Engaging Élites

Counts, Capital and Frontier Communities in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries, in Catalonia and Elsewhere*

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INTRODUCTION

The medieval frontier has received a great deal of scholarly attention in the last two decades, especially in the Anglophone world, and a great deal of healthy comparison has resulted, as well as the first signs of a much-needed engagement with the ageing theoretical terms of this discourse.1 Rewardingly for historians of the Iberian Peninsula, their scholarly territory has not been left out of these developments.2 All the same, blind spots seem to have developed. A particularly ironic one is that the Anglophone critique of the idea of Reconquista, with all its nationalist colouring, has become so entrenched that we have not necessarily noticed that most scholars working in Iberian-peninsula languages have either abandoned the term or reworked it as the more contemporary ‘restauración’ (although this is subject to many of the same problems).3 On the other hand, few if any such scholars see any problems with the

1 R. Bartlett & A. Mackay (eds), Medieval Frontier Societies (Oxford, 1989); D. Power & N. Standen (eds), Frontiers in Question: Eurasian borderlands, 700–1700 (London, 1999); D. Abulafia & N Berend (eds), Medieval Frontiers: concepts and practices (Aldershot, 2002); F. Curta (ed.), Borders, barriers, and ethnogenesis: frontiers in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, Studies in the Middle Ages 12 (Turnhout, 2005); see also N. Berend, ‘Medievalists and the notion of the frontier’, Medieval History Journal 2 (1999), pp. 55–72. In the terms of these writers, I deal here with frontier zones, rather than linear frontiers. On their characterisation in this area see the following note.


Another area where sight is at best partial is that of the control and organisation of the populations of the frontier zones between Christian and Muslim polities before the Castilian, Aragonese and Portuguese advances into the Muslim South had become irreversible, and how such structures were incorporated into the expanding and centralising polities beyond whose periphery they were located. Many views have been expressed on this, but this article will contend that we can think more deeply into the processes involved in this incorporation by considering them as choices, made by persons possessed of agency, rather than as structural integrations, and that in understanding those choices Bourdieu’s theories of capital offer new insights even now.

NO MAN’S LAND NO LONGER

For some time, during the 1960s and 1970s it was more or less accepted that there were no such populations, and that the claims of sources, written for kings and monks, that those kings’ and monks’ predecessors had laid claim to these territories, having either found or made them empty, were to be taken at face value. If any people remained they were, in the terms of the sources, nefarious pagans or questionably Christian, fit only to be expelled and expropriated. Such claims were accepted not just out of positivism, but because it made a story of state-formation easier to tell: government was rolled out, infidel opposition endured then defeated, and law and order brought to the wild frontier. If these terms seem to describe the American West more than the Douro/Duero and Ebro valleys, that is no surprise given the American heritage of many of the historians involved. But the lands of the Peninsula differed in critical ways from those of the Americas. The Expansion of the Polities beyond Which They Were Located

Médiévales, Hors-série 2 (Auxerre, 2008), doi: 10.4000/cem.9702, which takes instances even of defensive warfare by Christians as unambiguous evidence for political will to restore Christian rule to the Peninsula.


2 The present writer’s field of expertise is Catalonia, and most of the examples in what follows will be drawn from there (although parallel discussion from the Castilian historiography will be noted in footnotes where I am aware of it). There are problems in drawing comparisons between Catalonia and its westerly contemporaries that go beyond the linguistic division of the two historiographies, but they can be overstated, as discussed at pp. 28–31 below.

3 C. Sanchez-Albornoz, Despoblación y repoblación del valle del Duero (Buenos Aires, 1996). Such sources would include, for that work, the Asturian Chronicles, of which there are four modern editions without a shared idea of how to divide up the texts. That most often cited is J. Gil Fernández (ed.), J.L. Morales (trans.) & J.I. Ruiz de la Peña, Crónicas Asturianas: Crónica de Alfonso III (Rotense y «Al Sebastián»), Crónica Alheldense y «Profética» (Oviedo, 1985), but I find the division and commentary in Chroniques asturiennes (fin IX siècle), ed. & trans. Y. Bonnaz (Paris, 1987) more useful and cite it hereafter.

coincidence: the work of Frederick Jackson Turner, arguing that the United States of America was effectively created on its (open) frontier, loomed large in this scholarship. It served such purposes well, because emphasising the Iberian frontier as an open one in his terms allowed the classification of Spanish Islam as an ‘other’ whose claims to both territory and civilised status could thus be ignored, and because these writers desired, like Turner, to root the unique characteristics they saw in their nation in its creation and unification by this process.\(^8\)

Since the 1980s, however, information from archaeology and place-names has combined with the tendencies of historians more interested in marginal populations to focus more attention on the people who lived in these zones.\(^9\) The result has been a new emphasis that their settlements were often more or less ancient and probably continuous since then, and that even as settlers did move into such areas, they did so among and between existing divisions of land, churches and territories which were not being created so much as reactivated or refurbished.\(^10\) This has given the narratives of state formation (which do, after all, have the formation of historical states to explain) a certain amount of trouble.

In Catalonia, this has been partly met by moving the agency of development down the social scale. Where Ramon d’Abadal i de Vinyals saw an Albornocian repopulation of frontier waste zones by comital initiative, Pierre Bonnassie saw slow waves of peasant migration from the over-populated Pyrenees pushing Christian jurisdiction slowly outwards, and in this he has been followed by most subsequent work. (This also allows a focus on the Catalan people as agents, rather than the comital family who would lead the future Generalitat into union with Aragón, eventually Castile and thus modern Spain, and this presumably has its own part to play in the model’s continuing popularity among scholars who continue to be concerned about the federal state’s pressure on their language and culture.\(^11\))

While this writer is much less well positioned to generalise about the Castilian historiography, the trends that seem safe to remark upon (not least because they have been noted by scholars who participate in it) are more complex, and derive primarily from the impact of the work of Abilio Barbero and Marceló Vigil.\(^12\) By raising against Sánchez-Albornoz’s argument for a peculiarly Spanish hybrid feudalism composed of Visigothic, Muslim and Carolingian elements one home-grown from a deep continuity from

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\(^9\) Especially Manzano, ‘Christian-Muslim Frontier’ and *Idem*, ‘Creation of a Medieval Frontier’; see also Jarrett, ‘Centurions, Alcalas and Christiani perversi’.


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**Networks and Neighbours**
the pre-Roman and even pre-Iberian eras, they also, as José María Mínguez has remarked, made the populations into which the nascent polities of Asturias, León and eventually Castile expanded more or less irrelevant to the futures of their societies. Since the social structures that Barbero and Vigil saw as having developed in the more-or-less unconquered north became more or less standard throughout Castile, wholesale export of a model was the obvious answer. It has been easier for many scholars to assume that this was the result of aristocratic, and specifically comital or royal, imposition by force majeure than to explain the lack of variation that one would expect from a situation where local communities retained any decisive role in their integration into a larger polity.

Perhaps as a result, many scholars in the Castilian milieu have found the most productive approach to be one focused almost to exclusion on the geographical organisation of settlements and how that changed, which certainly gives a framework within which genuine change can be detected, but often entirely leaves out questions of how the occupants of such settlements may have understood, experienced or even contested such change, presumably because such questions (unlike the deep-reaching continuity crucial to the Barbero and Vigil thesis) left no detectable mark on the final outcome and thus were not historically significant. In recent years, however, such variation has begun to be detected and very recently indeed, a model of negotiated interaction in which the ‘local elites’ of such communities (and not necessarily frontier communities) chose to interact with the wider structures of power has begun to appear in the scholarship.

The wisdom of this is clear. Short of direct and continuous coercion, impractical on any scale in the early Middle Ages, to keep such groups and people responding with revenue, labour or time to one lord rather

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15 The location of cultural production in the north, rather than in the borderlands believed of modern anthropology, has also tended to make the frontier zones irrelevant to this scholarship, despite the fact that these are the places where alternative structures and models should have been most available. G. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands, the new mestiza. La frontera* (San Francisco, 1987) is the classic anthropological starting point, although hardly itself classical anthropology. Recent work in Spain has begun to reverse this trend, e.g. I. Martín Viso, ‘Una frontera casi invisible: los territorios al norte del Sistema Central en la Alta Edad Media (siglos VIII–XI)’, *Studia Historica: Historia Medieval* 23 (2005), pp. 89–114; J. Escalona & F. Reyes, ‘Scale Change on the Border: the county of Castile in the tenth century’ in J. Escalona & A. Reynolds (eds), *Scale and Scale Change in the Early Middle Ages: exploring landscape, local society, and the world beyond*, The Medieval Countryside 6 (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 153–83; A. Carvajal Castro, ‘Superar la Frontera: mecanismos de integración territorial entre el Cea y el Pisuerga en el siglo X’, *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 42 (2012), pp. 601–28, doi: 10.3989/aem.2012.42.2.08.


than another, especially in areas where alternative lords were easily available in the Muslim south, must have meant obtaining and keeping their cooperation. The historical cooperation and engagement of such ‘local elites’ is therefore key to our explanation of the expansion of centralised rule southwards. Given this, little has been worked out about who these élites actually were and what induced them to participate in these greater projects. The exchange between protection and self-government, between trade and freedom from toll, and between connection and autonomy, should not be assumed to be axiomatically weighted towards centralisation: it needs explaining, and this has only just begun to be done.

This article, working specifically from the prolific evidence from Catalonia but with nods further west, explains how this may have been done by developing a model of ‘combination capital’. Its essential contention is that neither the economic capital of political and material gain nor the social capital of association with the looming symbolic mass of royal and religious lordship were sufficient enticements for such élites by themselves. Rather, we see rulers and would-be lords persistently attempting, and so presumably needing, to combine the two.

**INTELLECTUAL MODELS**

Before invoking outside theorists, however, it is worth attempting to form some models of our own. While it is not yet agreed what induced such élites to throw their lots in with outside powers, it is easy to think of possibilities, many of which have indeed been suggested. Oppositions can be set up: one would be between a view of such communities being brought into kingdoms more or less by threat of force and one in which the encroaching authority had some cachet of legitimacy, even in the view of those outside it, that allowed it a particular sphere of action. Another would be between a view of communities as negatively incentivised, by military threat or insecurity, to seek protection from outside and one in which positive incentives such as trade revenue or personal advancement were the crucial elements. Obviously all these are components of which most interpretative structures use more than one, but each has concomitants that are worth considering, because they expose their inherent problems, and thus raise questions about a fifth model that incorporates aspects of them all. Perhaps the most common in the current historiography, this other model involves outside powers persuading or buying their way into

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18. For example, in Escalona & Reynolds, *Scale and Scale Change*, six of the twelve authors (A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado & J.A. Quirós Castillo, ‘Early Medieval Rural Societies in North-Western Spain: archaeological reflections of fragmentation and convergence’, pp. 33–60; M. Fernández Mier, ‘Changing Scales of Local Power in the Early Medieval Iberian North-West’, pp. 87–120; Escalona & Reyes, ‘Scale Change on the Border’; I. Martín Viso, ‘Circuits of Power in a Fragmented Space: gold coinage in the Meseta del Duero (sixth–seventh centuries)’, pp. 215–32) invoke the concept of local élites, and while two of them place the phrase in inverted commas (Vigil-Escalera & Quirós, p. 42), none of them provide a cite or a definition. Martín, ‘Frontera’, reports at p. 98 that Castellano & Martín, ‘Local articulation’, reckon these groups as those in control of a community’s labour, but at p. 102 instead prefers a different formulation to his own of two years before, ‘Las elites locales parecen haberse definido en primer lugar como dirigentes militares de las comunidades, con una actividad orientada a la rapiña y a la consecución de un botín, pero también a la defensa frente ataques externos.’ There is more detail in Martín, ‘Poblamiento’, p. 34, but it is far from clear that all authors using this term share even Martín’s shifting understanding of it. Escalona, ‘De “señores y campesinos”’, goes some way towards problematising the model; W. Davies, ‘Lordship and Community: Northern Spain on the Eve of the Year 1000’, *Past and Present* Supplement 2 (2007), pp. 18–33 offers a very useful summary of how such groups might work at pp. 30–32 without invoking ‘local élites’ at all.


20. This writer’s choice for guidance here is again Innes, *State and Society*.

dominant positions within such communities, from which they were able to bring about a more generalised subjection to seigneurial lordship.  

**DESTRUCTION-TESTING OUR MODELS**

The model of conquest is the easiest to find in narrative sources, focused as they tend to be on the actions of those at the top level of society.  

If a king moved into an area and built and garrisoned fortresses, the locals’ power to resist was limited. There are many recorded cases of such occupations, often framed as reoccupations: witness the claims in the Chronicle of Alfonso III for the reign of King Alfonso I or the various frontier castles built by followers of the counts of Barcelona in the mid-tenth century. All the same, each such garrison would be a drain on the ruler’s resources, and it is presumably no coincidence that we see the Barcelona counts’ endeavours principally through the window of documents in which responsibility for such garrisons was farmed out to others. As long as force was required to retain the obedience of such populations, the investment required would grow unsustainably. With the first step onto retaining obedience by other means, however, this model’s usefulness is exhausted; it does not tell us how peaceful cooperation might be achieved. Conquest was presumably never the end of such stories.

**LEGITIMISING INTERVENTION**

The model of legitimacy, as it may be characterised, is less simple to appreciate. It may be best to exemplify it from a recent publication:

The southern local communities were seemingly subjected by methods not too different from their northern counterparts: a general notion of collective political subjection enabled leading aristocrats to exercise a sort of subsidiary authority on community resources, as well as to obtain specific pieces of property…

This makes the elephant in this theory’s room more obvious: whence came such a ‘general notion of collective political subjection’? What is required for this model, in fact, is a framework shared between ‘local communities’ and ‘leading aristocrats’ in which both recognised that the other had a role and that these roles were correctly arranged in a hierarchy.

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It is rarely clear that such frameworks existed. One frequently imagined to have done such work is the echo of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo evoked periodically by the kings of León and Castile, but such efforts were genuinely episodic and ring far stronger in some texts than in others. In any case, why would a frontier headman, perhaps already rejoicing in a title like princeps, vicarius or even amir, recognise Toledan authority in the kings of Asturias just because they claimed it? By what reasoning would the recipients of such projection accept that new kingships based in the Atlantic north, where some would say the Visigoths never really ruled, had anything to do with Toledo or, more relevantly, to the territories into which they now moved? Certainly this was an exercise in Foucauldian governmentality that we can occasionally show medieval rulers attempting, as with comital claims to jurisdiction over adultery in León or over a wasteland in Catalonia, both sometimes citing Visigothic legal precedent. In both those cases, however, we see such justifications for intervention in the context of established comital courts: such (sharp) practices do not tell us how the legitimacy of those courts had become accepted. Here the teleology of the future state may weigh too heavily on the discussion.

The weight of the future state has, however, been less important for several scholars than that of the past, and a deeper past than the Visigothic or even Roman one. That portion of the Castilian scholarship most concerned with settlement organisation has focused on the long survival of pre-Roman hillforts as articulating points of territories after the Visigothic collapse and brief Muslim dominance. There are, however, marked differences between regions and between scholars as to whether such centres retained any organising role into the ninth or tenth centuries, and if not for how long that had lapsed, and in relatively few cases has the archaeology been done that would tell us if the sites were even occupied. This is of course important, even if they remained evident as territorial descriptors in charters, showing the enduring importance of these centres for people’s sense of where they lived and what distinguished it. Such sites are not unknown in Catalonia, but at the best-excavated and most closely-studied of them, l’Esquerda in the modern town of Roda de Ter, such invocations as a territorial focus for people’s sense of where they lived and what distinguished it. The site was still defensible, occupied, or any kind of jurisdictional centre (except in that a church was located within it). It seems indisputable that some hillforts or castra in Castile, at least, had owners, since in the case of Castrillo de Butrón in Lora someone could dispose of it entirely to the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña, but as Iñaki Martín Viso points out in his discussion of this case, this does not prove that the site was in fact in use as a settlement or defence, still less that this owner held any attached jurisdiction over the associated villa.

It is hard, therefore, to point to such sites, whose visually dominant positions would have made them useful landmarks whether they were in use or not, as signs of surviving social hierarchy that might have been more important. The weight of the future state has, however, been less important for several scholars than that of the past, and a deeper past than the Visigothic or even Roman one. That portion of the Castilian scholarship most concerned with settlement organisation has focused on the long survival of pre-Roman hillforts as articulating points of territories after the Visigothic collapse and brief Muslim dominance. There are, however, marked differences between regions and between scholars as to whether such centres retained any organising role into the ninth or tenth centuries, and if not for how long that had lapsed, and in relatively few cases has the archaeology been done that would tell us if the sites were even occupied. This is of course important, even if they remained evident as territorial descriptors in charters, showing the enduring importance of these centres for people’s sense of where they lived and what distinguished it. Such sites are not unknown in Catalonia, but at the best-excavated and most closely-studied of them, l’Esquerda in the modern town of Roda de Ter, such invocations as a territorial focus for people’s sense of where they lived and what distinguished it. The site was still defensible, occupied, or any kind of jurisdictional centre (except in that a church was located within it).

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preserve a memory of duty to outside rulers with titles like *comes or rex*. In any case, as said above, such a ruler would still need to convince the incumbents of such places that his claim as count or king related specifically to this place. A more convincing case might be made for churches, which plainly could articulate community in the absence of a wider jurisdiction for some time but over which more convincing arguments of jurisdiction could be made, due to the institutional role of bishops. The case of Tona, given in detail below, shows how this might play out, but also shows that this need not immediately encapsulate a place into a diocesan structure, and another Catalan example helps remind us how easily such necessities might be forgotten. Santa Margarida de Martorell, in the western zones of the county of Barcelona, is first documented in the twelfth century, but, when dug, was found to have an archaeological sequence going back to the fifth or sixth, in none of which time we have any record of it. During those six centuries the church had been continuously modified, with one campaign of works being datable to the mid-eleventh century and some before.\(^\text{33}\) At no point in this time have we any record that a bishop came near the place. This is of course an argument from silence, but it is one that tends to suggest that the bishops of Barcelona did not make the kind of efforts here that they did with other such frontier churches and that, unlike those, Santa Margarida remained beyond the frontier despite the expanding ecclesiastical interests not far away.\(^\text{34}\)

Christianity might of course be thought to be one source of legitimacy that outside rulers should automatically have had when the alternative was Muslim rule, but it is not clear that that always was the alternative, as opposed to continuing autonomy as at Martorell. It is clear, also, that many Christians could live quite happily under Islam, to the extent of finding ways to place blame for the problems of so doing on their own community leaders rather than challenge that *status quo*.\(^\text{35}\) In general, while such theories help us understand what rulers did to bring new populations under their control, they do not explain why those populations found such efforts convincing and why the terms in which those efforts were framed had resonance outside their originating frameworks.

INCENTIVES NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE

The theory of insecurity, which could be linked to that of conquest by the modern ambiguities of the word ‘protection’ as followed, for instance, by ‘racket’, finds much reader support in the sources. Armies did frequently move through frontier zones, border raiding is hard to find in sources but shows up enough that we may safely imagine it as a factor in people’s lives, and arrangements for defence are frequently obvious in the landscape even today.\(^\text{36}\) The obvious concomitant here is the same as the


\(^{34}\text{For Barcelona’s management of its property in the period see G. Feliu, ‘El bisbe Vives de Barcelona i el patrimoni de la catedral (974–995)’ in *Miscel·lània d’Homenatge a Miquel Coll i Alentorn en el seu vuitant anys* (Barcelona, 1984), pp. 167–91 & idem, ‘El patrimoni de la Seu de Barcelona durant el pontificat del bisbe Aeci (995–1010)’, in *Miscel·lània Ramon d’Abadal: estudis d’historia oferts a Ramon d’Abadal i de Vinyals en el centenari del seu naixement*, Estudis Universitaris Catalans 30 (Barcelona, 1994), pp. 51–68.}


problem, however: because frontiers are two-sided, there is involved in this thinking either an assumption that the powers of the Christian north were somehow the proper ones to whom to appeal, that is to say, an underlying example of the argument from legitimacy just critiqued, or an assessment, by contemporaries and by historians, that those powers were or became genuinely able to provide more effective protection than their Muslim rivals to the south. Against the former one can cite the famous example of the villages of Aguinaliu, in modern Ribagorza, who, despite the presence of Christian counts and their officials closer by in either Aragón or Pallars, in 987 sent miles further afield to Muslim Lleida for a Christian priest to judge a dispute whose record has come down to us. Against the latter, one only need mention the Muslim lordly family of the Banū Qāsī as recorded in al-Udrī’s geography of al-Andalus, repeatedly in rebellion and as repeatedly returned to office, very clearly the only people who could effectively rule the upper march of the emirate for more than a century. Their numerous sallies northwards either on their own behalf or Córdoba’s seem to have met little resistance. In order for that to change, those lords had to lose their local support to rivals. This theory, however, cannot explain how that should happen as long as they remained effective, and it cannot explain how Christian ventures into the frontier could attract interest from those living there until al-Andalus lost its strength. Such expansion is clear even at the fiercest heights of the Caliphate, though, so this will not do.

Lastly there is the model of positive incentives. There is little question that we can often understand pre-industrial power as an ability to control or manipulate the supply of prestige; this is the form in which Bourdieu’s theories of capital have most often been involved in the study of medieval power, especially among archaeologists for whom flows of goods may be the primary reconstruction permitted by their evidence. It is also asinine to doubt the existence of shared frameworks of appreciation here: whether one appeals to the universal fascination of gold or the specific circumstantial value accorded to that which is scarce or hard to obtain, trade must have made desirable things available to populations otherwise unable to get them, and it is also easy to see that the larger political sphere of a kingdom would offer greater levels of prestige to the ambitious than a village with only grudging outside connections, even though it is harder to see why such ambitious persons would stay in the village. The corollary is, however, that local elites wishing to profit from such incentives would have to retain a monopoly on them in order to maintain their position; if their fellows could access such goods or wider importance other than through them, their status would suffer, and yet how could they hope to block all the social, 


39 Muslim sources might be expected to say this, of course, but the _Chronicle of Albelda_ shows similar estimations from a Christian writer: Bonnaz, _Chronique Asturienne, ‘Chronique d’Albelda’,_ 47–7.

40 Iglésies, _Reconquista_; Escalona & Reyes, ‘Scale Change on the Border’.


economic or geographic mobility of persons that such resources would enable, and why should a governmentalising state wish to cooperate?44

One can get a certain distance further by combining these different aspects, of course: a population under military threat might be highly susceptible to arguments of righteous legitimacy by a rival military leader, especially if he came offering wealth and advancement. This is, however, not to sharpen analysis but to blunt it, to abdicate judgement about which factors were most effective and why. Before succumbing to this it is worth seeing if the sources’ testimony adheres more closely to any of these models or any particular combination thereof than to the others.

NAMING THE ÉLITES

At the moment, to this writer at least, the most problematic aspect of work on this issue is the unconceptualised nature of the local élites. One assumes that communities were under some kind of leadership even where official templates had not laid that down or adapted it, but very rarely has this assumption been tested in evidence, rather than supplied from anthropological theory, often dangerously outdated.44 Exceptions to this include the chapter of Escalona and Reyes already cited, which not only names two such local notables, Kardellus the founder of San Andrés de Aja in Cantabria and Abbot Avitus of San Román de Tobillas, but compares their known property-holding and political range.45 Monastic documentation, however, for all that it is often all we have, filters the visible community quite significantly. By using a category of documentation common in Catalonia and almost absent elsewhere, acts of church consecration, it is possible to get a slightly broader picture of a community’s composition at the point where it first engaged with what we might call the ‘inside world’.46

The best example here is one that has been studied elsewhere, Sant Andreu de Tona, south of the city of Vic, north-west of Barcelona.47 Tona first comes to our notice when it still lay beyond the near edge of the effective frontier, in 889; at this point, its community, whose peculiar self-conception seems to have had a Romanising flavour, called on the newly-established Bishop Godmar of Osona to consecrate the church that they had built next to the probably-Roman watchtower that anchored their identity.48 This is the last we hear of Tona for thirty-four years except a passing mention in the will of the next bishop.


Jordi. Only thereafter did the area begin to take part in the kind of activity that brought its members into the neighbouring city and villages to have records written. Without their need for the services made available by the reestablishment of the bishopric, only the archaeology of the hilltop would have revealed any earlier settlement.

The consecration act, however, shows us Tona’s community in developed action. Fifty-one people signed the act, nine of them, including one woman, autograph (according to the editor’s judgement). Of these, the scribe was a member of the cathedral chapter, whose hand is visible in other documents there, but the three other clergy were probably the ministers of the new church. Two of them, Albarus and Recharedus, were also among the six people of the fifty-one specifically named as having decided, ‘with contrite heart and the support of God’, to build it. These six, again including one woman, went on to make gifts for its endowment. The two priests mainly gave books and liturgical clothing but Albarus also paired up with his father, who boasted the significant name Centuríus, to give the lion’s share of the new church’s landed property as well, five modiatas of cultivated land. The forty-six other locals, not initially named, gave only four modiatas in combination, and the other three main donors did not equal that even together.

This act thus shows us not just local élites in action but also the hierarchy that even a relatively minor community might contain. Àlvar, Recared, Centurí, Bera, El·la and Galiênó, as they are named on the memorial that now stands on the hilltop, were presumably most of, if not all, of the ‘local élites’ of Tona, but Centuríus’ family was apparently more élite than the others. These were the people to whom, had there not been a new church and a nearby bishop (who may have come from Tona, since he also had land next to the church to give), outside interests would have had to appeal. While not everywhere can have been a Tona, it gives us, at least, a model with which to continue forward as we consider whether such appeals can be seen in our evidence.

CONQUEST AND CLEARANCE

Although, as said, the model of military takeover seems unlikely to provide answers to the kinds of questions this article raises, it is not infrequent in the sources. A franchise of Count-Marquis Borrell II of Barcelona to the city of Cardona in 987, for example, among its myriad other provisions by which the count hoped to fix settlers in the place, assures those settlers of their right to any land that they could take from anyone, either pagan or Christian. Conquest is, however, almost never one of the ways in which land is said to have been acquired when passed on in charters from this area, the commonest categories of title being from kinsmen (de parentorum), from purchase (de comparatione), or from clearance (de aprisione or de ruptura). The last of these especially, it has been argued, might hide a multitude of

49 Catalunya Carolíngia IV: els comtats d’Osuna i Manresa, ed. R. Ordeig i Mata, Memòries de la Secció històric-arqueològica 53, 3 vols (Barcelona, 1999), doc. nos 75 & 78 non-respectively.
50 A. Cavallé i Crivillers & R. Espadaler i Parsarises, ‘Pla de les Lloses’ in Vigué, Catalunya Carolíngia III, p. 645, suggests that late Roman remains might be expected in any further digging.
51 Ordeig, Catalunya Carolíngia IV, doc. no. 9.
52 On the role of such local priests in their community elsewhere in the peninsula see Álvarez Borge, ‘Proceso de transformación’, pp. 148–49 and soon W. Davies, ‘Local priests and the writing of charters in northern Iberia in the tenth century’, in J. Escalona & H. Sirantoin (eds), Documentos y cartularios como instrumentos de poder. España y el occidente cristiano (ss. viii–xii), (Toulouse, forthcoming). I must thank Profesor Davies for providing me with a draft version of this paper.
53 Ordeig, Catalunya Carolíngia IV, doc. no. 9: ‘orde contricio et nutu divino’.
previous abrogated tenures, as part of establishing a new status quo that all concerned could live with, but that this is possible does not of itself prove that those tenures had existed and been ended by violence.\textsuperscript{55}

In fact, in the very few cases where the rhetoric of conquest is used to justify landed possessions, it is used of the past and it is aimed at Muslims. Their use as such obviously illegitimate holders of land against whom military action was appropriate is the kind of strategy beloved by historians of the Turnerian mould, but as recent work has shown, the reports of conquest were almost always false.\textsuperscript{56} In one very obvious case, a hearing in 913 over the Vall de Sant Joan de les Abadesses, some way north of Vic, the defending abbess had her witnesses recorded as swearing to the fact that her father, Count Guifré the Hairy, had driven the Saracens out of the valley and placed her in charge as primus homo on the freshly-emptied land. The actual documents of her father and his establishment of the nunnery that survive, however, while not unproblematic, make it clear that he had largely bought his way into this area, including from several people who later apparently witnessed his daughter getting people to tell them otherwise.\textsuperscript{57} Neither is this the only such case.\textsuperscript{58} What this probably tells us is that mentions of conquest, like claims of emptiness and abandonment, were a last resort when for whatever reason other truer stories of property acquisition could not be told.

\textbf{ATTRACTIONS TO ENGAGEMENT}

How had it become worth it for those who had sold Count Guifré their land to pretend, publicly at least, that this had not happened? What could invest such people so deeply in a relatively recent structure of governance? Count Guifré himself was some years dead at this stage, but even if the judicial panel's relationship with Guifré's successors was worth a lot to them, the very fact that the hearing had to be held, presumably to indicate to the abbey's new subjects that they had no appeal beyond the abbess, shows that the participation of these local élites was also very important to the counts. How had this been achieved?

The Vall de Sant Joan hearing makes a good case to think with because, while the visible loyalty of the locality to the new regime is considerable, the amount that regime could offer in terms of material profit or opportunity seems relatively limited. Count Guifré had met his death in battle against the aforementioned Banū Qāšī in 898.\textsuperscript{59} While Abbess Emma's brother Count Sunyer, on the notionally-losing side in the hearing, would change this twenty years later, in 913 there seems to have been little prospect of getting rich on plunder-riding with the counts or making great new border clearances in the wake of their non-existent conquests.\textsuperscript{60} Neither is there much evidence of trade from which to draw revenue or any detectable uplift in material culture in this zone. The parlous state of local archaeology admittedly makes this a shaky position to hold, but the rising wealth of al-Andalus increasingly

\textsuperscript{55} See Jarrett, ‘Settling the Kings’ Lands’.
dominates the aesthetic and architectural style of the artefacts and buildings of this period that we do have, largely from further west. The frontiersmen were then in a better position to access cultural capital themselves by looking south-west than by going through the counts to their east. The counts had some role to play in guaranteeing safety to traders and travellers who wanted to cross the supposed no-man’s land to do business with al-Andalus, certainly; this is visible in the series of escorts and checks that Aimon of Saint-Germain-des-Prés recorded in telling the story of his brother monks who had obtained relics of Saint Vincent from Córdoba for his Paris monastery. This is not, however, the same as saying that no one else could make such arrangements, particularly over more regularly-travelled distances: the villagers of Aguinaliu already mentioned could obviously reach Lleida without a count, for example. Neither is it to say that the counts could restrict with whom such travellers dealt, even in their own territories; for all that the counts themselves might strive to be the best buyers, there were others in the land who could manifest such wealth. Furthermore, if trade was in fact so ephemeral that it could only operate in the luxury strata of the ultra-high aristocracy, as has been suggested for sixth-century Britain, mere connection to the counts was not going to bring such wealth down to frontier village level. If it was any less rarefied, however, it is hard to see how the counts could have been a better deal, in purely economic terms, than doing one’s own buying and selling.

The explanation in terms of material gain seems, therefore, to be inadequate. Bourdieu offered a conceptual way across such a divide by linking economic capital and symbolic capital. Certainly, we can imagine that economic capital might be exchanged for symbolic capital: the sixth-century British comparison might make us think perhaps of badges of office, clothes or jewellery that could be used to indicate access to resources not available to others which their bearers could then convert into social capital in their communities. Such jewellery is not at all attested on the Catalan frontier, and while fabrics are, foreign stuffs that presumably came through al-Andalus, rather than points east, seem to have been the highly-prized items. Neither does contact with the counts seem inherently likely to have brought wealth with which such foreign goods could be obtained but without which they could not. Imagining these operations cannot, therefore, make them real and so it is worth asking what forms of symbolic capital the counts deployed, here and elsewhere, that might have been exchangeable in the other direction.


CULTURAL AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

PATRONAGE OF LEARNING

In the current trend of work on the Carolingian Empire, especially, to which Catalonia once belonged, cultural capital was amassed most obviously, given the focus of our sources, by the patronage of learning. From such learning could be derived art, writing, ceremony and thought that enhanced the royal office in new ways (often, of course, made to look old) and raised the estimation of its holders in the eyes of their beholders. Here the work of Rosamond McKitterick has been path-breaking, and there seems little reason to doubt, for example, that a court of scholars and an unparalleled library served Charlemagne well in his project of building a court which only the Byzantine emperor could rival for wealth and attraction.\(^7\) It was not just royal courts that deployed such techniques, either, although it is hard to disassociate such intentions from the coincidental ones to equip a working administration or to garner the favour of God, both directly pragmatic accompaniments to any symbolic pay-off. Thus, Guifré the Hairy made considerable gifts to the twin churches of Santa Maria and Sant Joan de Ripoll that established them among the leading monastic communities in Catalonia, and his heirs’ continuing investment in Santa Maria certainly supplied its climb to a status as the area’s premier seat of learning alongside the cathedrals of Vic and Barcelona, as recognised in the late tenth century by Gerbert of Aurillac when he sought his training there.\(^8\) Whether or not the aims of the long series of comital patrons listed in the act of consecration of Santa Maria’s new church in 977 had necessarily been to create a house of learning, rather than one of prayer for their souls, they had, and Count-Bishop Miró Bonfill, a grandson of Guifré who redacted that consecration, was anything but blind to the results.\(^9\)

Neither was his cousin Count-Marquis Borrell II, who was also at that gathering. Borrell seems to have built up a cadre of highly-educated clerically-trained judicial professionals from the 970s onwards.\(^10\) One effect of this was presumably to overhaul the giving of justice in his dominions, thus increasing his revenues and his felt presence among his subjects, but it also opened to him a new level of theoretical representation of his power and presumably enhanced his reputation as a just ruler, not least because


these judges came to operate in the counties of his cousins as well as his own.\textsuperscript{71} To reuse another example, the potential for such investment to enable a governmentalising intervention in otherwise inaccessible communities is demonstrated by the appeal of the villagers of Aguinaliu to Lleida for a judge, when Borrell’s nephews the counts of Pallars, apparently less alert to such possibilities than their uncle, were much closer by.

These examples help explain why rulers interested in reaching out into the frontiers might invest in intellectual assets, and help us avoid the axiomatic belief of the academy that learning is automatically worth having.\textsuperscript{72} Such learning was certainly cultural capital. Nonetheless, it is worth considering how easily it could have been exchanged for any other form. As we shall see shortly in the discussion of fueros and franchises, sometimes it was worth making concessions to escape such outside influence. For those who wished to be the chief influences within their community of origin themselves, meanwhile, opportunities to be got from engaging with the wider intellectual world were limited. The most obvious route to learning was via the Church, but even though some churches seem to have had a surprisingly large staff, beyond them there would have been little chance for such skills to find a use.\textsuperscript{73} Arithmetic and administration might also serve pragmatic purposes, as might more military forms of training and experience, but all of them would open to their acquirers roads to better prospects elsewhere as well as a slight advantage at home.\textsuperscript{74} Learning might be one area where rulers could successfully defend a near-monopoly, but we should not assume that this automatically gave them capital that they could expend on frontier outreach.

**ROYALTY AND REGALIA**

It is the interests of those without the desire to escape or to ply a new career at court which are crucial to our question, in fact. The rulers attempting the engagement of frontier populations needed people on the spot; therefore, they had to be able to offer capital that could be locally exchanged. Here the symbolic capital of titled authority offered numerous prospects, as did the rights that office might bring.\textsuperscript{75} While it has seemed to some that the counts of Catalonia had comparatively little ability to control what powerful persons called themselves, it was still to their advantage that such persons used titles at all; someone calling himself a vicecomes or a vicarius, and presumably deriving advantage from so doing, by his use of a late Roman template for his position made it hard for himself to deny the authority of the comes of whom such officers were the notional subordinates.\textsuperscript{76} Some managed to ignore it anyway, and the counts themselves could be made vulnerable to such attacks by those who were willing and able to access the counts’ increasingly notional, but never forgotten, royal superiors, but by taking part in the hierarchy of office its participants legitimated it and defined, thus fixing, their positions within it.\textsuperscript{77} It was thus to the advantage of the counts to encourage such usages, and the same applies with even more force to rulers of polities further west where authority used royal titles and recognised no distant superior.

To the extent that these men could award such titles, however, and lesser ones like iudex (judge, superintendent) or saio (roughly, court enforcer) rather more, it was also to the advantage of their

\textsuperscript{71} E.g. Ordeig, *Catalunya Carolingia IV*, doc. no. 1526, though this was a bungled document the relevant judge would probably not have wished cited.

\textsuperscript{72} Bourdieu, ‘Forms of Capital’, of course points out that such emphasis on its pricelessness is crucial to the valuation of cultural capital that makes it actually exchangeable.


\textsuperscript{74} Cf. n. 42 above.


\textsuperscript{76} Idem.

recipients: not only did these titles imply specific rights, to demand renders or to appropriate property in judicial action for example, but it showed those of whom such demands might be made that the holder of the title had support in making them.78 Here social capital could be used to gain economic capital that reinforced social capital: judicial profits might be enjoyable and could be disbursed to feed followers or build a more impressive dwelling, but being the count’s (or viscount’s or bishop’s or abbot’s or vicarius’s) friend or fidelis could be important not primarily because of its potential for material profit but because of its exclusivity and links to wider world-systems that were otherwise unreachable from the village world, links that the office-holder could then monopolise.79 This duality of economic and symbolic value can also be seen in the administrative and ideological complex represented by learning, but is easier to locate, at the social level in which we are interested, in a more directly material sphere.

**LAW AND LOCAL ÉLITES**

Nowhere is this junction of material and ideological interests more visible than in the notably Iberian phenomenon of the local law-code, in Catalonia usually termed a franchise or a carta de población and further west better known as a fuero.80 Although these documents are most thickly attested in the twelfth century, the first ones preserved date from the tenth: we have already invoked one, Count-Marqués Borrell II’s grant of rights to the frontier city of Cardona, but there are more.81 The Cardona document is, in fact, unusual because of its size and its high style, as well as the rhetorical feint by which it accords considerable rights of self-government to a community that was nonetheless also being placed under the direct authority of one of Borrell’s viscounts; it was more usual for a franchise to deal in exemptions from authority, as the name suggests. In León and Castile, fueros are relatively simple and quite vernacular documents, arranged in capitulary clauses, that appoint and restrict officials, set punitive tariffs, assign duties and make clear systems of appeal. Despite the Catalan term, carta de población, and the example of Cardona, such privileges were not awarded only to new settlers; they could also be the way in which a pre-existent community achieved legal recognition as an entity with respect to the central power that awarded the privilege.82

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80 I owe many thanks in this section to Rodrigo García-Velasco; his ‘Legislation and Resistance: limitations of royal power on the Catalan and Aragonese frontiers, 986–1134’, MSt dissertation, University of Oxford, 2013, was the source of a number of the ideas presented here.

81 See n. 54, but the text is also printed with its typological fellows in *Cartas de población y franquicia de Cataluña*, ed. J.M. Font Rius (Madrid, 1969), doc. no. 9. For other areas’ texts of this kind see *Colección de fueros y cartas pueblas*, ed. T. Muñoz Romero (Madrid, 1847); *Los fueros del Reino de León*, ed. J. Rodríguez Fernández (León, 1981); and *Cartas de población del reino de Aragón en los siglos medievales*, ed. M.L. Ledesma Rubio (Zaragoza, 1991).

It is worth dwelling for a second on the paradoxical situation of authority in these documents. By such an award, a count, bishop or king denied himself demands that he might otherwise have made on the basis of law and custom elsewhere. On the other hand, in a small example of the sovereign paradox, only his authority could grant its own abrogation. The community, meanwhile, secured its self-government and the local élites’ monopoly on power only at the cost of admitting it was part of a larger organisation with duties that it might, come the raising of an army or the presence of the king’s court in the area, be called on to fulfil. A final twist is provided by considering the possibility that, before this award were made, the count or king might not have been able to enforce such demands: this implies a particular tipping point in these cases where it became worth admitting that he could in order to ensure that he did not, like a more empowered reflection of later commutations of serfs’ dues that fixed otherwise arbitrary and illegal ‘bad customs’. Fueros and cartas de població were considered to be good customs, of course, but custom presumably only needed recording at all if it was under threat.

There is little reason to doubt, therefore, that as well as the practical benefits obtained from such a concession these awards had a strong ideological element. Nonetheless, these documents also assigned people status, defined an in-group, the community, and an out-group, those not admitted to the community. This is sharpest of all at Cardona, where the out-group was conceptualised fundamentally as targets, but it is implicit in all such awards. While establishing structures of responsibility and report upon the much-mentioned local élites may have been the gain for the rulers, as well as the simple ideological bonus of having their authority recognised and thereby reinforced, creating an identity that could be defined and controlled must also have appealed to those who received these privileges on both material and symbolic levels. These agreements defined an outside and an inside by moving the area concerned into the latter. Before this could be completed, poised in the space between the outside and inside they now created, local élites and rulers met in these documents and exchanged promises of both social and economic capital.

If we think back to the act of consecration at Tona with which we almost began, we may now recognise the same processes at work there. Raising the church and obtaining its consecration involved sacrificing a number of autonomies: the ideological framework in which it was done determined that the building could not be put to use without help from beyond Tona, which would not however be given without the assurance of adequate help from within the community. The participants had to sacrifice substantial wealth and as a result got a non-local magnate assuming supervision of their use of their resources, but on the other hand the two priests of Tona now obtained recognition from that outsider and his endorsement of their right to tithes, and the donors to the church accessed not just the spiritual support of the prayers that would be made for them there but also the recognition of the lesser persons of the settlement that this great thing had been done through them. As with kings and recipients of fueros, here the leading parishioners and bishop met and reinforced their positions behind and across a frontier, in an exchange of capitals both sides obviously found worthwhile, but without which the parishioners would have remained completely beyond that frontier for the time being.

83 For explanation of the sovereign paradox, see K. Davis, Periodization and Sovereignty: how ideas of feudalism and secularization govern the politics of time (Philadelphia, 2008), p. 7 (more or less repeated pp. 34, 59, 73, 79–80 & 83, but useful the first time).


85 Cf. B.H. Rosenwein, Negotiating Space, power, restraint, and privileges of immunity in early medieval Europe (Ithaca, 1999): this work comes to quite different conclusions about the power balance involved in royal self-exclusion, but they lose force in a frontier situation where the ruler could only assert, not enforce, his power. This applies not just to the fueros but to the numerous actual immunities issued by the Frankish kings to the Spanish March, published in Catalunya Carolingia II: es diplomes carolingis a Catalunya, ed. R. d’Abadal i de Vinyals, Memòries de la Secció històrico-arqueològica 2 & 3, 2 vols (Barcelona, 1926–52), repr. as Memòries 75 (2009).

86 The liturgy of consecration required the bishop to hear and find adequate the new church’s endowment before proceeding: see Ordeig, ‘La consagración i la dotació’, pp. 85–7.
CATALONIA AND COMPARABILITY

We thus return to Old Catalonia after a foray, via the fueros, into wider territory, but it is worth asking how much more widely conclusions based on Catalonia can be applied. There is some resistance to the idea that cases from Catalonia have any application to Castile, especially, which Josep Marí Salrach has attempted to refute.87 Obviously there are differences between the areas. Catalonia is wetter and more temperate than most other parts of the Peninsula, though without the Atlantic climate of Galicia, and its agriculture has historically been different to Castile’s as a result. Nonetheless, as Salrach points out, the documents of our period nonetheless make renders and payments in kind in basically the same substances, wheat, oats, wine and meat, and territorial divisions in terms of castrum, villa and locus are easy to find in both areas.88

A more substantial difference, especially for an argument in which the ideology of power has a role to play, is the absence of royal government from Catalonia. The counts, even those of Barcelona, recognised a king as superior until 987 to at least a basic degree, but no ruler of the Franks had come south of the Pyrenees since 829 and few even close to them since then. In Asturias and then León, of course, the king was present and available and could choose to act in his territories, though we might wonder how often and how completely that zone of action included Castile, especially in the period before the future county’s unification. Nonetheless, the Carolingian kings did have input into Catalonia in exceptional circumstances, and even as late as 986 embassies were going back and forth between the March and the court, albeit rarely, to obtain royal precepts and backing for political action. Until that time, they remained available as a symbolic resource and one that could even be used against the counts by those suitably determined and equipped.89 Before then, and also afterwards, the popes had been developed as an alternative source of higher patronage in the area, so that the counts were, if in practical terms irrefragable, at least ideologically subordinate.90 In this respect, indeed, Barcelona makes a better comparison to Castile than to other parts of the kingdom of Asturias-León where royal action was less irregular91

Nonetheless, a consensus on the manner in which aristocrats and kings obtained influence in frontier or other unattached communities is detectable among the Castilian historiography, and the consensus model is quite different from that just developed here. It is a model based fundamentally on economic and social might, as measured in terms of buying power by which the count or king might acquire shares or dominant interests in a community’s property or the connections and political range that made him attractive either as a resort for judgements or as a patron for those in difficulties. All of these

91 Barcelona, Castile and León, of course, all also recognised a kind of higher authority in their shared use of the law-book of the Visigothic kings, the Forum Iudicum, as their final resort for judgement in court, but finding this custom a footing in the kind of situations under discussion here would exceed the scope of this paper. It is, all the same, another unifying rather than dividing factor. See R. Collins, ‘Sicut lex Gothorum continet: law and charters in 9th- and 10th-century León and Catalonia’, English Historical Review 100 (1985), 489–512, repr. in idem, Law, Culture and Regionalism, V; idem, ‘Visigothic Law’. Note also the kindred documentary cultures, quantitatively demonstrated in J. Jarrett, ‘Comparing the Earliest Documentary Culture in Carolingian Catalonia’, in Jarrett & A.S. McKinley (eds), Problems and Possibilities of Early Medieval Charters, International Medieval Research 19 (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 89–126.
eventualities, it is persuasively argued, would tend to redirect loyalties from a horizontal solidarity to a range of vertical relationships with the king, count or their subordinates, reducing community cohesion and the ability to combine against incorporation into a wider and less autonomous structure of lordship. There is little sign in this model of the kind of courting with cultural capital that has been argued for here in the Catalan counties. Is the interpretative divide thus justified despite all Salrach’s arguments and indeed my own? There are two reasons to suppose that it may not be. The first of these is that, perhaps ineluctably, we do also see the counts of Barcelona, Girona and Osona, and to an extent others, engaged in such activities. The tiny scale and massive dispersal of the property of the counts has been remarked upon and it can probably be assumed firstly that the often-miniscule properties identified as the counts’ in transaction charters were not typical of their resources, as very large fiscal estates which presumably did not usually come onto the land market that generated our evidence can sometimes also be detected, and secondly that much of the more scattered holdings related to resources allotted to the upkeep of castles, otherwise seen as fisci or beneficia without named holders. Nonetheless, they did also buy on small scales from people of no great standing or importance, which indubitably had the effect of creating links of obligation, and it may well be that the Castilian model deserves therefore to be added to the above as part of the medieval frontier magnate’s portfolio of power-plays.

The other reason to hope for comparability, however, is that the Castilian model also involves types of ruling action by the counts that can arguably be termed public, fiscal, or some similar term, such as holding a hearing with judges, taking fiscal revenues (if we accept Salrach’s argument that this should be the origin of Castilian tributum or) demanding or excusing military service. These capacities represent more than simply the results of economic strong-arming; they are an invocation of just the kind of cultural capital we have discussed above, the access to concepts of social practice reserved to an élite. They are, indeed, the source of the arguments of incipient legitimacy critiqued above, and we may justifiably ask, with one of the authors there cited, ‘pero ¿cómo se llegó a esta situación?’

The place of these capacities in the scheme of takeover instanced above from the Castilian historiography has been somewhat ambiguous: in one case it is argued that the counts and kings got such rights by exercising them, a somewhat circular formulation, but where more thoroughly worked out than this the preferred answer seems to be that these rights were the desired end result of the magnate’s manoeuvres, the incorporation of the target community within a wider structure of the accepted rights and practices of the

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93 J.M. Salrach, ‘El régimen político condal’ in Riu, España cristiana 2, pp. 575–611. A large fiscal estate more or less visible in Catalunya Carolingia IV, doc. nos 419, 420 & 535; see Jarrett, Rulers and Ruled, pp. 107–08.

94 Examples of such purchases in Catalunya Carolingia IV, doc. nos 730, 1107 or 1135. One reason this perspective may be less common in Catalonia is that evidence of common landholding there is much rarer than in some areas to the west. It may then be no coincidence that the scholar who has done most work on common land in this period, Gaspar Feliu i Montfort, is also the one with the gloomiest view of the comital defence of the peasantry: see his ‘La pagesia i els bens comunals’ in J. Farré & F. Sabaté (eds), Els grans espais baronials a l’Edat Mitjana: desenvolupament socioeconòmic: Reunió Científica: I Curs d’Estiu Comtat d’Urgell (Balaguer, 10, 11 i 12 de juliol de 1996) (Lleida 2002), pp. 23–40, repr. in Feliu, Llarg na feudal, pp. 13–27; cf. his ‘Pagesia abans de la feudalització’.

95 Salrach, ‘Orígens i transformacions’, p. 41; note that tributum is also the term used by Samson of Córdoba (see n. 35 above) for the taxes raised on the population of Córdoba by the emirs of al-Andalus. On this see M. Barceló, ‘La primerenca organizació fiscal d’Al-Andalus, segons la “Crònica del 754”’, Faventia 1 (1979), pp. 231–61, transl. as ‘La más temprana organización fiscal de Al-Andalus según la “Crónica del 754”’ (95/713(4)-138/755) in Barceló, El sol que salió por Occidente (estudios sobre el estado omeya en al-Andalus) (Jaén, 1997), pp. 23–54.


97 Escalona, ‘Comunidades y territorios’, p. 89.
early medieval ruling class. This is, however, to suppose that powerful persons in a position to arrange, more or less arbitrarily, the control and rule of a population too divided to resist, would naturally adopt a restrictive and traditional cultural cladding for their power, and one that, in the case of the counts, gave their superiors or rivals means of claiming rights as well. That this was not naturally preferable is inherent in the progress towards rule by violence and arbitrary maltreatment taken to be typical of the endpoint of the process of feudalisation in the Iberian Peninsula and elsewhere. Why did the counts of tenth-century Castile, and indeed the kings to whom they answered, accept less when they were in a position to impose more? The answer can surely only be that it helped to achieve their goals to do so, that these traditional trappings of legitimacy evoked a response among their intended subjects that was worth the restrictions of the structure they implied. In other words, we see here again combined economic and cultural capital used in exchanges for the symbolic capital of recognition in authority; the model can be made to work here too.

CONCLUSION: CULTURAL CLADDING

In ninth- and tenth-century Catalonia, then, and arguably beyond, the pragmatic advantages of support, protection and wealth offered by engagement with an outside power do not seem to have been enough by themselves to induce the vaunted local élites to participate in larger structures, perhaps because of the disincentives implicit in the accompanying loss of autonomy (something that forms of engagement like the later fueros, at least, attempted to avert or limit). Those offering either the retention or increase of economic capital as a bribe for participation thus had to clad this in symbolic or cultural capital, ornamenting their offerings with vestiges of resonance well beyond the immediate. We should not ignore the apparent necessity of such cladding for successful would-be lords of frontier communities. While it is common to suppose that symbolism would not appeal to hard-headed community leaders while they retained a genuine choice as to whether to join a larger polity, it seems from the sources that neither would simple profit (although either might make coercion more tolerable).

In electronics terms, such situations were AND gates: both inputs had to be live to generate an output. Only signalling on both channels broadcast royal or comital power at a frequency the local élites were willing to receive. This combination theory could be applied to a range of situations, but it is the only sufficient one to describe the drawing into engagement of these border populations, without whose support the medieval kingdoms of Spain could never have taken shape.

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Networks and Neighbours


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