (South of the Loire, Rosé, 2013). Overall, eighty to ninety *Vitae* were written in West Francia during the 10th century, including continental Brittany (we lack overall inventories; the count relies on Gaillard and Goullet 2020: 189-242; Isaïa 2022). Moreover, quantity goes with quality: only mention Hucbald of Saint-Amand, Adson of Montier-en-Der or Letald of Micy, among many authors who only miss a name to stand out. Dealing with hagiographical material however is not mere opportunism. Hagiography is by nature a genre that has to ponder upon historical twists and turns; every *Vita* has to explain how the concrete meanders of a saint's live embody the eternal plan of God. In this regard, the 860s are a turning point in *Francia orientalis*' hagiography: it then functioned as a lab for clerics to apprehend changes, and to propose solutions to behave with them (Isaïa 2023). This chapter builds on such observations to suggest further that hagiographers of the 10th century succeeded in supporting a renewed social organization, firmly set on collective responsibility. The chapter therefore presents a twofold reading: while listening to the hagiographical texts as evidence for mental attitude in front of changes, it better understands the real nature of this peculiar discourse and its performative role in medieval societies.

A fair analysis must start with figuring out what hagiography is capable of. The vigorous trend of reformative hagiography starts with the 11th century only. The Gregorian Reform, in the broader meaning of a concept that can include monastic reforms, favors references to apostolic times as to a Golden Age: hagiography is then a convenient medium for connecting to such a past (Krüger 2002; Foulon 2008; Bultot-Verleysen 2014). Its calling to deep changes can also rely on miracles' stories and supernatural narratives, because of their inherent demonstrative strength (Vanderputten 2013; Barone 1991 points to a Lotharingian exception that should not be taken for the rule). The case is far less clear up to the 10th century in *Francia occidentalis*: with a sound unanimity from the 840s on, the hagiographical narratives, and even when they allude to actual reforms, rather enforce continuity, consensus and order (Krönert 2012). Historians looking for changes in hagiography thus must prove to be subtle. Since the 1970s, some tap the *Vitae* and *Miracula* according to the methods of mentalities history, in hope that their authors may have unconsciously recorded the "mutations" that had affected society. In Bonnassie's words: "même involontaires, leurs réponses sont riches", that is "<hagiographical texts> convey generous answers, even without meaning it" (Bonnassie 1978: 275). The *Vita Geraldi* stands out as the best record historians had found to decipher evolutions that would have otherwise stayed unnoticeable: departing from mining into the text, looking for "reliable information" about the man Géraud and his involvement within French feudalism (Lewis, 1964; Schneider, 1973), pioneering enquiries have worked out hints and clues about medieval representations (Bonnassie 1978; Bonnassie 1985: 340). Following this epistemological path, one can take advantage of a rewriting to better identify breaks in a worldview. Precisely, during the 10th century, an anonymous hagiographer rewrote the 6th century's *Vita prima* of Bibianus (*BHL* 1324), bishop of Saintes. The new *Vita* (*BHL* 1326) (Poulin 2006: 76) carefully follows the pattern of the former, replicating its events in the precise order of their first appearance: Bibianus becomes bishop of Saintes after the death of his master the bishop Ambrosius. He succeeds in protecting his flock against the arian king Theodoric and against the Saxon pirates, as should any good *defensor civitatis*. The changes brought by the rewriting thus appear more blatant. The first hagiographer, who lived before the 550's south of the Loire (Heinzelmann 2010: 61), has a rather simplistic view on political order. He knows an emperor in the East, a good one for he builds a church for the relics of st. Bibianus; and a heretic king in the area of Toulouse, who has to be subdued by the gentle authority of the saint. After being threatened by that king, "the most holy bishop was not at all scared: spending the whole night in prayers, he overcame the rage of the haughty king..., and the one who thought to be frightful began to be frightened instead" (*Vita I[a] Bibiani*, cap. 6, l. 27-30). Long story short, the first hagiographer does not question the political order but understands the worldly organization from the only standpoint of orthodox faith. Informed by the experiment of the 10th century in Aquitaine, the rewriter has a completely different perspective on kingship.

> The more one tries to live freely in holy grace, among the human perversities and the tempestuous storms of this vacillating world, the more one will stand distinguished in the heavenly citadels, by a deserved dignity; and in so far as men have more completely despised and wholeheartedly rejected the various appearances of that worldly pomp, and have held as abject filth the crowned honors and dignity of kingship – some do! –, there they will, with the Lord's favor, seize the eternal privileges of power and obtain the scepter of everlasting glory. The most glorious servant of God Bibianus will be, as we have learnt, one of these men, for he was from royal stock; but still in childhood, he rejected the symbols of a dominion that fails and passes; he devoted himself totally to divine obedience, in order to take possession, in the court of the celestial assembly, of the reward of the eternal kingdom (*Vita II[a] s. Bibiani*, fol. 138v-139).

This hagiographer obviously does not describe actual constitutional order, but reuses religious images to convey a quite commonplace discourse about the compelling contempt of worldly realities. His Romanized political vocabulary –*dictatoria*, *imperii fasces*, *senatus celestis curiae*– is not rare in 10th century sources. (From the point of view of both style and vocabulary, the second *Vita Bibiani* especially reminds me of Hucbald of Saint-Amand's *Vita s. Amati* : a complete overview will help giving a more accurate appraisal on the author's education and training); yet the whole passage as it stands stays noticeable. The hagiographer has actually imagined the royal origins of the saint, and this invention is not pure fancy nor ornamental embellishment for the preface only; he affirms that Aquitaine was a barbarian kingdom indeed, held by the father of Bibianus. "<the saint> was to be invested of royal dignity as the successor of his father, who ruled Aquitaine with royal authority" (*Vita s. Bibiani*, fol. 140). Though Bibianus refuses to endorse a heathen power, the citizens of Saintes oblige him to become their "earl" (*comes*) for a reason that is worth listening to: "the inhabitants chose him as *comes* for these princes' family has its roots in Saintes". The saint therefore assumes with efficient rule (*regimen*) a political charge called "a princely sovereignty" (*principatus*) (*Ibid.* fol. 140v). While he aims at spiritual exhortation, the hagiographer acknowledges in an uttermost way the major political changes that have occurred during a long 10th century in *Francia* (West 2013: 139-170). Royal authority is a *de facto* power disseminated within the West with no automatic religious legitimacy. Aquitaine has a royal past of independent government with no historical links with the Frankish kingdoms; inhabitants elect their princes according to their personal virtues, nobility and local origins. Even if a conservative vocabulary is maintained, appointment to political responsibilities depends no more on central policies. Our hagiographer did not mean to be witness to these changes that he nevertheless voices loud. Yet as their interpreter, he is not inspired: he offers no guideline, but writes the conventional discourse against the mundane turmoil that many monastic authors of the period share. Changes did happen, but as ever down here: one has therefore to long for the eternal continuity.

The author's choice to rewrite the *Vita* of a saint of the 5th century remains a detail worth noticing. Many Frankish hagiographers of the 9th century focused on saints of the 4th century, mostly Italian ones, in a context of eager appropriation of an imperial past. Their point may have been to appropriate martyrs of pagan or heretic emperors, and to promote the Carolingians as authentic *defensores fidei*. As people who lived in *Francia occidentalis* at the end of the 9th century faced invasions, dynastic competition, turf wars and the scandal of fratricidal warfare among Christians, some hagiographers used the past differently. The special attention they paid to 5th-6th centuries' saints points to a use of their lives as historical precedents: past generations also met such apparently senseless catastrophes, hagiographers write, and a more lucid judgement connects so unexpected changes to the shallowness of the faithful. Some *Vitae* written during the 10th century thereby revive a remote past full of invasions and dangers: Lupus, bishop of Troyes, face the Huns of Attila (*Vita II[a] s. Lupi*); Nicasius, bishop of Reims, is killed by the Vandals (*Passiones Nicasii et Eutropiae*, Isaïa, 2017a). The events are already known. Their rewriting allows an additional lesson about vigilance:

> When suddenly, at the very time of prosperity, was set in motion the violence of the most cruel nation to take revenge on various provinces for the anger of an offended God: furiously, countless Vandals march rapidly, overthrow the ramparts of many cities, execute by the sword men and women, parents with children (*Passio Nicasii*, Reims, BM 1411, fol. 2v).

The steel logic of the hagiographer goes from his knowledge of the past –the barbarian invasions of the 5th century– to the most inviting conclusion: the Christian had to be punished of their lavishness and false sense of security. Consequently, the invasions that shocked them was not at all unexpected. Looking back to a remote past is arguably one of the techniques used by hagiographers to soothe the actual distress of people in front of changes. One major problem therefore is to realize that hagiographers could affirm that nothing really new can happen *precisely because* the opinion that something really new is occurring spreads out. An evolution in hagiographical prologues help catching the big picture. After *ca*. 800, many *Vitae* begin with a summary of the Church history. They start with Jesus then follow the steps of the Church's growing that they connect to successive sorts of saints: martyrs correspond to the needs of a Church exposed to persecution, when confessors suit a world where life examples improve the behavior of already Christian people, etc.. Sometimes, these constructs reveal a certain need of categories to understand and order the society; sometimes, they give priority to time and generations as the main ordering principle. All the same, these summaries deliver by nature a message about divine order in history, for the Lord gives every saint as a response to a specific context. As the meaning of human history is at stake, speaking about a stylistic *topos* to describe these introductory overviews is obviously not enough, even if they all do look repetitive. It is certainly the case with the chapter that opens the *Vita of Martin* written by Letald fo Micy before 1000. Martin of Vertou is placed at the end of a long series of saints, all provided by God according to specific contexts. Looking closer however, the reader can notice that the passage sounds not so confident about the order found on earth. Within a now conservative scheme, the author transforms what was elsewhere an optimistic passage into kind of a protest: no, there is no reason to believe that the Lord has forsaken the humankind:

> Longing to set the fundaments of his holy Church, the Lord, having redeemed her at the expense of his own blood, came back to siege in his Father glory after his victory over the prince of death: but He did not at all abandon her widowed, nor deprived of the Heavens' regardful direction. He did not cease to watch over her from the celestial residence of his glory. His sole majesty did watchfully care through His providence to let her guides to lead her free out of this sinking world (col. 805).

Letald lengthily goes on relating "the terrors of this cruel world" polluted by "the stratagems of a hidden and invisible enemy": in such a "dying world", saints are persons whose "unchanging purpose" is never affected "by troubles nor successes", *inter adversa et prospera eodem virtutis proposito constantes*. So Letald uses an opening formula that 9th century's hagiographers had already employed. Yet his Church's history looks like contending a wreck when theirs was all about triumph arches. Here again, a hagiographer leaves hints about a feeling of change, but only through a new pessimistic tone.

The conservative way of interpreting changes has indeed a rosy future in hagiography: rather than to original solutions that might just as well never emerge, one has therefore to give attention to the very insistent discourse on change for itself. Hagiography does reveal how deeply the hagiographers are concerned by the current changes, considering the growing importance of this topic in their œuvres. The layout of some *Vitae* of the 10th century seems designed to prove that every change happens on purpose. It is especially the case before 1000 with the *Vita* of Maïeul of Cluny. The *Vita* begins with the unusual depiction of a disaster that predates *Maiolus'* birth: the Saracens invade Provence and *Porcarius*, abbot of Lérins, knows for certain that he will meet his death by their hands. The catastrophe is violent, the disturbance sudden, but should not surprise Christians *indeed*: or so write the hagiographers. On the one hand, the invasions result of "the design of the Lord, who wants to strike the human race whose crimes ask for punishment" (*Vita Maioli*, I, 1: 178); on the other hand, the martyr-to-be is explicitly warned seven days ahead by an angel, who lets him know "and the moment, and the day, and the hour when the imminent death of them all has been definitely fixed" (*Vita Maioli*, I, 1: 179). With such a precise notice, he has plenty of time to get ready and warn his brethren, who fail all the same to confront their death steadily; thus a pungent *Porcarius*, who has barred all escape routes, blames them (as the hagiographers blame their audience), for true monks should never be surprised nor "unprepared", *imparati*. Such a beginning develops the familiar refrain, although usually far shorter, that most *Vitae* repeat about the predestination of the saint: especially since the 800s, hagiographers have insisted on the saint as a response given by God to definite circumstances (Isaïa, 2017). Here nevertheless, the concept is further highlighted: even if the historical events appear to everyone as senseless, better Christians are better clairvoyant. From a human point of view, Porcarius' fate is a blind accident that causes the departure of Maiolus' family from Provence to Burgundy. According to the designs of Providence however, there is no accident, but a perfect adjustment of every global crisis to the salvation of individuals – heavenly troops welcome Porcarius the martyr and Maiolus, conveniently bred in Lyon, becomes a monk in Cluny. Hagiography here meets with one of its major goals. Hagiographical texts are of course narratives that celebrate the Lord through the commemoration of his saints; hence a liturgical use, and a key role in the enactment of collective memory. Still hagiography also plays a crucial role – sometimes a cathartic one – in explaining how the salvific plan may connect with individuals' lots. Hagiographers work hard since the 860s to prove that no patent disorders can genuinely alter the eternal will of God. It could be a testimony in itself to the loss of meaning that their contemporaneous fellows undergo. It could just as well reveal a shift to a more pedagogical use of hagiography, and even voice the sense of superiority some hagiographers experience – a visible feature in this Cluniac text. Either way, the *Vita Maioli* serves as a landmark: far from only alluding to the widespread idea of divine disposal, it uses it as its very core scheme. The demonstrative logic of the narrative introduction has its exact counterpart in the prologue to the second book. The authors there express the same belief in the immutability of the Lord's plans, but in a theoretical way: "God must be truly called static motion and motile status. For He is never moving in Himself... but moves through everything, for everything exists thanks to His motion" (*Vita Maioli*, II, Preface: 206). Hagiography has portrayed saints as potent characters, thaumaturgical healers, ascetic heroes – here comes the Man of Providence. The authors of the *Vita Maioli* do not try to explain rationally how this Providence functions, but the narrative is demonstrative in itself: in a life full of accidents, a retrospective look deciphers Providence in action. "We do not believe that it was with no purpose that it pleased the Divine Providence to have this conspicuously holy man involved in such adverse events (*casibus*), for the man of God has improved through strain and exertion..." (*Vita Maioli*, III: 256).

The introductory observation about the "unthinkable change" was incomplete. To the problematic *reformatio* and *mutatio*, the *Vita Maioli* adds another possible translation of "change" with *casus* – event, accident, misfortune, especially when used by God as trials. With the Norman raids increasing after the treaty of Verdun (843), hagiographers had to deal with hasty changes that were making the providential course of events all of a sudden less evident (Koziol 2016). To understand them, some resort to the Christian tradition. It has two major solutions to offer, the solution of the crucible (1 Peter 1, 7) and the solution of expiation. The former explains that a Christian endures unpleasant and unfair events to test his forbearance and improve his merits like *Maiolus* does. The latter, like in the *Annals of Laon*, understands historical accidents as compulsory atonements for various misconducts. The two solutions share the same conclusion: it is not the order that actually disappeared, but its manifest embodiment; still the choice of the first rather than the second is meaningful. The solution of the crucible adopts the point of view of individuals: among mysterious changes and disorders, a Christian can always stay unscathed on a mystique and personal level. For instance, Regino Prumiensis' famous, but very brief, statement about the fragmentation of the Carolingian empire follows a far more profuse praise of the late emperor Charles the Fat. Regino is concerned by the innocence of the man, "the most Christian prince, a God-fearer and faithful observer of His commands... who has always trusted His divine governance: hence that all has worked together for good to him..." (Regino Prumiensis, *Chronicon*, a. 888): even talking about an emperor who nearly starved to death, it is not gallows humor. Regino requests that no one shall be judged according to his temporal fate, a philosophical position inherited from the strictest Augustinian orthodoxy: no historical event reveals the Almighty's judgment crystal clear. Together with references to punishment or divine revenge, the solution of collective expiation is set on bases more fragile. It nevertheless flourishes under the formulaic "because of our sins", already read in the *Vita Maioli*. Flodoard of Reims shares the same interpretation of the regrettable events that surround the death of archbishop Hincmar:

> As a retribution to our sins, the relics of our father and patron st. Remigius, because of the invasion of heathens, happened to be transported in 882 AD under the reign of Carloman by the archbishop Hincmar up to the aforementioned domain of Epernay… (Flodoard, *Historia Remensis ecclesiae*, I, 21).

This kind of lecture does not come from superstitious or illiterate clerics, but from the greatest intellectuals of the 10th century, like Folcuin of Lobbes. Folcuin is probably the most talkative author of the 10th century about his methods: they look rational. In the *Gesta* of St. Bertin (ca. 960-962), he explains his survey of archive documents; later in the *Gesta* of Lobbes, he highlights the difference between his faith in the Lord's plan and his ability as an historian to decipher it. "I do not know why" a portent happened in 959, Folcuin notes; "the reason why it happened is not known" he insists (Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum S. Bertini Sithiensium*, cap. 109). The same cautious author writes however, about the epidemic of leprosy that struck his monastery, that it was "a scourge from the Lord":

> At the same time, this monastery alas underwent the Lord's whipping through elephantiasis; I do not know if it was the consequence of our sins or in accordance with this say of the Scriptures: *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth* (Heb. 12, 6) (Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum S. Bertini Sithiensium*, cap. 110).

These examples demonstrate that there is no good reason to set historical narratives against the hagiographical ones: hagiography does not monopolize the explanation of brutal events by *ultio divina,* the "revenge of the Lord". In a conducive context however, hagiography uses this elucidation as a tool fully congruent with its own aims: as any *Vita* does, the *ultio divina* urges for repentance and conversion. The most important hypothesis here is that it also creates a vivid feeling of collective responsibility. When Adson of Montier-en-Der, at the very end of the 10th century, draws conclusions about the brutal changes that have affected the kingdom during the last hundred years, he does not insist on the mischievous ways of some aristocrats nor on this or that king's personal failure. Using the first person plural, he sees in every upheaval the payment for "our common offenses":

> Because we had persevered in our unjust and wrong ways, the vengeful Lord resolved to surrender these regions of Gaul to the heathens' savage sword. It happened during the reign of King Charles, son of Louis: before his days, *Francia* has never heard of pagans, nor has it seen them, within its borders, but it is absolutely doubtless that the cause of such a horrid danger and retribution lies in the joint merits of the people as a whole… everything was brought into disorder and corruption (Adso Dervensis, *Vita Basoli*, cap. 34).

Like Adso, the monks of Gorze face many troubles at the end of the 10th century. As kings of *Francia orientalis* and *Francia occidentalis* have struggled for the control of Lotharingia, targetting monasteries, Gorze has endured the threats of Hungarian mercenaries. In the lull that follows, a monk of Gorze wrote, probably between 983 and 987 (Goullet, Parisse and Wagner 2010: 32-33) a *Life of Chrodegang bishop of Metz* that somewhat appears as a political manifesto. Celebrating in Chrodegang (d. 766) the nephew of King Pippin (d. 768), the hagiographer links the glory of Metz to its special relationships with the Carolingians. In an undertone, the *Vita* shows a deep pondering upon the meaning of unexpected changes. The depiction of Chrodegang as the major actor of the Carolingian *coup d'État* (754) surely provides an inspiring occasion to do so, yet the 10th century context is again the deciding factor. The author affirms the providential conduct of all worldly matters, especially when it comes to kings' succession: "Kingdoms are in the hand of God, Who will give them to whomever He wants", proudly answers Chrodegang to the Lombard duke Aistulf (*Vita Chrodegangi*, p. 82). The author also acknowledges the two aforementioned meanings of upsets, both about Pope Stefanus' issues: others know that "the Almighty has justly permitted that the persecution of enemies overthrew him in order to proportionate his reward to his toils and anguishes" (*Vita Chrodegangi*, p. 78), when Stefanus himself humbly admits that he is under the Lombards' attacks "as a retribution that the Lord has consented because of his faults" (*Vita Chrodegangi*, p. 82). Within such a standard, but notably explicit, storyline, the people of Metz think aloud in a rather surprising way: their bishop dead, they expect a new one, an important change of course, but with no evident connection with the distress they express.

> They have undergone such a destroying fright that they prayed: if it was not possible to restrain the vengeful sword of the Lord after He had harshly unsheathed it, and to prevent it from striking, they asked to be handed over a visible and mortal enemy, so to meet a rapid death. Because the faithful, each one according to their personal responsibility, did recall what retribution their perverseness had earned, and how it had irritated God up to the Heaven. They feared that He would yield them forever to the insatiable enemy of mankind's salvation. People were also overwhelmed by fear : the harassment of evil men had so much upset the stability and torn apart the unity of the kingdom that even the prince was not at all allowed to live in peace, nor security (*Vita Chrodegangi*, p. 56).

These people do not seem to react only to the (peaceful and predictable) death of their bishop Sigibaldus... The passage more probably alludes to the analysis of current events that the hagiographer shares with the already seen contemporaneous authors. (According to chronological order, the first *Vita* to give so much room to fright is, as far as I know, Rimbert Bremensis' *Vita s. Anskarii*, written within the ten years that followed the death of Anskar in 865). His belief is easily sum up as follow: a rupture certainly preludes the worst; the worst is deserved as a punishment; but the statement has also its silver lining: the most painful events are not meaningful; a penance down here helps escape an eternal expiation beyond there – a blessing in disguise. No breaking news, but we can go deeper: the audience of the *Vita* learns about its direct responsibility in events that it can no more ascribe to fate or haphazard circumstances. Each one is compel to scrutinize his own behavior, because of its incidence on collective fortune: the stability of the kingdom depends on anyone's misconduct, as does the security of the king. The collective scope of the whole lecture is the most striking. Retribution is no more what a personal demeanor is worth, or not only: the author tries to think about divine justice on a new collective scale. In broad strokes, the atonement discourse of the 9th century was all about the guilt of one person (the bad king) as it alters the welfare of all his people. The language of *divina ultio* used in the 10th century narratives reverses this logic. An actual recovery is possible, but chiefly depends on a collective improvement.

The reflection has to progress cautiously because of a possible bias in the corpus. All the *Vitae* observed until now were written by monastic hagiographers, and firstly for a monastic audience. Could this feature increase the collective intent of the texts? Whenever a hagiographer belongs to the community he addresses, or writes about a late beloved abbot whom all the brethren had known, the vocabulary of mutual affection and an insistence on common fate do appear – but it is not the case with the *Vitae* under scrutiny. Besides, the exhortation to penance, especially under the threat of divine correction, should arise as much in preached *Vitae* designed for a lay audience. It is not the status of the author that determines his judgements on change, but the performance intended for his *Vita*: there is a manifest relationship between the (real or alleged) use of the *Vita* within a context of exhortation, and the emphasis on a "we" that involve the audience and call for its conversion. The aforementioned *Vita Martini Vertavensis* offers a perfect occasion to observe this rhetorical mechanism applied to the problematic understanding of brutal changes. Letald of Micy describes before 1000 how the city of Herbauges was destroyed as Sodom had been, because it refused to atone in response to St. Martin's exhortations:

> Due victim of this vengeful retribution, the city died that had despised obeying our Martin's warnings. See and consider, you who scorned the servants of the Truth ! Understand, if you can, under what rigorous vengeance you have to change ! ...Learn that the torments

> endured by these godless people have been prepared in eternity for the unrighteous who resist the Truth. So said the Lord, when some told Him about the Galilaeans whose blood Pilate has mixted with the ritual offerings : *I tell you, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish* (Luke 13, 1) (*Vita Martini Vertavensis*, § 10-11, col. 808A-B).

Letald succeeds in combining a very compelling address –"you have to change!"– with a rhetorical structure that opposes "the godless people (of Herbauges)" and the God-fearing community he exhorts: for its benefit, he actually plays the role of "*our* Martin". This mechanism invites, in the insistent refrain of 10th century's narratives about "our sins", not to listen only to the music of guilt and penance, for the important word in here would be "our". Alluding to "our sins" as to the most verisimilar explanation for unpredictable changes, the narratives of the 10th century refer to –and actually enforce– a strong sense of belonging to a community. Here is one of the likely reasons why the discourse of expiation bursts, while it is difficult to lay it on solid theological ground. Jesus has expressly forbidden such a justification of events: "Those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay." (Luke 13, 4-5) How can Letald use this precise chapter of the Scriptures to legitimate an awful punishment? As many hagiographers agree with Letald in pointing "our sins" as the direct causation of actual troubles, they do not intend to contradict an explicit command of the Lord: they indirectly underline a real societal change that is a new scale in describing and experiencing human communities.

The Early Middle Ages has seen the growing importance of ethnicity to define large and potentially increasing national communities (Reimitz 2015). The evidences from the High Middle Ages deal with communities created according to a less political vocabulary – smaller ones, emotional ones, religious ones. The shift of narratives' scale concurs with the collapse of the Carolingian empire: narratives henceforward focus on local issues – only compare the difference in both scope and tone between the *Annales regni Francorum* and Flodoard's *Annal*s. The conclusion that emerges from 10th century hagiography is that such a change in tone does not simply reflect a difference in historical context. The disappearance of the Carolingian-Frankish-Imperial encompassing identity has left place indeed to other experiments: one of them consists in creating community through a shared feeling of collective responsibility – to speak of "our sins" means to acknowledge a partook involvement in anything that happens *to us*. It is a way to root the feeling of belonging within the belief in a common fate. It is therefore not to the questionable theological meaning of the expression that one has to stick, but to its political and social implications. With its own language, hagiography accompanies –that is both echoes and creates– the birth of a new conceptual frame for social relationships: based on granted and revocable bonds of shared interests and responsibilities, it obviously reminds of feudality, not only a change in political and economical structures, but also deep in minds.

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Change and continuity in tenth century Western Europe: A conclusion

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The 10th century hides much more than one can imagine. It is a century that seems sunk in a dark past, and yet it is at the centre of many more reflections than one, as a historian or archaeologist, is willing to admit. Why? Because it occupies a space that is the bedrock at the foundations of the great historical narratives that, during the past two centuries, sustained and fuelled national narratives in many European countries. Let us review a few: the birth of the kingdom of León and the reinforcement of the county of Castile (which has always been like saying the forging of the "*Reconquista*"); the consolidation of the kingdom that would give birth to modern France; feudal anarchy in Italy awaiting its first '*Risorgimento*' through the communes; the unification of the heptarchy in England as the basis of an 'immanent' kingdom; the great Viking adventure in the North... Very traditional themes for even more traditional interpretations of history, which have not yet been sufficiently criticised and which appear, sometimes unconsciously, in too many works.

And despite all this, the 10th century hides much more than one can imagine, as the reading of the different papers included in this book will have demonstrated to even the most inattentive reader. Fundamentally because of three main issues. Firstly, the volume encourages dialogue between the different sources that support historical interpretations. These pages offer a serious reflection on the role of archaeology and history, their dialogues and disagreements, and their methodological challenges, as an arena in which to develop knowledge that definitively distances itself from the grand narratives.

Secondly, this book has concentrated on the complexities of the 10th century "per se", without considering that historical moment as a point of arrival, and even less so, with teleological zeal, as a fluid and blurred space, the basis for processes documented much later. Last but not least, through its pages it is possible to delve into the complexities of the 10th century by looking at very different actors and contexts, from the caliphs of Córdoba to the peasant elites in Iceland.

The notion that links the three issues described above is that of 'Change and Continuity': a conceptual label that may seem banal – what other task can historians and archaeologists perform than that of interpreting continuities and changes through time? – but which both must tackle. What changes? What continuities? And this book does that by broadening its geographical focus and the breadth of the topics analysed in it, embracing a multitude of European spaces, from present-day Portugal to Rome; from Córdoba to Iceland, passing through France, Ireland and England.

This is another virtue of the book: to analyse changes and continuities it does not use few examples, but many. Similarly, it does not only study the voices of the powerful through chronicles, epigraphy and hagiographies. Without forgetting them (Betti, Branco, Isaïa, Martín Viso, Portass, Vésteinsson), it takes into account the archaeological data of the different peasant communities and their leaders (Brookes, Gleeson, Peytremann, Sánchez and Fernández, Tente, Vésteinsson again). By doing so, it is possible to observe the contexts of agency of very different actors which can be articulated into three main themes:

the forms of the state, the social articulation of the elites, and their relation with central authorities and memory.

The 10th century saw very different state formations. Portass's study of rulers and resources explores the tax extraction capacity of Andalusian rulers decades earlier than has been traditionally assumed. As early as the 9th century, the emirs of Córdoba were able to obtain large amounts of tax revenues. This reality shows the distance between the tax states, partly heirs of the Roman Empire in their economies, and the landed states, which, like the kingdom of León, based their economic power on the possession of land. These differences gave rise to very different political landscapes: from a strong state to complex but non-centralised social formations such as those studied by Branco, Brookes, Gleeson, Tente and Vésteinsson.

In places such as Portugal, England, Ireland and Iceland, narrative sources and the archaeological record show fragmented social and economic realities, in which the lack of a strong state meant the emergence of a new logic of rural settlement, far from any action led by central authorities. Many of these settlements could not overcome political instability, like São Gens and Senhora do Barrocal, while, successively, the surviving local elites reorganised their political arenas in spaces increasingly integrated into the polycentric kingdom of León (see also Martín Viso).

These processes of reorganization are well documented in Ireland, where Gleeson shows, depending on the sources analysed, the existing diverse interpretations. The historical account tends towards political centralisation, as in England, where the emergence of hundreds, as a dense network of local administrative units, represented a significant moment in the territorialisation of royal power (Brookes), while archaeology shows the systemic decline of settlements and a strong economic contraction, even of royal centres.

This controversial reality has been interpreted in the light of transformations that would have given way to a reorganisation of authority at regional level. A different reality, although obtained in preventive archaeological work (so different from the archaeology developed in Ireland), is offered for the north of France by Peytremann. In those lands, a great diversity of rural settlements have been documented, whose lowest common denominator was the growth of their comfort and level of equipment in a horizon dominated by new aristocratic residential areas. Aspects that coincide with the interpretations given by the written sources.

Contrary readings, when interpreting the articulation of society, between narrative sources and the archaeological record again appear in the cases in Iceland. The memory of the local elites preferred a narrative that connected them with the apexes of Norwegian society. In contrast, the archaeological record shows, through the study of burials, a poor society. The 10th century violence contained in the Sagas recall a key moment for the creation of a new social body, in which the old and the new settlers of the island were gradually mixed, fuelling the re-creation of new elites (Vésteinsson).

Social distinction was achieved in Galicia and the north of what is now Portugal through the foundation of private monasteries. As Sánchez and Fernández point out, one of the main instruments for underlining the political and economic importance of the Eriz family was, as well as their closeness to the courtesan *entourages* of the kings of León, the construction, in the first half of the tenth century, of a good number of churches and monasteries (around 20). Their impact on the local social networks was very diverse, but, as a whole, they were fundamental for the inclusion of their territories in the kingdom of León, and for the exaltation of the social role of their founders.

The interaction between memory and aristocratic competition can be seen in all its complexity through the examples given in the papers written by Betti, Isaïa and Martín Viso. For a new kingdom, memory mattered. Especially when its intellectuals tried to present themselves to the Christian Iberian polities as the sole heirs of the Visigothic past. To this end, they not only resorted to writing chronicles, like the *Chronica Albendensia*, in which the region of the Gothic Fields was almost invented for political purposes, but the use and reuse of inscriptions carved in stone was at the core of other "policies of memory" conducted to unify the Visigothic past within the political agendas of the Leonese kings and aristocracies, both lay and ecclesiastical (Martín Viso).

Memory was also important in 10th century West Francia, especially in the ecclesiastical environments studied by Isaïa. Here, more than eighty *Vitae* were written in order to deal, in very unstable political times, with the uncertainties provoked among the social environment of the intellectuals engaged in the *scriptoria*. In those narratives, changes facing the society are perceived, but the intention is to give an account of them so that their audiences (generally the same communities in which the works were written) could better preserve their position within a shrinking political horizon.

The case of Rome is different. Perhaps the city with the most complex political environment in the 10th century; in it, the papacy appears as the patrimony of the Roman aristocracy, a very exclusive and competitive group in which women (and their offspring) possessed a unique importance and political centrality in their time. Betti gives clear examples of such female agency, as in the case of Stefania II and the control she exercised over Palestrina, as well as the misogynistic criticism with which early medieval authors, in particular Liutprand of Cremona, reacted (with moral values and sexism) to a situation so unusual for the political clichés of post-Carolingian Europe. Memory mattered also to political writers such as Liutprand, who did not hesitate to taint their opinions with insults, in order to record what he considered to be such immoral behaviour.

After reading these different papers, the 10th century is still there, questioning us about the difficulties of observing – in all its complexity; from various points of view – the continuities and changes by which the societies of Western Europe were articulated during a hundred years of political, social and economic experimentations.

The methodological challenges facing historians and archaeologists in the ways of articulating the very different results of archival research and fieldwork research, each of which follows completely different protocols, has in the 10th century one of its finest fields of action.

This book begins to respond to these challenges.