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SCALE CHANGE ON THE BORDER: THE COUNTY OF CASTILE IN THE TENTH CENTURY*

Julio Escalona and Francisco Reyes

This chapter focusses on one specific historical process — the incorporation of the Duero valley into the county of Castile, early in the tenth century — as a laboratory within which the explanatory capacity of the notion of scale change can be tested. In the first part, two different aspects of scale change — space and time — are discussed. The first needs little by way of demonstration, as Castile's territorial expansion is a frequently visited subject for historians. Much less attention has been paid to the relevance of the temporal scale at which the whole process took place. The Castilian expansion can be described as a case of sudden scale change, as a dramatic increase in extent and complexity which occurred within the limits of human experience — that is, a generation. Related to this latter theme, issues of perception and agency are examined in the second part of this chapter.

* This paper has been developed in several stages. It was presented to and discussed by the FES Project group and we are grateful for their input. Part of the argument was presented by one of us at the Medieval Communities AD 500–1200 Conference at University College London in 2007; other elements were presented in seminars at the Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales-CSIC (Madrid), Universidad de Salamanca, and Escuela Española de Historia y Arqueología en Roma-CSIC. We thank all who were present at those events and made comments and suggestions. Finally, we have benefited from suggestions and criticism made by colleagues who read draft versions of this paper, namely: Wendy Davies, Isabel Alfonso, and Andrew Reynolds. To all of them we would like to express our gratitude while stating that, much as we owe to their input, they cannot be blamed for any of our shortcomings.

The quality of the evidence that can be used is irregular. There is a limited number of narrative texts, Latin and Arabic and mostly not strictly contemporary with the events described, and a substantial body of charters, but few originals.¹ Moreover, the geographical and chronological distribution of charters is very uneven, as it depends on the development of the major monastic houses in whose archives they were preserved later on. Archaeology is rather underdeveloped in the region, but a few excavated sites provide interesting insights, while in a broader context, early medieval archaeological research has a promising future.² As a consequence, very little can be said about this period and region that is conclusive. Our aim is, instead, to test how far scale change and related notions can help make sense of the available evidence and to build models with which to orientate future research.

Scaling the Castilian Expansion: Space and Time

Space

The county of Castile experienced remarkable territorial growth between the ninth and tenth centuries. In the mid-ninth century, when it begins to feature in written sources, Castile was but a small frontier territory on the eastern side of the Asturian kingdom. A passage of the Chronicle of Alfonso III (written in the 880s) listing the territories north of the Cantabrian mountains that were under the control of the kings of Oviedo in the mid-eighth century refers to this area as ‘*Barduliae que nunc appellatur Castella*’ (Bardulias, which is nowadays named Castile).³ The name *Barduliae* — deriving from the *Varduli*, a pre-Roman ethnic group — can be considered as an antiquarian term and not necessarily accurate. The word *Castella* instead can be confidently accepted as a ninth-century innova-

¹ A general overview of the written sources for early medieval Castile in Gonzalo Martínez Díez, *El Condado de Castilla (711–1038): La historia frente a la leyenda*, 2 vols (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2004), II, 749–66.

² Julio Escalona, ‘The Early Castilian Peasantry: An Archaeological Turn?’, *Journal of Iberian Medieval Studies*, 1 (2009), 119–45; *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Villages in Europe*, ed. by Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 2009).

³ Chronicle of Alfonso III, *Ovetensis* redaction, 14, in *Crónicas Asturianas*, ed. by Juan Gil Fernández, José Luis Moralejo, and José Ignacio Ruiz de la Peña (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 1985), p. 133. This whole paragraph may represent an insertion from an earlier text into the late ninth-century chronicle. See Julio Escalona, ‘Family Memories: Inventing Alfonso I of Asturias’, in *Building Legitimacy: Political Discourse and Forms of Legitimation in Medieval Societies*, ed. by Isabel Alfonso, Hugh Kennedy, and Julio Escalona (Leiden: Brill, 2004) pp. 223–62 (pp. 242–43).

tion that emerges almost simultaneously in Latin (*Castella*) and Arabic (*al-Qila*) sources, in both cases meaning literally ‘the castles’. Having turned into a frontier territory in the context of increasing military pressure from Al-Andalus,⁴ Castilian society probably experienced intense militarization reflected in the adoption of a new name that highlighted its defensive function. Similar developments may have taken place in the neighbouring territory of Álava, east of Castile, which seems to have come under Asturian rule later in the ninth century with a lesser degree of integration in its political structures.⁵

Castile’s transformation into the much larger polity of the tenth century must be seen as an aspect of the overall territorial expansion of the Asturian monarchy under Kings Ordoño I (850–66) and Alfonso III (866–910), who extended their realm from the mountainous north down to the fertile plains of the plateau (Map 14).

Map 14. The Asturian kingdom’s expansion in the Duero plateau, eighth to ninth centuries.

⁴ Julio Escalona, ‘Military Stress, Central Power and Local Response in the County of Castile in the Tenth Century’, in *Landscapes of Defence in the Viking Age*, ed. by John Baker and others (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

⁵ José Ángel García de Cortázar y Ruiz de Aguirre, ‘El espacio cántabro-castellano y alavés en la época de Alfonso II el Casto’, *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 74 (1997), 101–20.

This created the conditions for a similar process on the eastern periphery. A first phase in the 880s, when Count Diego extended his rule down to the city of Burgos,⁶ was followed by a more significant move in the next generation: in the shaky years following the death of Alfonso III, the main strongholds on the upper Duero valley were controlled by three different aristocrats (Map 15).⁷

After what looks like a confused period of competition among aristocrats, these new territorial extents were consolidated by 930 and the river Duero became an active military front line for the rest of the tenth century and beyond.⁸ By contrast, the situation in the north remains unclear, as it is largely ignored by the narrative sources. Álava seems to have been brought under Castilian rule around 930, but retained a separate identity across the comital period and beyond. As for the northernmost lands down to the Cantabrian sea, it is commonly assumed that they were incorporated into Castile in the first phase of expansion (whatever the intensity of their subjection), but the evidence for this largely rests on references to the Count of Castile in charter dating clauses that appear to acknowledge political incorporation into Castile.⁹

⁶ The main sources for this early expansion are the Chronicle of Albelda (*Crónicas Asturianas*, ed. by Gil Fernández, Moralejo, and Ruiz de la Peña, pp. 151–88) and the so-called First Castilian Annals, which mention Count Diego's control of Burgos and Ubierna. The latter were named *Anales Castellanos I* by their editor Manuel Gómez Moreno, in *Anales Castellanos*, ed. by Manuel Gómez Moreno (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1917); the very recent new edition by J. C. Martín, however, proposes to change their name to Older Castilian Annals (José Carlos Martín Iglesias, 'Los Annales Castellani Antiquiores y Annales Castellani Recentiores: Edición y traducción anotada', *Territorio, sociedad y poder: revista de estudios medievales*, 4 (2009), 203–26). In this text we shall keep to the traditional naming. On the Annals more generally, see Francisco Bautista, 'Breve historiografía: Listas regias y Anales en la Península Ibérica (siglos VII–XII)', *Talia Dixit*, 4 (2009), 113–90. We thank Isabel Alfonso for drawing our attention to this important work.

⁷ The First Castilian Annals ascribe those events to the year 912: 'In era DCCCCL [= 912 AD] populaverunt commites Monnio Nunniz Rauda et Gondesalbo Telliz Hocsuma et Gundesalbo Fredenandiz Aza et Clunia et Sancti Stefani iusta fluvius Doyri' (In the era 950 [AD 912] count Munio Núñez populated Roa, Gonzalo Téllez Osma and Gonzalo Fernández Haza, Clunia and San Esteban, by the river Duero) (*Annales Castellanos I*, s.a. 912), but there are reasons to suspect that the Annals squeezed into one single entry three separate initiatives, maybe spanning several years; see Escalona, 'Military Stress'.

⁸ Escalona, 'Military Stress'.

⁹ Martínez Díez, *El Condado de Castilla*, pp. 209–24.

Map 15. The Castilian expansion on the eastern Duero basin, ninth to tenth centuries.

In the light of these developments, Castile represents an expanding political unit within a larger expanding polity (the Asturian kingdom). While keeping the focus on Castile, this process must be considered in terms of spatial scale change at several different levels: a) in the context of the overarching Asturian kingdom, b) for the county of Castile itself, and c) from the internal perspective of the local communities of the Duero valley.

a) In the eighth century, the Asturian kingdom grew substantially into lands north of the Cantabrian mountains and Galicia. The plainlands south of the mountains were by this time a sort of political no-man's-land that had apparently undergone a long-term process of socio-political fragmentation since the fifth century, to become a thinly populated, unarticulated territory. This situation may help to explain why, after the collapse of the Visigothic kingship in 711 and the mid-eighth-century internal struggles amongst the Muslim invaders, the emirate of Córdoba could not find in this region the necessary sociopolitical structures to facilitate effective rule and thus its power became restricted to the Ebro valley and the lands south of Iberia's central mountains (Map 14).¹⁰ In this situation, the Duero plateau could be eventually raided, but there is no evidence that it became part of the kingdom before the mid-ninth century. This is indirectly confirmed by the pattern of Arab military raids, which usually preferred to approach Asturian territory through the Ebro valley or, less commonly, the Portuguese-Galician western lands instead of crossing the Duero plateau. In the second half of the ninth century, the territory controlled by the kings of Oviedo grew by roughly a factor of 2.2 in the course of roughly two generations, although change was not just a matter of territorial expansion. The lands incorporated were physically very different from the kingdom's original mountainous core. Despite low

¹⁰ The theory championed by Sánchez-Albornoz that most of the Duero plateau had been intentionally depopulated by King Alfonso I (739–57) to create a defensive buffer against Al-Andalus, and was repopulated by the Asturian kings in the ninth and tenth centuries, was dominant in the mid-twentieth century, but it is no longer accepted. Compare Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, *Despoblación y repoblación del valle del Duero* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de España, 1966) with José Ángel García de Cortázar y Ruiz de Aguirre, 'Las formas de organización social del espacio del Valle del Duero en la Alta Edad Media: De la espontaneidad al control feudal', in *Despoblación y Colonización del Valle del Duero (siglos VIII al XX): IV Congreso de Estudios Medievales* (Ávila: Fundación Sánchez Albornoz, 1995), pp. 13–44; Francisco Reyes Téllez and María Luisa Menéndez Robles, 'Aspectos ideológicos en la despoblación del valle del Duero', in *Historiografía de la Arqueología y de la Historia Antigua en España (Siglos XVIII–XX)*, ed. by Ricardo Olmos and Javier Arce (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1991), pp. 203–07 and the critical overview in Escalona, 'The Early Castilian Peasantry', pp. 123–24.

population, harsh climate, and average elevation of *c.* 750 m above sea level, these were fertile lands with great potential for livestock breeding and cereal and wine production.¹¹ The immediate benefits of seizing the plains must have been evident for the restricted circle of aristocrats behind this political expansion. The combination of both the northern mountains and the plateau created a richer, more complex ecological base for their economy, which in the course of the tenth century evolved into greater interregional integration, mainly through urban growth and the development of mid-range trade and transhumance circuits, of which the first traces appear in the 960s.¹² Ninth-century elites could hardly foresee the developments that took place almost a century later, but they could surely perceive opportunities in political expansion southwards. This factor may have played a significant role in the consolidation of more formalized structures of royal government, which could probably only be reached through a basic consensus among competing aristocrats.¹³

Territorial expansion had important symbolic dimensions too. Newly acquired lands carried strong political connotations as former components of the Visigothic kingdom, which aligned with the neo-Gothic ideology that was becoming established in the Oviedo royal court in the second half of the ninth century.¹⁴ Even if traces of the Visigothic state were hard to recognize, the (largely re-invented) memory of a network of bishoprics was there to explain the process as

¹¹ An overview of the region's geography in Valentín Cabero, Cayetano Cascos, and Guillermo Calonge, *Geografía de Castilla y León*, III: *Los espacios naturales* (Valladolid: Ámbito, 1987).

¹² José María Mínguez Fernández, *El dominio del monasterio de Sahagún en el siglo X (Paisajes agrarios, producción y expansión económica)* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1980); Julio Escalona, 'Jerarquización social y organización del espacio: bosques y pastizales en la Sierra de Burgos (siglos X–XI)', in *Los rebaños de Gerión: Pastores y trashumancia en Iberia antigua y medieval*, ed. by Joaquín L. Gómez-Pantoja (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2001), pp. 109–38; José Ángel García de Cortázar y Ruiz de Aguirre and Esther Peña Bocos, 'La atribución social del espacio ganadero en el Norte peninsular en los siglos IX a XI', *Studos Medievais*, 8 (1987), 3–27; Wendy Davies, 'Sale, Price and Valuation in Galicia and Castile-León in the Tenth Century', *Early Medieval Europe*, 11 (2002), 149–74.

¹³ Carlos Estepa Díez, 'Configuración y primera expansión del reino astur: Siglos VIII y IX', in *De Constantino a Carlomagno: Disidentes, heterodoxos, marginados*, ed. by Francisco J. Lomas and Federico Devís (Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, 1992), pp. 179–95; Carlos Estepa Díez, 'El poder regio y los territorios', in *La época de la Monarquía Asturiana* (Oviedo: Real Instituto de Estudios Asturianos, 2002), pp. 451–67.

¹⁴ Escalona, 'Family Memories', pp. 239–51.

one of Visigothic recovery by Asturian heirs, a construct that features prominently in the chronicles emanating from Alfonso III's entourage in the 880s.¹⁵

b) While the kingdom to which it belonged grew by a factor of 2.2 in the period 850–900, the county of Castile itself did so by a factor of almost 10 (Map 15), although the early stages of this process are obscure.¹⁶ The First Castilian Annals drily mention its main political landmarks as seizures of major central places by the Castilian counts Rodrigo (Amaya) and his son Diego (Ubierna and Burgos), while the Chronicle of Albelda adds somewhat more colour in narrating Munio Núñez's efforts to secure the Castrojeriz fortress against Muslim raids in 882–83.¹⁷ However, as argued below, these major political moves may have been preceded by smaller scale individual steps by aristocrats who extended their property and clientship networks regardless of the county's political boundaries. Moreover, lands down to the Burgos-Castrojeriz line were incorporated in a period of political centralization in the Asturian kingdom, in the heyday of Alfonso III's neo-Gothic policies, and in the need to respond to increasing military raids launched from the Ebro valley. Both the First Castilian Annals and the Chronicle of Albelda coincide in presenting counts Diego and Munio as Alfonso III's agents, leading the takeover of strategic strongholds.

By contrast, the second phase was much less gradual with at least one-third of Castile's territorial growth taking place within one generation between the 880s and the 910s (Map 15). It also crystalized in a very different political context, immediately after Alfonso III's death in 910, and there is nothing in the Castilian Annals to suggest that the move was prompted by King García I's orders. Furthermore, instead of one single Castilian count, three different magnates — which the Castilian Annals call *comites* — carried out the expansion. This is often presented as a sign of collaboration and coordination among Castilian aristocrats,¹⁸ but is much more likely to mean the opposite. The 912 advance to the Duero line — a major landmark in a period of intense competition among mag-

¹⁵ Thomas Deswarte, *De la destruction à la Restauration: l'idéologie dans le Royaume d'Oviedo-León (VIII–XI siècles)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

¹⁶ Spatial growth in this phase is especially difficult to estimate because of lack of data about the pace and extent of incorporation of the northern lands down to the Cantabrian Sea. It is normally assumed that by the 880s they were mostly integrated, but to a great extent this can only be confirmed from tenth-century evidence.

¹⁷ *Chronicle of Albelda*, XV, 13, in *Crónicas Asturianas*, ed. by Gil Fernández, Moralejo, and Ruiz de la Peña, pp. 178–80.

¹⁸ Cf. Martínez Díez, *El Condado de Castilla*, pp. 187–202.

nates — can be seen as the consequence of the 880s expansion phase, which enabled some northern aristocrats to accumulate power and to replicate in Castile the mix of territorial growth and aristocratic development that had already taken place on the Leonese side of the plateau in the previous generation. This point is discussed further below.

c) When compared to Asturian expansion over the Duero plateau, Castile's territorial growth — especially its latest phase — appears more limited in size, but more intense in its temporal scale. In this light, it seems especially relevant to adopt a 'bottom-up' perspective and to consider the process from the point of view of the communities that were incorporated into the county — and, by default, into the kingdom. The lands bordering the Duero were not gained by Castile from a polity of comparable scale. Largely apart from any higher political rule, the region was a political no-man's-land, for which the eighth and ninth centuries were as dark a period as any dark age elsewhere in early medieval Europe. In the last fifteen years, though, retrospective analysis of the ninth- and tenth-century written sources and a gradually expanding body of archaeological data are beginning to reveal slim traces of a widespread pattern of small-scale independent communities.¹⁹

As far as it can be reconstructed, the population in the eastern Duero basin seems to have been organized into fairly simple structures. Some urban sites from the Roman and Visigothic past may have remained occupied,²⁰ but the character

¹⁹ Ernesto Pastor Díaz de Garayo, *Castilla en el tránsito de la Antigüedad al feudalismo: Poblamiento, poder político y estructura social del Arlanza al Duero (siglos VII–XI)* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1996); Iñaki Martín Viso, *Poblamiento y estructuras sociales en el norte de la Península Ibérica, siglos VI–XIII* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2000); Francisco Reyes Téllez, *Población y sociedad en el Valle del Duero, Duratón y Rianza en la Alta Edad Media, siglos VI al XI: Aspectos arqueológicos* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 2000); Julio Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio en la Alta Edad Media castellana: La formación del alfoz de Lara*, British Archaeological Reports, S1029 (Oxford: Barhedges, 2002).

²⁰ The archaeological evidence for early medieval urban sites in this region is very scanty. However, Arabic narrative sources do use urban terms when mentioning settlements like Roa, Osma, or Clunia; see, for example, Ibn Hayyan, *Al-Muqtabis*, v, in *Crónica del Califa 'Abdarrabman III an-Nasir entre los años 912 y 942 (al-Muqtabis V)*, ed. by María Jesús Viguera and Federico Corriente (Zaragoza: Anubar-Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, 1981), pp. 129–30 and 331). Although those texts were written in later times, and may be projecting a more developed image over the early tenth-century situation, the period's territorial structure is better explained if allowing for some ancient sites to have retained their spatial centrality, even if its nature is difficult to define in the absence of richer archaeological records.

of those occupations is hard to define. There are, nevertheless, reasons for thinking that, in some areas at least, native aristocracies associated to ancient central places could have been the immediate interlocutors of expanding comital powers.²¹ Most people lived in small rural settlements, usually within supra-local territorial units of varying size, often — but not always — centred on a hill fort.²² An estimate based upon the tenth-century administrative districts into which such supra-local units were often converted yields an average size of 100 to 150 km² for these territories.²³ After absorption into the Castilian county, many small supra-local territories became administrative districts, their hill forts military strongholds, and the rural settlements around them villages whose agricultural surplus fuelled consolidation of the larger, emerging polity. From the point of view of local communities in the Duero basin, scale change resulting from Castilian expansion appears much more intense: if the Asturian kingdom grew by a factor of 2.2 and the county of Castile by 10, their horizons shifted from small hill fort centred territories to a new political landscape about 500 times larger. On the Duero line especially, this process of scale change happened abruptly and, after incorporation, there was no way back, only the need to adapt to the new situation.

The process of change just noted cannot be discussed in greater detail in the space available in these pages.²⁴ In summary, however, this brief overview has argued that Castilian expansion can be read as a process of scale change taking place at different levels, with different impacts: the kingdom doubled in size, the county grew ten times larger, and the Duero basin communities were swallowed into an immensely larger world. None of these levels could be rescaled in such a

²¹ Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*, pp. 77–84.

²² Iñaki Martín Viso, 'Central Places and the Territorial Organization of Communities: The Occupation of Hilltop Sites in Early Medieval Northern Castile', in *People and Space in the Middle Ages (300–1300)*, ed. by Wendy Davies, Guy Halsall, and Andrew Reynolds (Brepols: Turnhout, 2006), pp. 187–208.

²³ This estimate is based upon the districts as described by Gonzalo Martínez Díez, *Pueblos y alfores burgaleses de la Repoblación* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1987); however, it has been taken into account that the boundaries of most of those divisions are known mainly from later medieval sources and some of those districts are known to have engulfed a number of earlier smaller territorial units; see Julio Escalona, 'Comunidades, territorios y poder condal en la Castilla del Duero en el siglo X', *Studia Historica, Historia Medieval*, 18–19 (2000–01), 85–120.

²⁴ Specifically on the political articulation of the early Castilian county, see Carlos Estepa Díez, 'La Castilla primitiva (750–931): Condes, territorios y villas', in *Poder y simbología en la Europa altomedieval: Anexos de Sociedad, Territorio y Poder*, ed. by Francisco Javier Fernández Conde (Oviedo: Trea-Ediuno, 2009), pp. 261–78.

way and remain unchanged, thus scale change as a concept provides a gateway to the analysis of more profound transformations.

Time

For the sake of brevity, it is necessary to put aside discussion of the larger framework of the Asturian kingdom and concentrate on the expansion of the Castilian county. In general terms, the overall process appears rapid, but it was not consistent. Periods of slow progress alternated with moments of intense change, although different actors could have very different perceptions of the pace of change. The pace of the earliest phases of expansion is unknown, since there is little documentary trace. The operational range of ninth-century aristocrats was much more limited than that of their tenth-century successors, being effectively limited to lands nearer the original Old Castilian core. In any case, this obscure formative phase was surely crucial for the emergence of a small group of leaders with the capacity to undertake expansion.

After incorporation of the Burgos-Ubierna region in the 880s, spatial growth and temporal intensity increased. For all actors, this had to be a perceptible transformation. For populations of the absorbed southern lands this could only mean evident rapid change, as within a lifespan they had to adapt to subjection and integration into a political system far larger and complex than their former socio-political frameworks. The experience can have been no less intense for the aristocracies that were the main promoters and beneficiaries of expansion. Both individual aristocrats and the political system they represented became dramatically transformed. Unlike in their northern bases, dominance over newly gained southern communities had not slowly developed from within. They did not have long-established clientship and/or kinship links to them. All this had to be worked out from scratch, but the social distance between them and local communities was much greater in size and in quality. Aristocrats that controlled Duero strongholds in 912 were building a dual identity for themselves: as supra-local chieftains in the north and lords in the south. Eventually, the second superseded the first, even in the north.

A more nuanced discussion of spatial and temporal change is beyond the limits of this chapter. Our analysis has only considered time and spatial extent as variables. It should ideally be refined to include other aspects, such as the economic significance — actual or potential — of incorporated lands, variations in local social structures, or the role played by trans-territorial structures, such as long-distance communication, interconnection between micro-regions, or the like (for

many of which there is insufficient evidence). It is sufficient, however, to make the point that a consideration of scale change (both in space and time) provides a suitable basis for describing and comparing the processes studied and that the temporal scale of the later phase of the Castilian expansion points to a context in which the perception of sudden, eventful transformations by social actors may well have informed their actions in a way that can be recognized on the basis of the available evidence. This latter aspect concerns the second part of this chapter.

Scale Change and Agency: Aristocrats and Local Notables

One of the greatest benefits of combining time and space in a scale-based approach to social processes lies in the capacity to address issues of practice and agency, especially bottom-up agency.²⁵ Individuals as much as groups act within their social contexts according to their perception and conceptualization of processes taking place, which is often moulded not just by personal experience, but also by social interaction. Processes operating at a larger scale than they can perceive may well go unnoticed as such, while actors — especially in relatively isolated local contexts — may only grasp and react to unconnected manifestations of a process whose entirety they may miss.²⁶ In the historical process under study here there were clearly different kinds of actors, operating at different spatial scales and with different capacities to perceive and respond to change. Our discussion focusses on both ends of the range — Castilian aristocrats and local communities of the Duero basin — and especially on the last phase of expansion *c.* 912, whose temporal intensity provides the context for bottom-up agency to become visible. The point is furthermore relevant because it can help to challenge accepted views of this process that assign a largely passive role to the region's local populations in these formative years.

Scale Growth and the Castilian Aristocrats

As suggested above, Castilian expansion must be seen as a conscious move by a limited number of aristocrats influenced by slightly earlier comparable develop-

²⁵ See Escalona, this volume.

²⁶ The term *scale mismatch* has been proposed to designate situations in which actors fail to recognize the scale of processes they respond to, or lack the means to act at the required scale: Graeme S. Cumming, David H. M. Cumming, and Charles L. Redman, 'Scale Mismatches in Social-Ecological Systems: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions', *Ecology and Society*, 11.1 (2006), 14.

ments on the western side of the kingdom. Leaders of this movement were probably powerful individuals from the outset, but their influence as a group became rescaled in the process, changing in volume, extent, and nature. Identifying individual aristocrats is not easy given the nature of the evidence, let alone describing their respective trajectories.²⁷ We can nevertheless use a few examples to build an approximate picture of the overall trend.

In the first place, let us consider the scale of aristocratic power in the Castilian northern core in the earlier phase up to the 880s expansion. It is fair to assume that aristocrats known to us in this area — surely not the only ones that existed — had particular territories as their power bases,²⁸ but it remains highly speculative to map them. From the patchy data available we know that magnates were relatively rich landowners who patronized principal churches and monasteries and led retinues of warriors. Their relationship to underlying communities, however, seems to have been defined more by leadership and control of community resources than by lordship and land ownership. As Martín Viso has put it, in those northern areas, if local communities were ruled by a number of chieftains, the magnates were ‘chiefs of chieftains’.²⁹

No individual source yields a direct image of the scale of secular aristocratic power, but we can hypothetically attempt to use monastic sources. Most monasteries of this period with surviving charter collections are the result of secular patronage and their estates may be considered as a reflection of lay power (on which see below). It does not follow that monastic estates functioned exactly like secular ones, although it is possible to suggest that in this formative phase their scales may have been in relative accordance. Take, for a start, the small monastery of San Andrés de Aja in the Soba valley (Cantabria). A charter of 836 preserved in a later medieval copy in the collection of the Abbey of San Salvador de Oña — to which San Andrés eventually became subjected — narrates how the monastery was built by Valerius and his son, the priest Kardellus, on their own land; years later, in 836, when Valerius was long dead and Kardellus approached his last days, the latter donated all his property to San Andrés. The bequest included properties

²⁷ Martínez Díez, *El Condado de Castilla*, pp. 147–202. A critical revision in Estepa Díez, ‘La Castilla primitiva’.

²⁸ Estepa Díez, ‘La Castilla primitiva’, pp. 264–66.

²⁹ Iñaki Martín Viso, ‘Poder político y estructura social en la Castilla altomedieval: El condado de Lantarón (siglos VIII–XI)’, in *Los espacios de poder en la España medieval: XII Semana de Estudios Medievales*, ed. by José Ignacio de la Iglesia Duarte and José Luis Martín Rodríguez (Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2002), pp. 533–52 (p. 544).

in six named places, four in the Soba valley and two in the neighbouring territory of Castile, scattered across a maximum radius of some 25 km (Map 16).³⁰ San Andrés, thus, provides an image of the estates of an early ninth-century relatively wealthy northern cleric. Clearly, his estates ranged over the local scale, as they included land in several villages, spread over more than one supra-local territory. Clearly, too, Kardellus's case was far from representing a maximum.

An interesting comparison can be made with the well-known case of San Román de Tobillas. An 822 charter — also from Oña's collection — describes a similar process.³¹ Some time before that date, Abbot Avitus founded the monastery of San Román in Tobillas (Álava). In 822 he gave it all his property, which included churches, houses, mills, plots of land, and other rights scattered over a large number of places.³² The geographical distribution of Avitus's estates shows an interesting contrast with those of his contemporary Kardellus (Map 16). His property was not only more abundant, but it extended over a much larger area. The scale of its main cluster, just north-west of Tobillas, was comparable to San Andrés's estates, but included more distant areas, like Paredes Rubias, some 70 km west from Tobillas, a cluster along the river Omecillo in the east, and, more strikingly, a cluster much further south, in the middle Tirón valley, on the northern side of the Demanda mountains. Overall, Avitus seems to have held property over an area of about 90 x 75 km.³³

³⁰ *Colección diplomática de San Salvador de Oña (822–1284)*, ed. by José Álamo (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1950), no. 2 (hereafter *Oña*, ed. by Álamo).

³¹ *Oña*, ed. by Álamo, no. 1.

³² See Esther Peña Bocos, *La atribución social del espacio en la Castilla altomedieval: Una nueva aproximación al feudalismo peninsular* (Santander: Universidad de Cantabria, 1996), pp. 109–10; Peña Bocos, 'Las presuras y la repoblación del valle del Duero: Algunas cuestiones en torno a la atribución y organización social del espacio castellano en el siglo IX', in *Repoblación y reconquista: Actas del III Curso de Cultura Medieval*, ed. by José Luis Hernando Garrido and Miguel Ángel García Guinea (Aguilar de Campóo: Fundación Santa María La Real-Centro de Estudios del Románico, 1993), pp. 249–59; and recently Juan José Larrea, 'Construir iglesias, construir territorio: Las dos fases altomedievales de San Román de Tobillas (Álava)', in *Monasteria et territoria: Élités, edilicia y territorio en el Mediterráneo medieval (siglos V–XI)*, ed. by Jorge López Quiroga, Artemio M. Martínez Tejera, and Jorge Morín de Pablos, British Archaeological Reports, International Series, S1720 (Oxford: Barhedges, 2007), pp. 321–36.

³³ The mention in this list of a church called Santa María de Lara, which is often thought to mean the well-known monument at Quintanilla de las Viñas, near Lara de los Infantes, much further south, demonstrably refers not to this place, but to an unidentified homonymous one in the north; see Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*, pp. 188–89.

Map 16. The estates of San Andrés de Aja and San Román de Tobillas in the ninth century.

Both Kardellus's and Avitus's estates comprised isolated properties here and there, although the latter's were more extensively spread throughout the counties of Álava and Castile. This may well represent a maximum scale for this area and period. Even more interestingly, the southern cluster on the river Tirón lay beyond the accepted political extents of either county by 822. Dominant historiography concedes precedence to political expansion over seigneurial developments and has consequently questioned this charter for its inclusion of territories only militarily secured in the 880s.³⁴ It must be remembered, however, that Asturian expansion over the Duero plateau did not entail warfare against and military conquest from another kingdom, but rather the piecemeal, relatively negotiated subjection of a large number of small-scale communities. This may have happened throughout most of the ninth century, allowing the secular aristocracy to extend their power networks both inside and outside the county's 'official' boundaries (which were surely ill-defined at this time). It would make better sense of the charter evidence, therefore, to adopt a 'bottom-up' perspective and to consider that the occupation of certain major strongholds like Ubierna, Burgos, and Castrojeriz by counts Diego and Munio in the 880s was preceded by a phase — at least two generations long — in which the efforts of individual aristocrats to expand their own estates and clientèles extended beyond the kingdom's political reach. In this light, Count Diego's actions — albeit most visible in narrative sources — would have been not so much the condition for aristocratic accumulation of power as the result thereof. Once secured, though, the taking of strongholds in the 880s became the condition for aristocratic growth thereafter.

Although charters issued between 885 and 912 in the area south of Burgos are scantier than in the north, a similar process can be envisaged for the second phase up to 912. This move was more sudden than its predecessor, but probably also included an initial period of the spread of aristocratic connections across the lands between Burgos and the river Duero regardless of royal initiative. Tellingly, the three counts that occupied the Duero fortresses in 912 — Munio Núñez, Gonzalo Fernández, and Gonzalo Téllez — were at the end of their careers and died shortly thereafter.³⁵ Both Gonzalo Fernández and Gonzalo Téllez had established links

³⁴ See the discussion of the historiography in Larrea, 'Construir iglesias', pp. 322–28.

³⁵ If Martínez Díez (*El Condado de Castilla*, p. 193) is right in arguing that the Munio Núñez of 912 was the same that defended Castrojeriz in 883 (*Chronicle of Albelda*, xv, 13), he must have been an old man by this time. Gonzalo Fernández died shortly after 915 (*Colección documental del monasterio de San Pedro de Cardena*, ed. by Gonzalo Martínez Díez (Cardena: Caja de Ahorros y Monte de Piedad del Circulo Catolico de Obreros de Burgos, 1998), no. 9 (hereafter *Cardena*, ed.

by marriage with local elites of the territory of Lara,³⁶ south-east of Burgos and conceivably created connections with other southern territories that remained unrecorded. There are reasons for thinking that, as those aristocrats acquired positions in the lands around and south from Burgos, competition among them intensified and peaked in the fragile period after Alfonso III's death in 910. Political instability at the end of his reign must have created a context for the race towards the Duero line, a move that, importantly, the Castilian Annals do not describe as executed under royal orders.

We can better understand how the second phase of expansion affected the scale of aristocratic power by considering the individual trajectory of the best recorded of the three counts of 912, Gonzalo Téllez, who has been studied in detail by Iñaki Martín Viso (Map 15).³⁷ Gonzalo Téllez was the ruler of Lantarón, a small territory between Álava and the original Castilian heartland. Lantarón is not recorded as a county except in Gonzalo Téllez's time, which seems to support the idea, fostered by Carlos Estepa, that the comital title was in this period linked to effective positions of power, more so than to administrative districts³⁸ and powerful people (arguably those who were at the top of clientship networks) would be called 'counts' and could eventually carve out a 'county' for themselves. In the Lantarón area, Gonzalo Téllez had abundant landed property and patronage networks. He even seems to have patronized the small episcopal see of Valpuesta and its associated monastery, to the point that the Bishop of Valpuesta may have functioned as a prominent figure in the Count's entourage.³⁹ However, Gonzalo Téllez's power extended much farther. He had another cluster of property and rights in the central section of the Castilian county, around Burgos and Oca. Here he had landed property in several localities, one of which — Villagonzalo, south of Burgos — was named after him, and he also patronized the monastery of San Jorge in Cerezo, another territorial centre not far from Burgos.⁴⁰ A third focus of power was for him the important south-eastern territory of Lara, some 80 km away from Lantarón. There he forged links with the powerful comital

by Martínez Díez)) and Gonzalo Téllez sometime between 915 and 919 (*Cardena*, ed. by Martínez Díez, no. 8). On the dates see Martínez Díez, *El Condado de Castilla*, pp. 196 and 201.

³⁶ Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*, pp. 203–04.

³⁷ Martín Viso, 'Poder político y estructura social'; see also Martínez Díez, *El Condado de Castilla*, II, 198–202.

³⁸ Estepa Díez, 'La Castilla primitiva', p. 265.

³⁹ Martín Viso, 'Poder político y estructura social', pp. 543–44.

⁴⁰ *Cardena*, ed. by Martínez Díez, nos 6 and 95.

kindred that controlled the area by marrying the noblewoman Flamula.⁴¹ He thus managed to exercise — at least for a period — some direct power in this region, as expressed — again — in his patronage of monasteries. It remains hypothetical that he was actually the patron of the local monastery of Santa María de Lara (Quintanilla de las Viñas, Burgos),⁴² but it is quite clear that he was the original founder of San Pedro de Arlanza, which would eventually become the region's main monastic house.⁴³ Finally, in the context of the 912 expansion to the Duero line, Gonzalo Téllez took control of the town of Osma, which had been an episcopal see in the Visigothic period. It is open to speculation whether targeting Osma aimed to boost the significance of the bishopric of Valpuesta by moving its see to the old Visigothic town.⁴⁴ The emphasis on the episcopal dimension of Gonzalo Téllez's connections is in accordance with the fact that in his latest years he seems to have undertaken a serious bid for Castilian supremacy, but died without realising it.⁴⁵

Despite the paucity of information characteristic of this period, the case of Gonzalo Téllez illuminates the significance of scale change for the higher aristocracy. In his northern heartland, Téllez's power was well rooted, little threatened

⁴¹ Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*, p. 204.

⁴² The first unimpeachable written source for this monastery — a 929 charter from San Pedro de Arlanza — shows Momadona, the sister of Gonzalo Téllez's widow Flamula, as the house's patron, while Flamula herself has been related to the woman that appears in an inscription dedicating the church to God. See Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*, p. 67.

⁴³ Gonzalo Téllez's foundational deed has long been obscured by the fact that the twelfth-century Arlanza monks reinvented their history by forging a most successful foundational charter attributed to Count Fernán González. See Julio Escalona, Pilar Azcárate, and Miguel Larrañaga, 'De la crítica diplomática a la ideología política: Los diplomas fundacionales de San Pedro de Arlanza y la construcción de una identidad para la Castilla medieval', in *VI Congreso Internacional de Historia de la Cultura Escrita*, II: *Los libros de derecho. Los archivos familiares*, ed. by Carlos Sáez (Alcalá de Henares: Calambur, 2002), pp. 159–206. The idea that Gonzalo Téllez was the original founder is reinforced by the fact that Arlanza's first abbot, Sonna, features subscribing one of the Count's deeds in 913 (*Cardeña*, ed. by Martínez Díez, no. 6).

⁴⁴ In which case Valpuesta would be just another example of the ideal of restoring the old Visigothic ecclesiastical geography that was a prominent component of Alfonso III's neo-Gothic policies. The clearest indication in this direction is the poem inserted in the *Chronicle of Albelda*, XII (ed. by Gil Fernández, Moralejo, Ruiz de la Peña, in *Crónicas Asturianas*, p. 158) that lists the kingdom's twelve episcopal sees, including Osma. Although this is often assigned a date in the late 880s, according to other chronological indications in the Chronicle, the piece could well be an insertion from later in the reign of Alfonso III, in which case it could coincide with Gonzalo Téllez's activity.

⁴⁵ Martín Viso, 'Poder político', p. 544.

by competitors, but limited by social obligations; to some extent he could perhaps be described as a 'chief of chieftains', relatively dependent on long-established social relationships based on patronage. By contrast, as his southern connections expanded, he became more of a feudal lord, less limited by social obligations. Expansion freed Téllez from overdependence on a specific territory and gave him more resources to manage his power at will.

This example also helps to understand the significance of the Castilian pattern of aristocratic landownership, whose paramount feature is the creation of dispersed estates, comprising many fragmentary properties scattered over areas much larger than were any local community or supra-local districts.⁴⁶ This is often explained as a consequence of repeated partitions of inheritance among aristocratic kindreds,⁴⁷ which would imply that those estates had formerly been more concentrated. However, without denying the importance of hereditary partitions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Castilian aristocratic estates seem to follow a dispersed pattern from the very start, which require a different kind of explanation, focussed on the conditions in which they were created. As a result of expansion, the Castilian aristocracy came to interact with a mass of communities — and their small-scale elites — in the probable context of competition among magnates for new resources and, ultimately, supremacy. 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, like a church, a plot of arable land, or a vineyard here and there.⁴⁸ The cases of villages fully owned by one particular magnate are remarkably few and, when they occur, the owners seem to be of comital or nearly comital rank, whereas for most Castilian aristocrats, owning entire villages was an exception. As a result, the kind of aristocratic estates created in the tenth century were fragmented and scattered, a trend that continued during the eleventh century. For example, in 1044, the estates of Laín

⁴⁶ Pastor Díaz de Garayo, *Castilla en el tránsito*, pp. 254–68.

⁴⁷ Pastor Díaz de Garayo, *Castilla en el tránsito*, pp. 271–74.

⁴⁸ Escalona, 'Comunidades, territorios y poder condal'; on the relationship between aristocratic interests and community resources, see Juan José Larrea, 'Obispos efimeros, comunidades y homicidio en La Rioja Alta en los siglos X y XI', *Brocar*, 31 (2007), 177–200.

González, a Castilian middle-rank nobleman, when seen at a large scale were concentrated in south-east Castile (Map 17).⁴⁹

Map 17. Comparing the scale of aristocratic dispersed estates:
Doña Oneca (1029), Lain González (1044).
After Pastor Díaz de Garayo, pp. 260–61.

However, within this area they were actually quite scattered with no clearly dominant focus and, moreover, only the odd case of a fully owned village among a mass of arable portions and shared rights. Fifteen years earlier, the estates of Oneca, a noble woman from the comital kindred, showed a similar pattern (Map 17).⁵⁰ Fragmentation and dispersion became the blueprint of Castilian aristocratic estates down to the mid-fourteenth century.⁵¹ By this time, this was seen as

⁴⁹ *Cartulario de San Pedro de Arlanza, antiguo monasterio benedictino*, ed. by Luciano Serrano (Madrid: Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios, 1925), no. 40. See Pastor Díaz de Garayo, *Castilla en el tránsito*, pp. 259–65.

⁵⁰ *Cartulario de San Juan de la Peña*, ed. by Antonio Ubieto Arteta, I (Zaragoza: Anubar, 1962), no. 49. See Pastor Díaz de Garayo, *Castilla en el tránsito*, pp. 259–65.

⁵¹ Pastor Díaz de Garayo, *Castilla en el tránsito*, pp. 259–65; Ignacio Álvarez Borge, *Poder y relaciones sociales en Castilla en la Edad Media: Los territorios entre el Arlanzón y el Duero en los siglos X al XIV* (Salamanca: Junta de Castilla y León, 1996), pp. 136–40.

a serious weakness for noble houses and there were several attempts to develop and maintain more efficient and manageable patrimonies.⁵² In a tenth-century context, however, those scattered estates do not suggest weakness at all. They reveal that one of the immediate effects of the Castilian expansion was that aristocratic power — at least for the topmost magnates — became trans-territorial, independent from the fate and constraints of individual communities, and increasingly distant from them.

Scale Change and the Local Communities

It makes perfect sense to think that Castilian aristocrats were quite aware of a process of political expansion that was largely their creation. Neither could such a process — given its temporal and spatial intensity — go locally unnoticed in the county's southern borders. For the communities there the impact of being incorporated into a larger political system was as significant as it was for the aristocrats, if not more so. One major aspect was that parts of them — rarely whole villages — were incorporated into the networks of landed interests of the counts, the aristocracy, and the main ecclesiastical houses. Some peasants lost their freedom and became bonded. Surplus was extracted from the communities to fuel the development that is apparent, for instance, in the building of new churches, monasteries, and fortresses. There were also aristocratic intrusions in the management of community resources such as woodland and water, which have been the subject of much discussion. Only more recently is attention being paid to the relevance of tenth-century territorial changes to our understanding of the fate of communities within the newly established situation. Significant territorial changes can be detected at least at two levels.

Many existing supra-local units were initially taken as the basic territorial framework and turned into administrative districts, their hill forts into comital fortresses. Moreover, their boundaries often changed, as parts were taken or added. Not infrequently several territories were amalgamated into a single district.⁵³ A major case of territorial reorganization is found in the southern border

⁵² Carlos Estepa Díez, 'Las behetrías en el canciller Don Pedro López de Ayala', in *Historia social, pensamiento historiográfico y Edad Media: Homenaje al Prof. Abilio Barbero de Aguilera*, ed. by María Isabel Loring García (Madrid: Orto, 1997), pp. 95–114.

⁵³ Julio Escalona, 'Mapping Scale Change: Hierarchization and Fission in Castilian Rural Communities During the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in *People and Space*, ed. by Davies, Halsall, and Reynolds, pp. 143–66.

in the second half of the tenth century, when increasing military stress from Al-Andalus prompted a wholesale reconfiguration of defence there and the creation of the macro-district of Clunia, which superseded a formerly fragmented pattern of territorial units.⁵⁴ By the end of the comital period, the old supra-local territories had lost most of their community significance and became a framework for political control and the collection of revenues.⁵⁵ Thus the upper level of early medieval socio-territorial articulation was gradually removed.

The territories of local communities were affected by the fission of earlier units into later medieval parishes. While the Castilian village network as we know it up to the twentieth century was largely a creation of the late eleventh century, before then there are traces of larger local territories with a polyfocal settlement pattern of between two and five settlement units. It has been argued that pressure from secular and ecclesiastical lords played a major role in converting this varied pattern into a simpler dominant one: single settlements, often each with a local church and well-defined boundaries.⁵⁶ This process was not homogeneous in time: some areas were more precocious; others clung to their former structures for a longer time. The trend, however, was to encapsulate community identity and territoriality at the smallest possible scale (individual settlements) and to erode all supra-local, community-related levels of articulation.

Bottom-up Agency: Escaping the Community?

Territorial change must be taken in this case as a symptom of more profound social transformations taking place at the scale of the entire Castilian county and beyond, but with relatively greater impact in the southern half. When the region was incorporated, the subjection of local communities to aristocratic impositions was only one aspect of the new situation. Equally important was the sudden appearance of a whole range of new power resources which did not exist before, derived from the irruption of a large-scale political system and ruling aristocracy.

⁵⁴ Escalona, 'Comunidades, territorios y poder condal', pp. 95–99.

⁵⁵ Ignacio Álvarez Borge, *Monarquía feudal y organización territorial: Alfoces y merindades en Castilla (siglos X–XIV)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1993), pp. 17–54.

⁵⁶ Julio Escalona, 'De "señores y campesinos" a "poderes feudales y comunidades": Elementos para definir la articulación entre territorio y clases sociales en la Alta Edad Media castellana', in *Comunidades locales y poderes feudales en la Edad Media*, ed. by Ignacio Álvarez Borge (Logroño: Universidad de La Rioja, 2001), pp. 117–55; Escalona, 'Mapping Scale Change'.

Finding a place in the new order was surely a matter of the highest concern not only for aristocrats but also for members of local communities, namely local elites. For the latter, the political horizons changed abruptly from the very restricted milieu of their localities and small hill-fort districts into a much wider landscape where everything was rapidly changing, their traditional status references lost significance, and the social rewards and expectations were no longer the same.

One important change was that the limits for social mobility became suddenly expanded. Beyond the restricted boundaries of their small supra-local communities, local elites were confronted with a range of new opportunities: effective political control of the southern lands was in its making and both the Count's rulership and the aristocracy itself were being redefined. One obvious possibility — and one that conceivably often happened — was that local elites seized the occasion and reinforced their local dominance over their communities. However, the context was also open for local elites to try to supersede their community contexts and join the lesser ranks of the emerging Castile-wide aristocracy. Now, if that kind of 'bottom-up' initiative actually occurred, where are the traces of this process? No single source informs us explicitly about this, but several elements, when handled together, seem to point in this direction. In the final section of this chapter we briefly explore two such aspects: a) the local elites' military function; b) their relationship to local churches.

Military Functions

One of the most obvious impacts of the Castilian expansion was that it swiftly turned the Duero region into an active military frontier.⁵⁷ As the Castilian counts strengthened their positions on the river line, the region became a priority for raids launched from Al-Andalus. Military stress peaked in the 930s and in the 990s, but was an issue throughout the tenth century.⁵⁸ An important consequence of this situation was the development of a system of military obligations that affected thoroughly the free population, similar to the *trinoda necessitas* of Anglo-Saxon England.⁵⁹ In the absence of explicit legal sources, these obligations have to

⁵⁷ Most of the points raised here are dealt with in greater detail in Escalona, 'Military Stress'.

⁵⁸ The tenth-century military campaigns against Castile are described and discussed in Martínez Díez, *El Condado de Castilla*, passim.

⁵⁹ Nicholas P. Brooks, 'The Development of Military Obligations in Eighth- and Ninth-Century England', in *England before the Conquest*, ed. by Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes

be deduced from a number of piecemeal scraps of evidence, sometimes as late as eleventh-century charters granting exemption from those burdens.⁶⁰ There is, thus, a distinct danger of projecting back a later image on the early tenth century and, moreover, of imagining a clear-cut system when it probably was only taking shape.

There seem to have existed three main kinds of general military obligations. The most important (called *fossatus*) was to take part in the territorial army led by the count or — more rarely — the king. The operations involved could be defensive (like Ramiro II's victorious defence of the central Duero frontier at Simancas in 939)⁶¹ or offensive (like Ordoño II's campaign in the Henares valley in 921),⁶² but had a distinct large-scale scope: they could take place where required. In the eleventh century, non-aristocrats could pay *fonsado* as horse riders (*equites*) or infantry (*pedones*) depending on their wealth, which reflected the social differences within freemen from the local communities.⁶³ Another general obligation (*castellaria*) was to contribute to the building and maintenance of castles.⁶⁴ This seems to have mainly operated at a medium scale: the inhabitants of each district were responsible for the maintenance of its castles.⁶⁵ The third

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 69–84; Richard P. Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo Saxon England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

⁶⁰ Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, 'El ejército y la guerra en el reino astur-leonés, 718–1037', in *Ordinamenti militari in Occidente nell'Alto Medioevo, XV Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, 2 vols (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1968), I, 293–428 (pp. 382–87).

⁶¹ First Castilian Annals, s. a. 939.

⁶² *Historia Silense*, in *Historia Silense: Edición, crítica e introducción*, ed. and trans. by F. Justo Pérez de Úrbel and Atilano González Ruiz-Zorrilla (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1959), p. 154.

⁶³ As the frontier gradually moved south, *fonsado* was ultimately converted into a tax called *fonsadera*. See Carlos Estepa Díez, *Las behetrías castellanas* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2003), pp. 238–45.

⁶⁴ Sánchez-Albornoz, 'El ejército y la guerra', pp. 402–03.

⁶⁵ After the work render was also converted into a tax, the pattern of its collection suggests a territorial layout (Sánchez-Albornoz, 'El ejército y la guerra', p. 403). The evidence for the tenth century is very slim, as it is hardly ever mentioned, but one charter of c. 972 (*Cardeña*, ed. by Martínez Díez, no. 153) recording the unusual exemption of *castellaria* for a local community suggests that it was a general obligation in Castile.

general military obligation (*anubda*) was to provide garrisons for surveillance,⁶⁶ which in the tenth century seems to have been the task of the frontier's local elites, who carried out their duty using the growing network of frontier castles and watchtowers.⁶⁷

The fact that in the central Middle Ages those military obligations were converted into royal taxes may have fostered the standard view that they were basically heavy burdens cast upon ordinary people, an opinion also held of military obligations elsewhere in early medieval Europe. However, this may well be wrong, or only partly right. Whatever their actual weight upon the population, military duties provided members of the local elites with a function to perform in the newly articulated system: joining armed parties could be worth the cost if it returned the booty and prestige to support their image as leaders within their communities and if, most importantly, it facilitated 'good connections', that is, contact with lordly or comital clienteles; building towers and organizing surveillance services had the advantage of justifying the local leaders' pressing upon their neighbours and mobilizing local surplus in a direction that fuelled their own definition as a military class.

Local Churches

The hypothesis that local churches may have played a role in local elites' strategies to differentiate themselves from their communities is worth exploring. A growing body of archaeological evidence is building a case for thinking that in the post-Roman or Visigothic period most peasant rural settlements in central Iberia did not normally have churches.⁶⁸ In the north, this seems to be a feature of the eighth

⁶⁶ María Estela González de Fauve, 'La anubda y la arrobda en Castilla', *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 39–40 (1964), 5–42; Sánchez-Albornoz, 'El ejército y la guerra', pp. 403–08.

⁶⁷ Francisco Reyes Téllez and María Luisa Menéndez Robles, 'Sistemas defensivos altomedievales en las comarcas del Duratón-Riaza (siglos VIII–X)', in *II Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, 3 vols (Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, 1987), II, 631–39; Roberto Vázquez Álvarez, 'Castros, castillos y torres en la organización social del espacio en Castilla: El espacio del Arlanza al Duero (siglos IX al XIII)', in *Del Cantábrico al Duero: Trece estudios sobre la organización social del espacio en los siglos VIII a XIII*, ed. by José Ángel García de Cortázar y Ruiz de Aguirre (Santander: Universidad de Cantabria, 1999), pp. 351–73; Escalona, 'Military Stress'.

⁶⁸ Juan Antonio Quirós, 'Las iglesias altomedievales en el País Vasco: Del monumento al paisaje', in *Esglésies rurals a Catalunya entre l'Antiguitat i l'Edat Mitjana (Segles V–X)* (Montserrat, forthcoming).

to tenth centuries, when churches and monasteries begin to feature in charters in growing numbers.⁶⁹ Historians have employed a variety of models to explain the decision to erect local churches: external impositions from higher powers; holy men (hermits) operating spontaneously from the periphery of local society; the collective initiative of local communities; individual decisions from some of their leading members. All of these models seem partially valid by the mid-tenth century. However, the role of local elites has been relatively overlooked, perhaps assuming that the phenomenon of the proprietary church was restricted to aristocratic patrons.

Certainly aristocrats — both secular and ecclesiastical — founded and endowed proprietary monasteries.⁷⁰ Charter evidence for this is clear, including the cases of Abbot Avitus and Count Gonzalo Téllez, discussed above. Although, of course, their physical setting had to be local, those foundations were hardly local in nature. They were major tools in the strategies of an emerging large-scale, trans-territorial feudal class. They functioned as nodes of increasingly complex estates, they characterized their founders according to socially accepted patterns of religiosity, and they provided them with privileged burial places, a practice that marked them out from those buried in community cemeteries. As much as being warrior leaders, the aristocrats who took over the south of Castile in the early tenth century had a major mark of social identity in being the patrons of proprietary churches. Such a visible mark could be replicated by people seeking to develop a high-status social identity.⁷¹

From the start of the tenth century, but peaking in the 940s to 960s, we find among the charters of the southern half of the county cases of churches or monasteries transferred from their owners into someone else's possession, normally

⁶⁹ A general discussion in Esther Peña Bocos, *La atribución social del espacio en la Castilla altomedieval: Una nueva aproximación al feudalismo peninsular* (Santander: Universidad de Cantabria, 1996), pp. 105–25.

⁷⁰ The literature on this issue is huge. A recent overview in Francisco Javier Fernández Conde, *La religiosidad medieval en España: Alta Edad Media (siglos VII–X)* (Oviedo: Trea, 2008), pp. 222–26. See also the discussion in Wendy Davies, *Acts of Giving: Individual, Community, and Church in Tenth-Century Christian Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 36–44, and María Isabel Loring García, 'Nobleza e iglesias propias en la Cantabria Altomedieval', *Studia Historica, Historia Medieval*, 5 (1987), 89–120.

⁷¹ José Ángel García de Cortázar y Ruiz de Aguirre, 'Monasterios hispanos en torno al año mil: Función social y observancia regular', in *Ante el milenario del reinado de Sancho el Mayor: Un rey navarro para España y Europa: XXX Semana de Estudios Medievales de Estella* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra-Institución Príncipe de Viana, 2004), pp. 213–70.

another monastic house. Those deeds were carried out by the counts of Castile, by high aristocrats, other noblemen, and lesser status people. However, there is a layer of such charters in which local people, very often clerics, put themselves (*traditio* is the term used), together with a church or monastery (the term varies considerably), under the rule of a larger house.⁷² These churches have often been interpreted as the religious centres of local communities, their clerics as local rulers, and the handing over of the church as a collective commendation to the monastery (more rarely a bishop); yet, close inspection of the more abundant eleventh- to thirteenth-century documents fails in most cases to demonstrate that ecclesiastical lordships were established over those villages, which reinforces the simpler explanation that those churches did not belong to whole communities, but to private owners.

For example, in 947 Abbot Crescentius donated all he had to Cardeña, including the church of San Pedro y San Clemente in Sarracín (10 km south of Burgos). He requested that the Cardeña monks prayed for his soul's salvation, as well as for that of his brother, Abbot Quintillanus, who had died previously. This seems to indicate a proprietary monastery where one brother succeeded another as abbot. Unlike other monasteries acquired by Cardeña, which were eventually turned into subordinate houses or 'priors', there is no other record of this monastery thereafter.⁷³ In another document, dated in 957, a monk called Didaco, together with his son Tellu commended themselves in body and soul to Cardeña's abbot and donated their church of San Sebastián in Cabia (south of Burgos) with all its property.⁷⁴ This monastery is not mentioned again in Cardeña's charters. A third, better-documented case is that of San Andrés de Villalbilla, which was donated to Cardeña in 954 by the sisters Osicia and María.⁷⁵ Between 947 and 950, the monastery of San Andrés had received five charters, four of which recorded *traditiones* of people who submitted themselves to Abbot Félix.⁷⁶

⁷² On the donation of 'body and soul', see José Orlandis, "'Traditio corporis et animae': Laicos y monasterios en la alta edad media española', in *Estudios sobre instituciones monásticas medievales*, ed. by José Orlandis (Pamplona: Euns, 1976), pp. 125–64 and Davies, *Acts of Giving*, pp. 52–61.

⁷³ *Cardeña*, ed. by Martínez Díez, no. 60.

⁷⁴ *Cardeña*, ed. by Martínez Díez, no. 91.

⁷⁵ *Cardeña*, ed. by Martínez Díez, no. 86. On this case see Ignacio Álvarez Borge, 'El proceso de transformación de las comunidades de aldea: Una aproximación al estudio de la formación del feudalismo en Castilla (siglos X y XI)', *Studia Historica, Historia Medieval*, 5 (1987), 145–60 (pp. 152–53).

⁷⁶ *Cardeña*, ed. by Martínez Díez, nos 58, 80, 109, and 209 (the latter wrongly dated in 996).

However, the fifth is a charter of 950 by which Osicia transfers to her sister María, Abbess of San Andrés, (*profiliatio* is the term here) all the property she inherited from their parents.⁷⁷ Since María is mentioned as Abbess at the same time that Félix is named as Abbot, this seems to be a case of a double monastery, with a double rulership, whichever the relation between Félix and María. The key figure, though, seems to be Osicia, who, despite having given away all her inheritance, leads the 954 donation to Cardeña. In San Andrés de Villalbilla we have an example of a monastery in the hands of a kindred whose members managed to attract other people's donations to a monastery they firmly controlled. However, after the 954 grant, there is no further news of San Andrés in Cardeña's charters. Neither the village of Sarracín, nor Cabia, nor Villabilla belonged to Cardeña's extensive lordship in the central Middle Ages, so we should conclude that those were simply proprietary churches or monasteries in the hands of local kindreds.

Many additional examples could be cited, although the greatest difficulty remains with regard to discerning the social status of church owners in each case. While there is a serious lack of research on lesser members of the aristocracy,⁷⁸ some church owners were clearly aristocrats, with extensive estates of which their proprietary monasteries could be just another element. In other instances, however, owners were clearly people of lower social position. Given the distinctiveness of church ownership, we can safely discard ordinary peasant families as potential owners, but there is a wide range of other people that these kind of houses could belong to that are surely none other than local elites. Osicia and María, for example, seem to be locally powerful and influential, but nothing suggests that they belonged to the kind of extra-territorial, extensive aristocracy described above.

Arguably, one major reason that explains the difficulties in socially defining church owners is that some of them were in the process of changing their status, in which their churches probably played an important role. One unusually well-recorded case is that of a man called Alfonso Sendínez,⁷⁹ who appears in two Cardeña charters holding property in the village of Tubilla del Lago in the Esgueva valley. In 950⁸⁰ Alfonso Sendínez and his wife Eilo gave to Cardeña their monastery of San Pedro in Tubilla del Lago. Eight years later, they sold a meadow

⁷⁷ Cardeña, ed. by Martínez Díez, no. 70.

⁷⁸ But see the interesting discussion in Álvarez Borge, *Poder y relaciones sociales*, pp. 27–51.

⁷⁹ Vázquez, 'Castros', pp. 362–63; Escalona, 'Military Stress'.

⁸⁰ Cardeña, ed. by Martínez Díez, no. 74.

nearby.⁸¹ High-status indicators can be found in both charters. In the first, Alfonso Sendínez received in return for his donation a mule, a piece of fur, and a piece of clothing; in the second, the price for the meadow was a fully equipped horse.⁸² It seems clear that in the 950s Alfonso Sendínez behaved and was recognized as an aristocrat in the Esgueva valley area, but he may have had more modest origins. Not only is he never recorded holding property anywhere other than in this particular area, he also seems to have his family roots in nearby Torresandino. This village occurs in a 948 Cardeña charter as *Torre quem ferunt Domno Sindino*,⁸³ pointing to an otherwise unknown man called *dominus* Sendino who was arguably Alfonso's father (Alfonso Sendínez means literally 'Alfonso, son of Sendino') and enjoyed a local status dominant enough for his tower to give its name to the locality. This is a story of successful social mobility in two generations: in the early tenth century Sendino was arguably a member of the local elites in the Esgueva valley with local dominance in one village; in the mid-tenth century his son had property in the surrounding area, a proprietary monastery, and displayed noble-status marks. Whether his elevation continued we cannot tell, but this case illustrates the connections between owning and donating churches and the aspirations of certain local elite members in the south of Castile. There may have existed many other similar cases that were either not recorded in written sources or lack sufficient narrative detail to be properly recognized.

The charter evidence discussed suggests that, in central and southern Castile at least, there was a layer of local churches/monasteries founded and controlled by dominant members of local communities. Although a minority could rise up to nobility, most did not, and we should expect their proprietary churches to have humble material structures. Likewise, some of these churches may have been of ancient origin, but most seem rather short lived, for about one or two generations. In some cases, their end as a monastic house seems to be their donation to a major monastery less interested in keeping its religious functions than in its associated landed property and the rights attached to it. Are there any archaeo-

⁸¹ *Cardeña*, ed. by Martínez Díez, no. 93.

⁸² The term in the charter is 'accepimus in honore'; similar texts often use the formula *in robra*. Both expressions refer to a gift which is received in gratitude for the donation made. Though there are dubious cases, it seems to apply only to aristocratic transactions and to be less a price than a counter-gift. The goods handed over under this concept tend to be of high symbolic significance. See Davies, *Acts of Giving*, pp. 135–36.

⁸³ *Cardeña*, ed. by Martínez Díez, no. 61.

logical traces of this kind of local church? There is the possibility — but it is just a possibility — that they have gone unnoticed in the material record because of their ephemeral nature. Across Castile, numerous traces of small shrines, often partly carved into rock, are associated with small groups of graves and these sites have traditionally been interpreted as hermitages because they appear too insignificant to be properly called monasteries.⁸⁴ A hypothesis that those small churches may have belonged to members of local elites makes sense in the light of remarks made previously.

In the early tenth century, building churches within a village, giving them landed property, and appointing one or more kinsmen or women as clerics could seem a valid strategy to reinforce differentiation within and from the community. It would not only help create a patrimony under the direct control of a notable and his heirs and away from wider community or kindred interference, but also provide the scene for the creation and display of a separate social identity, by hosting private rituals and, most importantly, a separate burial place. After all, that is what aristocrats were doing at a grander scale at the same time. Could it be that some members of the local elites reacted to the new order by replicating aristocratic behaviour in order to mark themselves off from their communities and highlight their fitness to join higher settings? If so, how can we interpret the handing over of so many local churches? Clearly something must have changed. The hypothesis that by the 940s secular ownership of churches began to be considered socially inappropriate is attractive, but cannot account for the large number of churches that remained in secular hands down to the late eleventh century. Aristocratic cases seem to span the period while the handing over of lesser status churches tends to concentrate in the mid-tenth century. The fact that many were donated by clerics could hint (sometimes demonstrably) that it was not the original patrons but their appointees who were in control of the church now and that it no longer served its original purpose. In some cases, successfully elevated elite members may have lost interest in the churches that tied them to a restricted social milieu. Maybe in other cases what we see is the result of a failed strategy that could not propel upwards the founder and his heirs; after the patron's death, there would be no need to keep it going and the local clerics could seek higher patronage

⁸⁴ This can be the case of many such sites recorded as hermitic in surveys like Elías Rubio, *Monjes y eremitas: Santuarios de roca del sureste de Burgos* (Burgos: Diputación Provincial de Burgos, 1986) or Alberto Monreal, *Eremitorios rupestres altomedievales (El Alto Valle del Ebro)* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 1989).

from a major house. Whatever the case, grants of local churches could be marking the end of a period in which it was worth it to attempt this line of action.

Conclusion

Slim as the evidence is, we hope to have shown that a scale-based approach can help grasp some idea of how Castilian expansion affected both the local communities of the Duero basin and the overall system. Scale change is a powerful fuel for social transformations. These have been explored in the past with greater attention to the upper social layers, often with a top-down approach. However, a combination of the spatial and temporal dimensions of systemic change brings to the fore the conditions for bottom-up agency from inside the local communities to become more visible. As the Duero basin communities came under the rule of the Castilian counts and their networks of aristocratic interests, a phase of relative openness to social promotion seems to have started. Local notables seem to have responded to it by stressing their military role and replicating an aristocratic way of life; also by emphasizing difference from their neighbours, while using their workforce to develop their own status markers. After roughly one generation, the social system was seemingly more defined and less open. Spinning off became harder; while some surely succeeded, most local notables failed to achieve nobility and instead reoriented their strategies towards their communities, where they remained locally relevant, and could play a dual game as advocates of their communities in case of conflict with external powers while also joining the patronage networks of secular and ecclesiastical lords. Escaping the community was now much more difficult.