

# **Constructing Territoriality “From Below”: Collective Action, Micropolitics, and Landscape in the Duero Plateau (Tenth-Eleventh centuries)\***

by Iñaki Martín Viso

The aim of this article is to analyse patterns of territoriality constructed “from below”, based on evidence drawn from a wide range of territories, which were held together by the presence of local initiatives instead of being linked automatically to the central-authority organisation. As this situation was typical of the Duero Plateau, three case studies have been chosen (Ausín, Valdesaz, and Palenzuela). An analysis of these cases shows that the territories were shaped around collective action and focused on common goals, mutual defence practices, and the selection of complementary riverside and mountain landscapes. These arenas of local micropolitics were integrated into the encompassing powers, breaking with the early medieval idea of “deteritorialisation”.

Tenth-Eleventh centuries, Iberian Peninsula, territory, collective action, landscape, micropolitics.

\* This work has been carried out within Project PID2020-112506GB-C42, funded by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación. I would like to thank Daniel Justo for his collaboration on elaborating the maps and Francisco José Álvarez for his help to improve the English.

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Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup\_referee\_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup\_best\_practice)

Iñaki Martín Viso, *Constructing Territoriality “From Below”: Collective Action, Micropolitics, and Landscape in the Duero Plateau (Tenth-Eleventh centuries)*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0530-6.05, in Iñaki Martín Viso (edited by), *Political landscapes in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages: the Iberian Northwest in the Context of Southern Europe*, pp. 57-79, 2024, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0530-6, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0530-6

### 1. The “territorialised” early Middle Ages

An influential study by Robert David Sacks emphasises the formation of territories as a strategy of domination through the control of space. Territory can be understood as a social construction determined by social agents and therefore embedded within society; one of its main outcomes is the reification of power.<sup>1</sup> A correlate is the theory that territoriality is associated with the exercise of authority. Although its embodiment has changed over time, territory can thus be understood as a form of political technology, which acts as a counterpart to the notion of measured and calculated space that is typical of states.<sup>2</sup> The close connection between authority and territory seems indisputable, although it does not always relate to the state and relates even less frequently to patterns associated with the nation-state, based on exclusion and definition of clearly separated political areas.<sup>3</sup>

This connection can also be observed in the Middle Ages, although its embodiment moves away from linear models of definition. A territory was frequently a network of places interconnected through a series of power practices.<sup>4</sup> Taking into account both territory as a technology of socio-political domination and the presence of alveolar territorial patterns, Michel Lauwers and Laurent Ripart have proposed an evolution throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup> They argue that the early Middle Ages would have been characterised by a phase of “deterritorialisation”, in which sacred and political space was generally defined in reference to a centre. A clear example involves the bishoprics, which were marked by the existence of centres that did not necessarily project themselves onto homogeneous topographical area.<sup>6</sup> During the second phase, a “polarisation” would have occurred, due to the formation of lordship: some places polarised territory, as in the case of cemeteries or castles. Finally, “territorialisation” was reintroduced in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as exemplified by the establishment of parish territories.

Despite the idea of a “deterritorialised” early Middle Ages, any approach to the written sources informs us of the presence of very diverse territories. Scribes had to refer to territories in order to locate specific places, goods, and activities; this is why it is paradoxical to speak of “deterritorialisation”. In fact, while there was a multiplication of types of territoriality and “central places”, the patterns organised from central authorities did not always seem to be very effective.<sup>7</sup> Other territorialities, which were not directly associated with a central authority, emerged. For example, the assembly places in

<sup>1</sup> Sacks, *Human Territoriality*, 19-20 and 30.

<sup>2</sup> Elden, *The Birth*, 32; Scott, *Seeing*.

<sup>3</sup> Ruggie, “Territoriality;” Sassen, *Territory*.

<sup>4</sup> Monnet, “Le territoire.”

<sup>5</sup> Lauwers, and Ripart, “Représentation et gestion.”

<sup>6</sup> Mazel, *L'évêque*.

<sup>7</sup> La Rocca, “La trasformazione;” Schneider, “Cités.”

Northern Europe were linked to small territories, defined through political practices and closely related to physically differentiated geographical areas. The "central places" reflected the decision-making practices of people representing different localities, who formed a political community. They were not associated with initiatives "from above", but arose "from below", even though these political communities were not egalitarian. However, the territories were perceived clearly by their inhabitants.<sup>8</sup>

A similar perspective is useful for understanding the Frankish *pagi*. This term was a label for very different territories. In some cases, the *pagi* were linked to urban centres, establishing a clear hierarchy between the "central place" and its surrounding area. As a consequence, it was easy to adapt *pagi* to administrative Frankish patterns, such as the *comitatus*, as happened in much of southern France.<sup>9</sup> In other cases, however, the connection was not so simple and the *pagus* became a territorial unit inferior to the *comitatus*.<sup>10</sup> In regions where the connection between the *pagus* and *comitatus* was less clear, the *pagi* were more like geographical units in which people developed a certain sense of shared sociability.<sup>11</sup> As Charles West has pointed out, *pagus* was not a technical term like *comitatus*; it referred to a perceived area, the formation of which was neither the product of power nor a design from a central authority, but the consequence of local societal dynamics. This led to a somewhat different configuration, in which well-established boundaries could not be delineated. The centre of the *pagus* was of relative importance and many *pagi* were associated with traditional meeting places. Their links with the institution of the Frankish *comitatus* were somewhat complex: not all *pagi* became counties and those that were did not always have the same level of influence.<sup>12</sup> This reflection on the *pagi* shows how the larger early medieval polities were likely made up of smaller, more local political units that emerged on the margins. The key to the consolidation of these larger polities was their capacity to re-signify small territories of previous origins.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to question the meaning of the territories that emerged "from below".

These considerations allow us to place the Duero's Plateau in the tenth and eleventh centuries within a more general framework that allows the possibility of comparison. Following a collapse of the political system in the eighth and ninth centuries, this region underwent a process of reshaping larger, encompassing polities, and the construction of lordship which emerged in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Both phenomena had an impact on the presence of small-scale territories. Researchers have highlighted the presence of these

<sup>8</sup> Sanmark, *Viking Law*; Semple, Sanmark, Iversen, and Mehler, *Negotiating the North*.

<sup>9</sup> Schneider, "In regno Septimanie."

<sup>10</sup> Catafau, "Le vocabulaire," 134.

<sup>11</sup> Innes, *State*, 120-3; Mazel, "De quoi la principauté?," 74-5; West, "Principautés."

<sup>12</sup> West, "Principautés," 137-8; Mazel, "De quoi la principauté?," 75.

<sup>13</sup> Davies, "Introduction," 4.

territories as an essential fact in the shaping of local-scale politics. A good example were the *alfoces*, which made up the basic political units in Castile (the far north-east of the Plateau), grouping together a small number of settlements, over which counts (and later kings) established power. They originated outside the central authority, which reused and transformed these units.<sup>14</sup> In other areas, the territories were less clearly labelled in charters; although they were sometimes called *alfoces*, they were also identified as *territoria* (territories) and *vales* (valleys). All of them included a small number of settlements and they were not originally part of an administrative structure created from above.<sup>15</sup> Of course, the dynamics of territorial creation existed during this period, so they were not part of a previously unalterable political geography. However, the new territories were of larger dimensions, with clearly defined “central places”.<sup>16</sup>

Although there is a scholar tradition about territories, it is necessary to make an approach that takes into account the social, political and economic mechanisms behind them. Their incorporation into the royal administration from the tenth to the twelfth centuries has been emphasised, a fact that is true but partial, since it does not take into account the key factors that defined the micropolitical dynamics related to them. Their geographical definition and their relationship with a past that predates the documentary evidence have been a focus of the past research. However, their internal logics and dynamics have not been studied in depth.

The evidence at our disposal is remarkably limited: it is based mainly on written, archival sources. The documentation kept in ecclesiastical archives refers only tangentially to territoriality. They are concerned with the rights acquired by the ecclesiastical institutions. Only when a territory was incorporated into the monastic or episcopal estates, which was rarely the case, or when one of the villages became part of these estates, the territories can be seen. This situation occurred usually in a context of conflict, which shows the difficulties of the process. But it can also be a misleading view, as troubles and tensions are highlighted. Archaeology does not report directly on the territories, although archaeological data are fundamental to understanding their social, political and economic meanings and their material dimensions.

These considerations are the basis for this paper. Three cases have been selected for analysis, mainly because they have relatively rich written documentation and can provide a better understanding of this form of territoriality “from below” and how it worked.

<sup>14</sup> Estepa Díez, “El alfoz;” Álvarez Borge, *Monarquía feudal*; Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio* and “Mapping Scale Change”; Martín Viso, “Central Places.”

<sup>15</sup> Martín Viso, “Pervivencias;” Justo Sánchez, and Martín Viso, “Territories.”

<sup>16</sup> Martín Viso, “Pervivencias.”

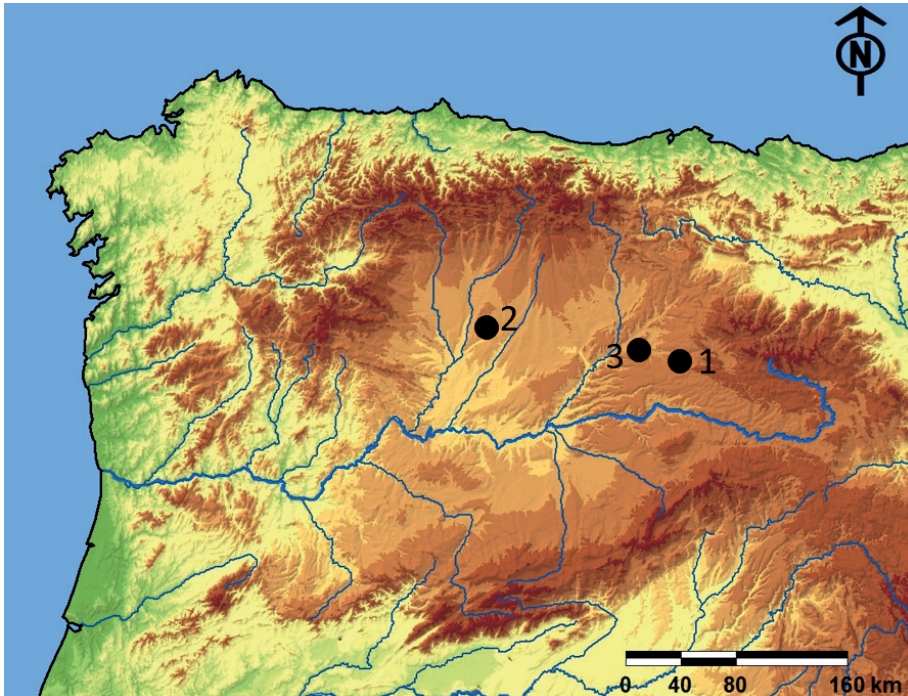


Figure 1. Location of the study cases: 1) Ausín; 2) Valdesaz; 3) Palenzuela

## 2. The *alfoz* of Ausín-Los Ausines

The first case study is Ausín or Los Ausines,<sup>17</sup> a small territory organised around the course of the river Lara or Los Ausines, which appears as *Cabia* in tenth-century charters. It is a well-known case, thanks to the studies of scholars, such as Ignacio Álvarez Borge and Julio Escalona. It had a clear topographical base, combining valley landscapes modulated by the river course with higher areas. This area was identified as an *alfoz*, although in its first known reference in the cartulary (*Becerro*) of San Pedro de Cardeña in 944 it is described as the *suburbio* in which the monastery of San Martín de Modúbar was located.<sup>18</sup> According to other references in the same cartulary, this term appears to indicate the presence of a “central place”.<sup>19</sup> However, both

<sup>17</sup> Álvarez Borge, *Monarquía feudal*, 57-8 and Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*, 94-110. This is also useful, but only for its descriptive view, Martínez Díez, *Pueblos*, 85-91.

<sup>18</sup> Fernández Flórez, and Serna Serna (eds.), *El Becerro Gótico*, doc. 46: *et in corum honore basilica fundata est in suburbio quod dicunt Agusini*. The *Becerro* is a cartulary written at the end of the eleventh century. The interest of the area of Los Ausines is related to the presence of the monastic *dehesas*.

<sup>19</sup> Looking at the Cartulary (*Becerro*) of San Pedro de Cardeña, it is clear that this situation occurred in the case of Cerezo (doc. 322) and especially Burgos (docs. 1, 2, 15, 17, 35, 36, 42, 44, 52, 72, 127, 172, 174, 207, 268, 334, 335, 339, 361, and 364).

its identification and potential function are problematic. We can accept that the “central place” would have been somewhere in the locality of Los Ausines, which actually gives its name to three different settlements: the quarters of Quintanilla, San Juan, and Sopeña. On a limestone hill that overlooks the valley in which the three quarters were located, there is a Romanesque hermitage, dating from the twelfth–thirteenth centuries, with the suggestive name of Nuestra Señora del Castillo (Our Lady of the Castle). Every year on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, a traditional pilgrimage is held and all the inhabitants of local neighbourhoods go to the hermitage. Although archaeologists have found some evidence of Iron Age and Roman occupation, there is no clear or recognisable data about an early medieval occupation, let alone a fortification. It seems more likely that the valley settlement dates back to Roman times.<sup>20</sup> It is very likely that we are looking at some kind of unmonumentalised “central place” on which a hermitage was later built. This pattern is repeated in nearby cases, including Santa Cruz de Juarros – the axis of the neighbouring *alfoz* of Juarros – and Cuevas de Juarros, where recent archaeological excavations of the hermitage on the hill have found two eleventh-twelfth century burials, prior to the construction of the Romanesque building.<sup>21</sup>

The functions of this “central place” are unknown. Although the microtoponymy seems to indicate the presence of a fortification, the archaeological evidence is elusive. The fact that a pattern repeated in neighbouring territories involves the transformation of such places into hermitages may suggest another type of centrality, possibly related to burials, sites with religious meaning, or even meeting places. However, there are no solid traces of any early medieval monumental construction. The ambiguity associated with the meaning or absence of monumentalised structures does not seem to reflect the intervention of a central authority, such as the Castilian counts. Instead, it seems to reflect a pattern created by local communities, who valued sites that had special significance for them.

Another relevant feature is the absence of clearly defined boundaries. The reconstruction carried out by Julio Escalona highlights this, including poorly defined areas, which may have been sectioned to form parts of other territories, in particular Burgos.<sup>22</sup> The data suggest an area of some 80 km<sup>2</sup> not defined in linear terms, but through places recognised as part of the *sub-urbio* of Los Ausines. The best example can be found in a description of the estate of San Salvador de Oña in the *alfoz* of Ausín in 1077, which mentions a

<sup>20</sup> Abásolo Álvarez, and Ruiz Vélez, *Carta*, 19–21; Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*, 96–7.

<sup>21</sup> The findings of this archaeological excavation are unpublished and supported by the project PID2020-112506GB-C42. Monzón Moya, and Martínez González, *Informe*. The dating of two individuals buried in the cemetery (likely previous to the construction of the hermitage) are 1028–162 AD (95,4%) (UE209, Beta 620436) and 1116–219 AD (60,5%) or 1042–108 (34,9%) (UE111, Beta 620437). The chronology is thus between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, although an earlier burial use cannot be ruled out. I would like to thank the authors of the report and Iván García Izquierdo for permission to use those data.

<sup>22</sup> Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*, 95–6.

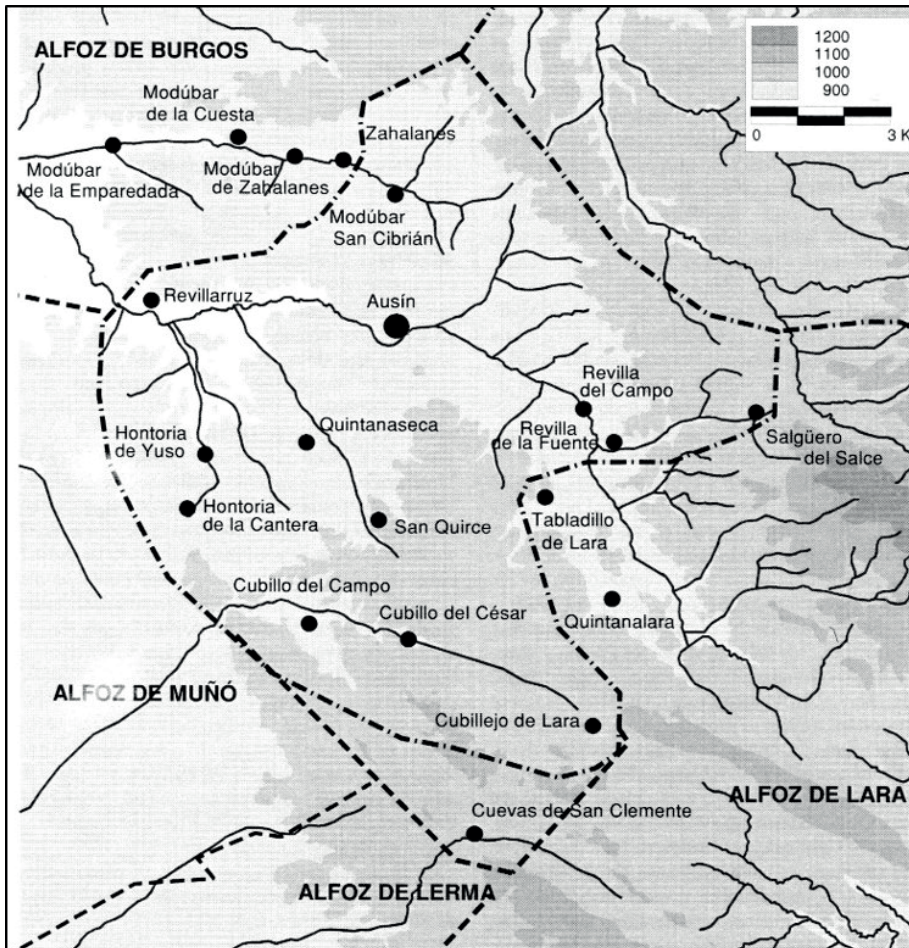


Figure 2. The *alfoz* of Ausín (From Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*).

series of localities placed within the territory. Interestingly, this text reveals the existence of a hierarchy, as it mentions a *sayón* (responsible for enacting justice) in Revillarruz, who controlled ten villages.<sup>23</sup> The lordship of Oña was created thanks to the grant of the Count of Castile Sancho García in 1011 on the occasion of the foundation of the monastery.<sup>24</sup> It is striking that this hierarchical pattern was not based on control of the “central place” in Ausín or Los Ausines – in fact, this place was not even mentioned. This has been interpreted as the consequence of a reshaping caused by the establishment of

<sup>23</sup> Garrido Garrido (ed.), *Documentación*, doc. 35: *Ripiella de Ferruç ad integrum cum suo saione qui currit decem uillas*.

<sup>24</sup> Zabalza Duque (ed.), *Colección*, doc. 64.

lordship, which implied the formation of a new “central place”. The key was the exercise of justice, which explains the mention of the *sayón*.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, the previous “central place” was associated with other practices that the monastery (or in earlier years, the count) did not control directly. Returning to the spatial definition of the territory, we can speak of a “reticular” pattern. This contrasts with the formation of more or less homogeneous political-administrative units, an “aureolar” pattern that came to define territories linked to a central authority.<sup>26</sup>

The notion of territory reflects a series of social and cultural mechanisms that give it content.<sup>27</sup> In the case of Los Ausines, we have evidence of these tools. In a charter dated 972, the *concilio pleno de Agosyn* (the whole council of Ausín) gave the Count of Castile García Fernández the *dehesa* de la Lomba in exchange for not carrying out work on the castles.<sup>28</sup> The term *dehesa* must be interpreted as a place in which access rights were restricted, which can be used as pasture for livestock and firewood. The charter discloses the existence of a collective-use area related to the *concejo* or local community.<sup>29</sup> Julio Escalona pointed out that this common land was just linked to the locality of Ausín; as this was the territory’s “central place”, it did not affect the rest of the villages. However, about forty individuals confirmed the donation, suggesting something more than a mere village assembly.<sup>30</sup> Another possibility is that this *concilio pleno* referred to the whole territory, with all inhabitants affected by the grant.<sup>31</sup> This community was identified with rights over an area of communal use and shared rights of access by different villages, which were parts of a larger community: the *dehesa* of La Lomba. We would therefore have a triad – territory-community-areas for collective use – without ruling out the existence of collective spaces specific to each village (although none were documented during this period) or the existence of other overlapping community identities or private spaces. The territory-community-collective-use area connection is meaningful. The reason for giving the *dehesa* is also striking: to be exempted from a service in the castles (*castillería*). We do not know whether the service involved maintenance work or the provision of military services. However, it was a central-authority requirement – in other words, a kind of socio-political mechanism of a territory controlled “from above”.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*, 108. Álvarez Borge, *Monarquía feudal*, 58 points out that Revillarruz was the same territory as Ausín, with a change in its hierarchical position. By contrast, Martínez Díez, *Pueblos*, 90 thought that Revillarruz was a different territory, subsumed in Ausín.

<sup>26</sup> Monnet, “Le territoire,” 32.

<sup>27</sup> Boissellier, “Introduction,” 37.

<sup>28</sup> Fernández Flórez, and Serna Serna (eds.), *El Becerro Gótico*, doc. 3.

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of the term *concilium/concilio*, see Davies, *Windows*, 214-7 and Escalona, “Community.”

<sup>30</sup> Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*, 104.

<sup>31</sup> Martín Viso, “Commons,” 391-2.

<sup>32</sup> Escalona, “Comunidades.”



Although the donation is unlikely to have implied a sense of ownership of the *dehesa*, the Count is known to have given this place to San Pedro de Cardaña shortly afterwards. A recent study has explored the complex construction of the monastic *dehesas*, highlighting the fact that forms of exploitation were probably maintained outside the monastic lordship and can be understood as inherited local practices, despite the creation of a pattern of property.<sup>33</sup> It is not easy to identify the *dehesa* of La Lomba, as the boundaries that appear in the text are difficult to locate nowadays. Julio Escalona placed it between Los Ausines and Revilla del Campo, based on some micro-toponyms.<sup>34</sup> Another possible location reflects its identification with Mount Elcineto or Elcinedo, an area to the north-east of Modúbar de San Cibrián and characterised by the presence of a small elevation, slope, or hill (in Spanish *loma*, from the medieval *lomba*).<sup>35</sup> In the latter case, the border would have fallen between the territories of Los Ausines and Juarros. This location is of interest, suggesting that areas designated for collective use may have been an essential element in the way territories were defined, even though the inhabitants of both districts could sometimes have shared uses.

### 3. *The Valle de Salice (Valdesaz de los Oteros)*

A second case study takes us to the region of Los Oteros, where we find Valdesaz, the tenth-eleventh century *Valle de Salice*, a place-name related to the presence of willows. This area is located in the Cea-Esla interfluve, which is dominated by small hills (*oteros*) that rise up in the plain, forming an undulating landscape. The territory is on the margins of the river valleys mentioned above and crossed by small streams. The characteristic features are precisely those small secondary valleys and the hills or *oteros*.

The tenth and eleventh century charters include several testimonies about a territory of *Valle de Salice*, which was home to the villages of Pajares de los Oteros, Villasinda and Quintanilla, as well as various churches, in particular the monastery of San Cipriano de Valdesaz.<sup>36</sup> This monastery, known since the tenth century, formed the axis of a network of relations created through an important set of donations.<sup>37</sup> Despite the homonymy between the territory

<sup>33</sup> Armendáriz Bosque, "Explotar y gestionar."

<sup>34</sup> Escalona, *Transformaciones*, 370.

<sup>35</sup> Armendáriz Bosque, "Explotar y gestionar," 61, n. 47 suggests that this may be a problem of documentary transmission; it is called by different names, although he differentiates it from the other *dehesa* given by Diego Gudestioz.

<sup>36</sup> Along with San Cipriano de Valdesaz, the documentation of the monasteries of San Salvador de Matallana and Santiago de León, which had properties in this area, provide valuable information. All these charters were collected in the archives of the Cathedral of León, where they were copied and preserved in the late medieval cartulary or *Becerro*.

<sup>37</sup> Evidence of the presence of such places within the *Valle de Salice* emerged during the first half of the eleventh century; Ruiz Asencio (ed.), *Colección Catedral León III*, docs. 713 (1013.03.20), 762 (1019.04.01), and 776 (1021.05.15); Ruiz Asencio (ed.), *Colección Catedral León IV*, docs.

and the present-day town of Valdesaz – previously known as Almonacid de los Oteros – it is clear that the references identify a wider territory or valley. The latter term is associated with a well-defined socio-spatial unit, but never with an administrative district linked to the monarchy.<sup>38</sup> This territory did not include the whole region of Los Oteros, but a more specific area. There also appears to have been a neighbouring territory with potentially very similar conditions: San Pedro de los Oteros, where the village of Matadeón was located in 1025.<sup>39</sup>

The role played by the monastery of San Cipriano de Valdesaz, mentioned as early as 912 in a donation by King García I, is meaningful.<sup>40</sup> The location of the monastery is currently unknown, although some argue that it might be the present-day parish of Valdesaz de los Oteros. However, a text from 1042 seems to indicate that the monastery may have been near the village of Pajares de los Oteros.<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to note that most of the many assets accumulated by the monastery during the tenth and early eleventh centuries were outside the *Valle de Salice* and particularly in nearby villages, such as Fresno de la Vega, Castrillo de la Vega, Cubillas de los Oteros, Morilla de los Oteros, Matadeón de los Oteros, and Villabonillos.<sup>42</sup> Only in the mid-eleventh century did the monastery begin to hold properties in the area, although it never became a large landowner in the valley.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps there was a turning point in the middle of the eleventh century, when the texts mention the existence of a *serna* of San Cipriano. The monastery probably controlled a superior level based on defending the collective rights of the community in that agrarian land –with a collective use– in exchange for some kind of fee.<sup>44</sup> It is interesting that San Cipriano received plots of land in its *serna* from local landowners, perhaps as a mechanism aimed at creating new social networks.<sup>45</sup> At this time, Nuño Pérez granted San Cipriano a monastery built by himself.<sup>46</sup> Previously, the monastery had never been a central actor in *Valle de Salice*, despite being located there. It compensated for this weak link by having a strong presence in neighbouring areas, which explains why the monastery was located in many charters within the territory of Coyanza, the main

954 (1037.05.25), 1002 (1042.09.18), and 1094 (1054.03.11), as well as other references to the locations of vineyards and land. See Sánchez Badiola, *La configuración*, 78-9.

<sup>38</sup> De Ayala Martínez, “Relaciones,” 140-6; Sánchez Badiola, *La configuración*, 152-4.

<sup>39</sup> Fernández Flórez, and Herrero de la Fuente (eds.), *Colección Otero*, doc. 171: in *docenzo Sancti Petro*, in *Mata de Aiube*.

<sup>40</sup> Sáez Sánchez (ed.), *Colección Catedral León I*, doc. 27.

<sup>41</sup> Ruiz Asencio (ed.), *Colección Catedral León IV*, doc. 1002: in *Paliars de Ualle de Salice, iusta monasterio de Sancti Cipriani, uilla que nuncupant Palacios*.

<sup>42</sup> Ruiz Asencio (ed.), *Colección Catedral León III*, docs. 514, 553, 594, 638, 761, and 775.

<sup>43</sup> The first plot of land in Valdesaz owned by San Cipriano was recorded in 1019; Ruiz Asencio (ed.), *Colección Catedral León III*, doc. 762. However, the estate of the monastery in Valdesaz was less important during those years.

<sup>44</sup> On *sernas*, see Martín Viso, “Commons.”

<sup>45</sup> See Gómez Gómez, and Martín Viso, “*Rationes*,” 368-9.

<sup>46</sup> Ruiz Asencio (ed.), *Colección Catedral León IV*, doc. 1094.

"central place" related to the monarchy in that district.<sup>47</sup> On one occasion, Pajares de los Oteros also appears within the territory of Coyanza (*subtus ducencio Quoaianka*).<sup>48</sup> It is probable that at least two territorialities were superimposed: one referring to a small valley active on a local scale and the other to a higher territory associated with Leonese royal power. In contrast to the marginality of San Cipriano, at least until the middle of the eleventh century, there is evidence that other actors were active. This included the monastery of San Vicente de León, despite its geographical remoteness.<sup>49</sup>

Another feature is the absence of a clearly identified "central place". Neither the charters nor the present-day landscape provide evidence that can be used to identify such a place. Although this does not rule out the possibility that a "central place" existed, it would likely have been understated and possibly linked to local practices instead of the monarchy. No boundaries are identified in the documents, which simply provide the locations of some villages and churches in the valley. Thus, we are once again faced with a type of "reticular" territory.

However, one interesting document gives more information on the *Valle de Salice*: the charter of franchises granted in 1064 by Queen Sancha to the inhabitants of Valdesaz.<sup>50</sup> The text has been preserved only in fourteenth and fifteenth copies from the archives of San Isidoro de León and Cathedral of León, respectively. In the former copy, the text is inscribed with a confirmation given by the courts of Toro in favour of the lord of the Valdesaz, while the copy from the episcopal see is a notarial transfer made at the request of the procurators and notables of the council and estate of Valdesaz.<sup>51</sup> There are some issues related to authenticity of these documents and clauses that may have been added, leading some researchers to consider it a forgery.<sup>52</sup> Other scholars, however, have argued that it is an original, albeit with some additions.<sup>53</sup> In this sense, the presence of Queen Sancha, rather than Fernando I – an uncommon circumstance during this period – may testify to its veracity, as a forger would likely have used the name of the King. Likewise, many clauses make perfect sense in the context of the mid-eleventh century. Given the coincidence between the possible dating of the charter and the increasingly presence of San Cipriano in the *Valle de Salice*, perhaps the text can be understood in terms of the inhabitants' desire for written rights endorsed by the monarchy.

<sup>47</sup> A sample in Ruiz Asencio (ed.), *Colección Catedral León III*, doc. 514 (986.06.25), where the monastery was placed *intus urbe Quoianka in locum que nuncupant in Ualle de Salice*.

<sup>48</sup> Ruiz Asencio (ed.), *Colección Catedral León III*, doc. 641 (1004?.10.08).

<sup>49</sup> Ruiz Asencio (ed.), *Colección Catedral León III*, docs. 754 (1018.05.17), 776 (1021.05.15), and 820 (1025.04.05); Ruiz Asencio (ed.), *Colección Catedral León IV*, doc. 946 (1036.03.21). Other monasteries, such as Santiago de León or Santa María de Matallana, also appear.

<sup>50</sup> Rodríguez Fernández (ed.), *Los fueros*, doc. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Rodríguez Fernández (ed.), *Los fueros*, 119.

<sup>52</sup> Ruiz Asencio (ed.), *Colección Catedral León IV*, doc. 1131.

<sup>53</sup> Rodríguez Fernández (ed.), *Los fueros*.

The analysis of this charter of franchises allows us to observe two important facts about territoriality and its meaning. The first relates to the territorial definition of *Valle de Salice*. The content of the charter affected the people of Quintanilla de los Oteros, San Juan, Villasinda, Palacinos, Fuentes de Oteros, Grajal, and Pajares de los Oteros.<sup>54</sup> Some of these places are currently uninhabited, although all (apart from San Juan) can be identified today. Although the text is somewhat ambiguous, the most feasible interpretation is that rights were granted to all of these villages, in addition to Valdesaz, perhaps indicating that the latter had some kind of central function not visible in our sources. It is striking that the definition of the territory – some 40 km<sup>2</sup> – is again expressed in a grid pattern, with no linear boundaries separating it from other places. However, the text also indicates the existence of a reserve (*coto*), in the sense of an area exempted from any kind of authority. The reserve consisted of nine villages (in contrast to the previous list, which had only eight settlements). More or less linear, although somewhat imprecise, limits are indicated.<sup>55</sup> It is in the definition of this exempt area that we can perhaps observe a modification of the eleventh century text, since such references from that period are very rare.

The second of the facts is a prescription: when the *apellido* was called, people of the reserve who did not attend had to pay a fine of one cow, worth five *maravedís* or coins.<sup>56</sup> Although the reference to the *coto* is likely to be an addition, the *apellido* refers to a situation that was documented in the eleventh century. The term defines a practice established to provide mutual defence within a community –generally a small territory made up of several villages and defined precisely by this mutual-defence practice. Its presence among the services owed to the lord was fundamentally linked to a local affirmation of the royal lordship (*realengo*) and to its interpretation as a military defence mechanism that allowed warriors to be mobilised in actions outside their original territory. The substratum of the *apellido* was a concept involving mutual aid and defence: any inhabitant had the right to appeal or call when he felt attacked and all settlement neighbours were forced to defend themselves against the attack.<sup>57</sup> This obligation was fundamental to the political identity of the territory, as can be seen in the case of Valdesaz. Here, the territory was defined as the area subject to an appeal to mutual defence. This definition gave it political content that probably signified the very origins of territoriality. In contrast to Los Ausines, here there is no record of the presence of common lands, except for one reference to the control of the *serna* of

<sup>54</sup> Rodríguez Fernández (ed.), doc. 5, § 9: *Ego Sancia regina do et concedo istos foros ad Ualem de Salice et istas uillas nominatas Quintanilla, Sanctiuanes, Uilla Sinda, Palacino, Fuentes, Grajar, Pajares.*

<sup>55</sup> Rodríguez Fernández (ed.), *Los fueros*, doc. 5, § 10, and 11.

<sup>56</sup> Rodríguez Fernández (ed.), *Los fueros*, doc. 5, § 13: *Et sonando apellido in no coto uillanus qui ibi non exierit pectet unam uacam de quinque morabitanos ad concilium.*

<sup>57</sup> García de Valdeavellano, *Curso*, 615; Reglero de la Fuente, “Las comunidades,” 25-6; Martín Viso, “El *apellido*.”

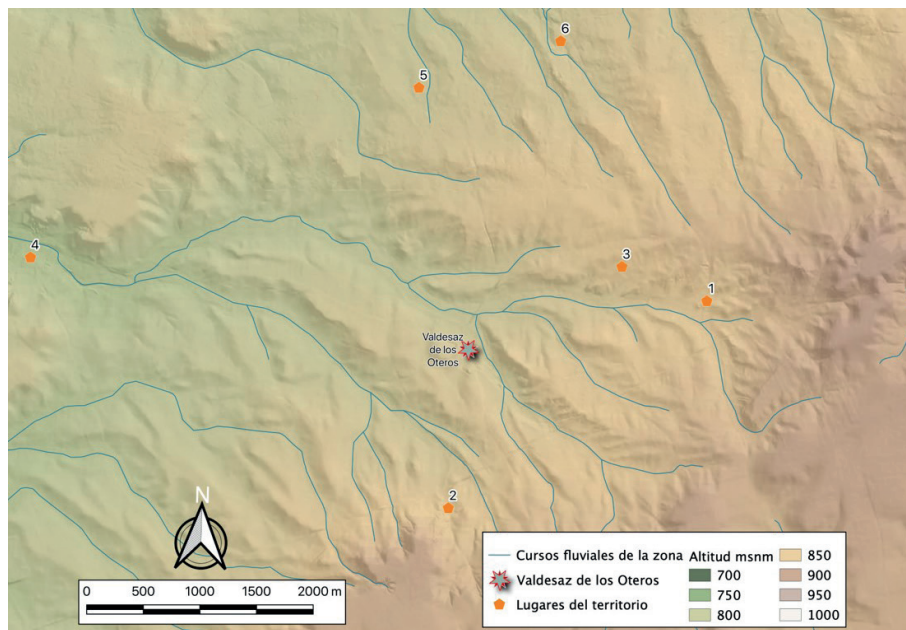


Figure 3. The territory of Valdesaz according to the charter of franchises (1064): 1) Villasinda; 2) Quintanilla de los Oteros; 3) Palacios; 4) Pajares de los Oteros; 5) Grajal; 6) Fuentes de los Oteros. Designed by Daniel Justo Sánchez.

San Cipriano. It is tempting to think that the charter did not mention common lands because the *serna* was controlled by the monastery of San Cipriano, which managed the safeguarding of these rights.

#### 4. *The territory of Palenzuela*

The third and final case study is Palenzuela, a town located on the course of the Arlanza river, near its mouth on the Arlanzón. This was the site of *Pal-lantia*, an ancient pre-Roman hillfort, possibly unoccupied in Roman times.<sup>58</sup> The town, although displaced from the hill where the pre-Roman settlement would have been located, seems to have enjoyed new relevance as early as the tenth century, when it is mentioned among the places attacked in 934 by a Muslim army.<sup>59</sup> References are scarce, however, and we have to wait until the endowment of the Bishopric of Oca in 1068 to find any mention of Palenzuela.<sup>60</sup> In 1074, King Alfonso VI gave a charter of franchises to the people of

<sup>58</sup> Hernández Guerra, “Consideraciones.”

<sup>59</sup> Ibn Hayyan, *Al muqtabis V*, 257.

<sup>60</sup> Garrido Garrido (ed.), *Documentación*, doc. 19: *Et in alhoz de Palentia, monasterium Sancti Andree de Uallegera*.

Palenzuela. As this document was later endorsed by his successors, some content may have been replaced and added. Some chapters may not correspond to the reign of Alfonso VI and others may have been inserted to bring the text up to date, as was done explicitly in the last four chapters.<sup>61</sup> In any case, the text can be used to study the territory of Palenzuela in greater detail.

The charter shows two different territorial areas. On the one hand, it mentions the following villages in Palenzuela: Segouela, Tabanera de Cerrato, Ornejo (a deserted village in Valdehornejo), Villahán, Henar (a deserted village in Valles de Palenzuela), Valles de Palenzuela, and Valdeparada (a deserted village in Valles de Palenzuela).<sup>62</sup> These seven places outline a geographical space articulated by the lower course of the Arlanza, where Palenzuela is located, and the hilly areas to the north and south, in this case up to Tabanera, which is located in a slightly higher area some distance away from the Arlanza. The landscape, which covered complementary environments, extending over 80 km<sup>2</sup>, would have been the original territory of Palenzuela. On the other hand, the charter also mentions thirty villages that extended beyond the Pisuerga river and formed the *alfoz* (*En el alfoz de Palençuela Comitit sunt omnes istae villae tras Pisuerga*), a territory linked to the royal authority, as their inhabitants served the king (*cum Palenciela serviunt rege in unum*).<sup>63</sup> This territoriality went beyond local landscapes to agglutinate a much wider space, with Palenzuela as its central axis. This is how we should interpret the location of the church of Santa María de Vallegera in Villamediana, within the territory of Palenzuela, in a text from 1079, although this village is not mentioned in the charter.<sup>64</sup> It is interesting to note this double sense of territoriality, which may have acted synchronously, undoubtedly creating a certain ambiguity. It is also worth noting that the implementation of territoriality associated with royal authority made it possible to modify previous structures, in a dynamic of great fluidity. However, territoriality “from above” should not be confused with the original territory of Palenzuela.

Although the text of the charter requires more detailed study, three facts stand out. The first one refers to the centrality of Palenzuela, even though its functions were never defined. It is unclear whether the castle existed at this time, although Ibn Hayyan speaks of a fortress in the aforementioned text on the campaign of 934. In any case, the fact that the charter does not mention the castle may suggest that the centrality of the place was not linked directly to the presence of a fortification. Secondly, the charter indicates a series of limits, which define the same territory described by enumerating the villages of Palenzuela. These boundaries convey a good knowledge of the local geog-

<sup>61</sup> Rodríguez Fernández, *Palencia*, doc. 4; for an analysis, see 53-4.

<sup>62</sup> Rodríguez Fernández, doc. 4, § 3: *Aldeae de Palenciola sunt istae: Seoguella, Tavanera, Orneio, Villafan, Fenar, Valles, Valdeparada*.

<sup>63</sup> Rodríguez Fernández, *Palencia*, doc. 4, § 9, and 54-5. See Martínez Díez, *Pueblos*, 276-7, where the places are also located.

<sup>64</sup> Reglero de la Fuente (ed.), *El monasterio*, doc. 31.

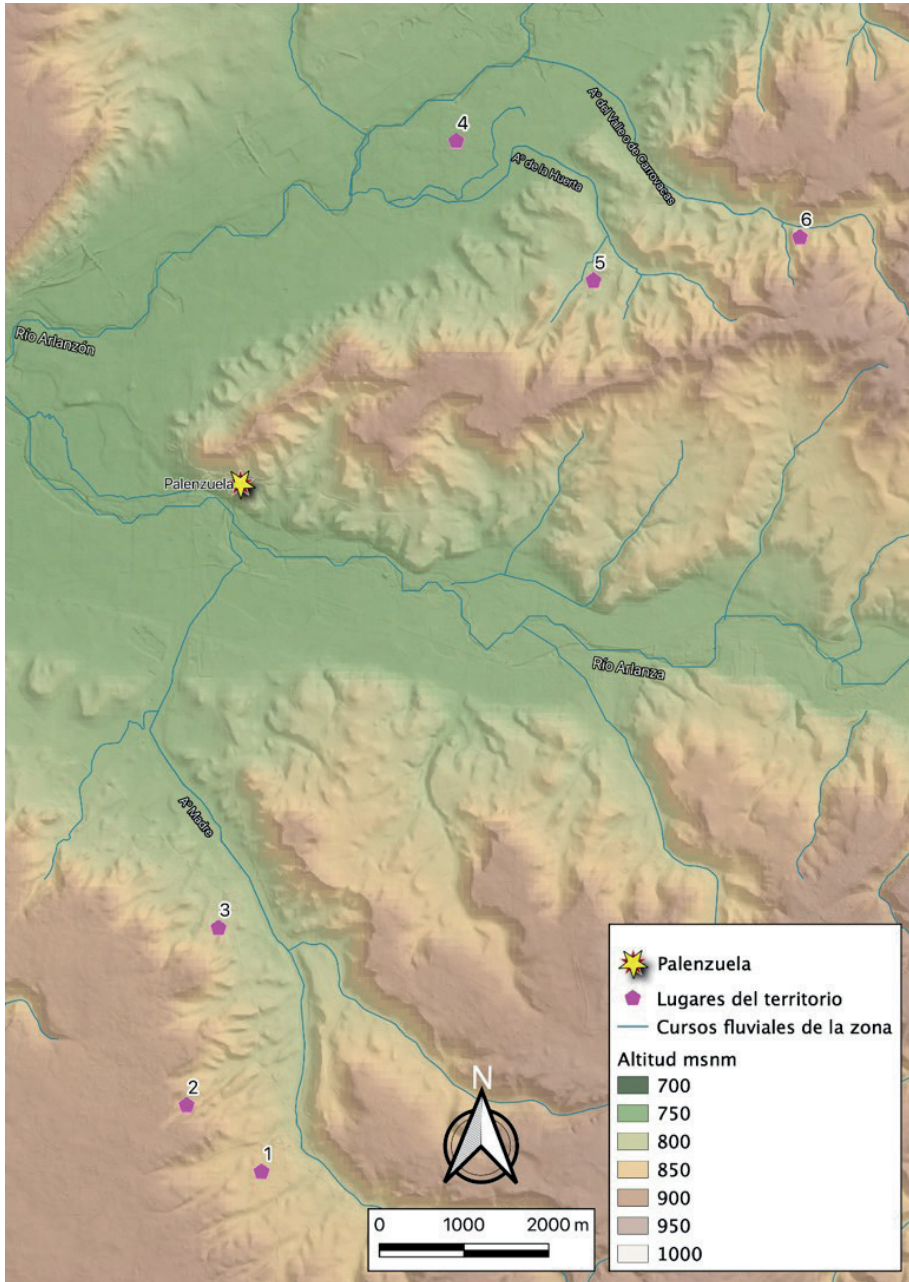


Figure 4. The territory of Palenzuela according to the carter of franchises (1074): 1) Tabanera de Cerrato; 2) Ornejo; 3) Villahán; 4) Henar; 5) Valles de Palenzuela; 6) Valdeparada. Designed by Daniel Justo Sánchez

raphy, pointing out springs, roads, and other places that served as references, as well as knowledge of the past, when it is remembered that Pozuelo had been a village of Palenzuela.<sup>65</sup> All of these aspects suggest linear boundaries based on a local reality (created by local actors), which coincided with the identification of the Palenzuela villages. The question that arises is why separate chapters include two different descriptions of the territory, one “reticular” and the other based on an image of defined limits. As the text has been preserved with later additions, we may suspect that the reference to boundaries was one of such additions, since the definition based on the membership of some villages was more in keeping with the type of information provided in other eleventh-century documents. One possible context that might explain this inclusion was the disputes between Palenzuela and neighbouring territories, including Baltanás and Río de Francos, in the middle of the twelfth century, which led to a more detailed delimitation of the boundaries.<sup>66</sup>

It is worth highlighting a third and final fact: the presence of obligations integrating all settlers, which can be understood as forms of local political action. The text highlights the existence of an *apellido* carried out within the alfoz – with some doubt as to whether it refers to the territory of Palenzuela itself or to the extended territory associated with service to the king – and also to the possibility that the lord could summon the inhabitants outside it. This prescription must modify the original meaning of *apellido*, extending it to include the defence of the lord, in this case the king, but with a series of conditions. For example, the lord had to give the inhabitants a payment (*recabdo*) or they would not have to attend. In addition, if the damages were valued at 300 *sueldos*, the lord was expected give them a cow or twelve rams; this suggests that, without such a commitment, they could not attend. Such conditions would not apply, however, to the *apellido* in its original sense, where the king (in his capacity as lord) did not intervene.<sup>67</sup> The conclusion to be drawn is that the territory of Palenzuela was organised around an action of mutual defence, which its inhabitants were forced to enact. This practice was reused to benefit the lord and to protect him from threats under a series of conditions.

The charter does not cite the presence of common lands linked to the territory of Palenzuela. However, the disputes between Palenzuela and neighbouring territories in the mid-twelfth century show those common lands. A very interesting document from 1145 records a conflict between the council of Baltanás and its *alfoces* (villages inside its territory), between the council of Palenzuela, its villages and *alfoces*, and between Royuela and the land of Río de Francos. These are three different territories, which until that point appear to have shared some collective areas. Count Gregorio Marañón, by order of Alfonso VII, delimited boundaries between all of these places and decreed

<sup>65</sup> This is an example of what Julio Escalona has called “dense local knowledge”; Escalona, “Dense Local Knowledge.”

<sup>66</sup> Fernández (ed.), “Colección,” doc. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Rodríguez Fernández, *Palencia*, doc. 4, § 31, and 55.



their allowed uses, including an area in which the inhabitants of the three territories had rights.<sup>68</sup> The agreement cannot have been comprehensive, as a document from 1233 records that, in the time of the king's grandfather (Alfonso VIII, 1157-214), a perambulation was carried out to define the boundaries between Baltanás and Palenzuela, which must have been paralysed due to a confrontation between Gonzalo Pérez de Torquemada and one *alcalde* (local justice official) of Palenzuela.<sup>69</sup> In any case, we can see the presence of a shared liminal area, which worked as common land for different territories, including Palenzuela. This was not the only area of collective use associated with Palenzuela; a *monte* (mountain) of Palenzuela was also cited in the twelfth century.<sup>70</sup> The term *monte* referred to non-cultivated common land, in this case associated with the territory. It was probably located in northern Palenzuela, close to the course of the Arlanzón. Territoriality was thus associated with the presence of common land.

##### 5. Territories "from below": features and possible comparisons

A brief examination of the three case studies shows some features that defined territoriality "from below". These were small territories, apparently less than a hundred square kilometres in size, which were extended via geographical areas characterised by complementary landscapes: valleys with greater agricultural potential, combined with low-altitude land offering pasture and firewood. However, these should not be understood as territories determined by the environment, as territorial segments could be somewhat artificial, subdividing areas with similar characteristics, such as fragments of the same valley.<sup>71</sup> The key was the membership of each lower unit of the territory. The selection of spaces was related to two factors: the complementarity of resources and the settlers' perception that the landscape included differentiated segments.

Another notable feature is lack of evidence for possible "central places". Although the names of territories refer to specific points or settlements, which may reflect the relevance of these places, it is not at all clear what functions they performed. They do not seem to have served prominent military or administrative functions. The fact that "central places" were undeclared, with no reference to their presence in any of the Duero Plateau territories,<sup>72</sup> may have been due to the fact that their status stemmed from local political practices, which remain unmentioned in the documentation; they could have been meeting places, burial sites, or centres of worship not controlled by ec-

<sup>68</sup> Fernández (ed.), "Colección," doc. 4.

<sup>69</sup> González, *Reinado*, doc. 507.

<sup>70</sup> Serrano (ed.), *Colección*, doc. XIV.

<sup>71</sup> Davies, "Introduction," 1-2.

<sup>72</sup> Estepa Díez, "El alfoz."

clesiastical institutions. As this area is undoubtedly opaque, this hypothesis should be explored further.

These territories acquired meaning through collective action, involving all inhabitants as a community. It is possible to see how this was reflected, for example, in shared common lands, which were generally located on the periphery, providing access to important resources related to grazing and firewood. Such activities must have been related to a “moral economy” that sought to guarantee the minimum needed to maintain households.<sup>73</sup> Although the presence of large, shared common lands was a central element in the definition of these territories,<sup>74</sup> it was not the only aspect related to collective action. The *apellido*, related to the mutual defence of a territory is another example. It created an identity forged in praxis, not in legal definitions. They were the basis of a local agency focused on the rights of some resources and on values of solidarity.

These features contrast with patterns established “from above”. In the latter case, larger territories were drawn but not defined by clearly identifiable segments of landscape. They had complementary resources and were endowed with “central places”, ruled by a hierarchy that sought to be defined in linear terms and thus constituted an “aureolar” territoriality. Territoriality “from above” was based on forms of dominance that flowed downwards, incorporating obligations towards power; it was therefore a vertical relationship. By contrast, territoriality “from below” was based on collective action among local inhabitants, a practice that fostered horizontal relations and the creation of identity via a praxis developed by local actors who identified with the territory.

This statement does not exclude the exercise of domination. It can be argued that territories created “from below” were directly linked to micropolitics, a term that refers to local political practices, based on customary norms that focus on specific factors affecting local collectives. This was the sphere in which local power relations would have manifested themselves: they were arenas for actions taken by local notables and elites. In contexts where higher authorities had a weak presence, territories created “from below” enjoyed greater autonomy and became primary political units. When more powerful authorities were established, they generally sought through various means to control these territories and to transform them into an axis of socio-political domination. In the case of the Duero Plateau, territories of uncertain origin seem to have acquired great relevance in the eighth and ninth centuries, when a political collapse took place and all references to a higher authority disappeared. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, the territories were integrated into new socio-political coordinates promoted by overarching polities.

This reflection leads us once again to search for a comparison with other early medieval European cases. Without going into detailed research, which

<sup>73</sup> Martín Viso, “Mancomunales.”

<sup>74</sup> A situation already perceived by Reglero de la Fuente, *Espacio*, 225-6 in the case of the *alfoces* of the Montes Torozos in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See also Justo Sánchez, “Vivir en el territorio.”

is beyond the aim of this study, some parallels can be detected, as in the case of some Frankish *pagi*. A very similar pattern can be observed in the definition of territories in the case of the *pagus* of *Texandria* in Frisia, at least until its full inclusion in the Frankish world.<sup>75</sup> The same can be said of the Alpine *pagi*, where the presence of collective action associated with common lands is noted in reference to a *silva* whose control was disputed by *pagenses* (people from the *pagus*).<sup>76</sup> The comparison also fits the Anglo-Saxon *regiones* or *folk territories*, in which one can observe collective-use areas and the presence of polyfocal "central places".<sup>77</sup> There are even similarities to (and many differences from) the case of Flexo in northern Italy, known for a famous conflict in which its inhabitants disputed the collective use of a *silva* with the abbey of Nonantola. The territory of Flexo (*fines Flexicianis*) shared some features with study cases from the Duero Plateau.<sup>78</sup> It would be interesting to carry out a systematic and comparative survey to investigate territories that, beyond their inherent diversity, enjoyed similar patterns on the scale of early medieval Europe. An examination of such cases and of the different contexts in which they were embedded would provide a more complex picture of early medieval societies and politics, without ignoring the roles played by other actors (kings, aristocrats, families, and other communities). However, this falls outside the aims of this paper, which is only intended to focus on the case of the Duero Plateau. In fact, a more global view would even allow to see how these patterns of territoriality "from below" could work in other regions always with their own particularities. One such possible comparison would be with seventh to twelfth century South India, where *nāḍus*, a kind of "peasant" territories formed by some settlements, worked as minor units during the Pallava and Chola kingdoms. They combined supralocal agency, embodied in their assemblies or *nāṭṭars*, with their integration into the state administration. The basis of these *nāḍus* was the management of irrigation areas shared by several villages. Yet again, this study does not aim to make the comparison, but it is necessary to point out the need to overcome excessively Eurocentric views.<sup>79</sup>

The case of the Duero Plateau clearly points to the existence of territorial patterns based on collective action, micropolitics, and the construction of a physical and political landscape. All of this enriches the view introduced by Sacks. At the same time, it qualifies the image of "deterritorialisation", which is typically related to the early Middle Ages, by not focusing exclusively on territories constructed "from above" and defined by the establishment of power.

<sup>75</sup> Theuws, "Early Medieval Transformations;" Bijsteveld, and Toorians, "Texandria Revisited."

<sup>76</sup> Wickham, "European Forests," 163-4; Zeller *et al.*, *Neighbours*, 99.

<sup>77</sup> Rippon, while *Territoriality* is a recent and very comprehensive analysis, his earlier book *Kingdom* is also relevant. See also Faith, *The English Peasantry*, and Oosthuizen, *The Anglo-Saxon*. A specific case involves the *lathes* of Kent; Brookes, "The Lathes."

<sup>78</sup> Fumagalli, *Terra*, 54; Castagnetti, *L'organizzazione*, 71-85; Lazzari, "Comunità rurali."

<sup>79</sup> Stein, *Peasant state*, although his approaches have been modulated by, among others, Veluthat, *The Political Structure*, 186-97 and Subbarayalu, *South India*, 124-37.

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